

OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

3rd July 2006

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Bell (Chair) and Councillors Lane and Bambrick.

Conservative Group

Councillor Bladen (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Atkin.

OV/1. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd May 2006 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

OV/2. **REPORT OF COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Lane reported on work, which the Community Scrutiny Committee was due to undertake during the forthcoming year. He advised the Meeting that this was designed to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan's three priority themes:-

- Safer and Healthier Communities
- Cleaner and Greener South Derbyshire
- More efficient, customer focussed services

In addition, he reported that the work programme would provide an opportunity to include community groups during scrutiny into the following areas:-

- Rural Post Office closures
- Housing Services
- Clean neighbourhoods and environment
- Street scene review

Councillor Lane confirmed that the following items would be placed on the Committee's Work Programme for 2006/07:-

- Low frequency noise
- Primary Care Trust issues and District Council Liaison
- Rural Post Office closures, including the withdrawal of pensioner cards
- Best Value Performance Indicators
- Quartile performance
- Housing service performance management
- E-enablement
- Corporate Plan Three Priorities, clean neighbourhoods, the Environment Act and the Council's response
- Street scene review
- Role of Member champions
- Pamphlet on the work of scrutiny
- Scrutiny website

- Area Meeting reports; publicity report on a bi-annual basis on the work of scrutiny
- Training – proactive e-training package for Members and Officers
- Preparation of the Committee’s Annual Report

The Chair added that this seemed an excellent way to start a new year of scrutiny. However, he did express concern that there may be too much work to consider within the timescale of one year. The Principal Policy Officer confirmed that this had been considered and it was felt that much information was already available and that all items could be dealt with within the scrutiny process.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised the Meeting that it would be useful to complete a pro-forma document in order to define further each piece of work. He added that this would help to define reporting stages etc. Councillor Lane agreed to consider this in conjunction with the Principal Policy Officer. The Chair also added that this would help to keep focus and maintain goals.

Councillor Atkin asked how the Community Scrutiny Committee intended to tackle the issue of rural Post Office closures. Councillor Lane advised that this work was currently being scoped and when this was completed, it would be reported back to the Committee for agreement.

OV/3. **REPORT OF CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chair confirmed that the work of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee would be based on the following:-

- Ongoing issues
- Special projects

He confirmed that the work areas for ongoing issues would be:-

- Use of resources
- Asset Management Plan
- The budget process
- Corporate Plan process
- Regular reports to appropriate policy committees encouraging feedback

Special projects were confirmed as:-

- Shifting resources
- Service standards
- Support to voluntary and community groups, including the partnership grant scheme
- Environmental education
- Sickness absence

It was also confirmed that time lines needed to be completed for each of these areas, plus clear scoping of each item.

A discussion then ensued with regard to any additional training requirements aimed at scrutiny functions. Councillor Lane confirmed that a scrutiny assimilator was available on the basis of an interactive package. The Principal Policy Officer added that this had been developed by Derby City

Council. It was agreed that he would forward copies of Powerpoint slides, providing further details of this training device, to all Members of the Overview Committee. The Chair confirmed that the focus for the forthcoming year was that scrutiny should be service driven, focussing on performance and producing work to enable the Council to improve its performance rating.

Councillor Atkin asked if the prospect of public speaking at Development Control Committee meetings should be scrutinised. Councillor Lane advised that if accepted, this would be for a six-months trial period with a subsequent report on the matter for the Council to consider its future.

The Chair requested confirmation of the lead Officers within the Policy Unit for each item of the Work Programme. The Principal Policy Officer confirmed that the work would be spread within the existing Policy team. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that there would also be a replacement for a recently retired officer, plus one additional officer to be recruited, who would deal with items from the work programme.

The Chair confirmed that for the next meeting, the Corporate Scrutiny Committee would have a detailed Work Programme.

The Principal Policy Officer reported that he would like to make further use of the Council's internet and intranet sites. It was felt that this would assist in the inclusion of not only Councillors, but also members of the public. The Principal Policy Officer confirmed that he was the lead Officer on this project and would continue to progress this along with the Council's Web Editor.

Councillor Atkin asked if a member of the public could suggest items to be scrutinised by the Committee. The Chair responded that members of the public would be encouraged to suggest items for scrutiny, but both the Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committees had the ultimate ownership of their own work programmes. He added that this could be built into the scrutiny information on the website.

OV/4. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair confirmed that the Overview Committee was seen as a forum to overview the other two scrutiny committees. The Principal Policy Officer distributed copies of a table, which detailed scrutiny work programme items that were currently being considered. The Chair agreed that this would assist the Overview Committee in its function and requested this as an ongoing item on the agenda to aid clarity.

Councillor Bambrick then gave an update on the current position with regard to the street scene project. He advised the Meeting that a survey was currently being carried out by the CVS, and he would aim to copy this to all Members of the Overview Committee for the next meeting. The Deputy Chief Executive added that Derbyshire County Council was currently organising a focus group, including South Derbyshire District Council staff. This was taking place to address local issues by closer working between authorities.

Councillor Atkin felt it would be useful to have a copy of Derbyshire County Council's Work Programme and the Principal Policy Officer agreed to e-mail this information to all members of the Committee.

R. L. BELL

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 4.45 p.m.