

OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

9th August 2004

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Harrington (Chair) and Councillor Bambrick.

Conservative Group

Councillor Hood (Vice-Chair) and Councillor Bale.

(Councillor Jones also attended the Meeting.)

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Murphy (Labour Group).

OV/8. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th June 2004 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

OV/9. **MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE**

The Chair referred to background information on this matter prepared by Councillor Murphy. The initial discussion had been triggered by the Derbyshire Partnership Forum and concern was expressed regarding the level of resources to implement any changes. It was recognised that the Council's approach appeared to be reactive, rather than proactive, a point identified in the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It was considered that additional work on the matter was required, including consultation with officers and the issue would remain on future agendas as an ongoing item. Policy Committees would also be advised of the issues, for any necessary consideration in the forthcoming budget process.

OV/10. **CONSTITUTION ACTION PLAN – UPDATE ON PROGRESS**

The Constitution Action Plan, previously circulated to Members, had now been split into completed actions and outstanding actions. The Legal and Democratic Services Manager reported on the matter, advising that the pilot scheme with the Environmental and Development Services Committee had now been completed and changes made to the Committee's terms of reference. The pilot project had then been rolled out to the Housing and Community Services Committee and in this regard, one more meeting with the Chair of the Working Group would be necessary to formalise the report to the Committee in the next cycle. The Finance and Management Committee would then be subject to the pilot project and discussions had already been undertaken with the Chair of that Committee regarding the establishment of a Working Group. It was hoped to meet initially during August and a final report would eventually be submitted to the Committee. Following completion of those projects, the role of the Full Council would be considered and it may also be appropriate to establish a Working Panel for this matter.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that there were issues in the Corporate Improvement Plan in connection with the ongoing review of the Council's political management arrangements.

With regard to the recent decision of the Council to require Policy Committees to respond to proposals from the Overview or a Scrutiny Committee within a period of six months, it was considered that this period may require further consideration following the comments in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It was now felt that a period of three months would be more appropriate, although the need for flexibility was recognised. It was considered that the Chairs of Policy Committees together with Divisional Managers should be consulted and if appropriate, a report submitted to the Council Meeting on 23rd September 2004.

(At this point Councillor Bambrick joined the Meeting.)

OV/11. **ROLE OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL**

It was reported that background information on this matter had previously been circulated to Members, including a Draft Business Plan for Civic Functions, the policy for the use of the Civic car, a job description for the Chair from another authority and details of Civic allowances for the Derbyshire and neighbouring authorities. It was noted that the Civic allowances were outside the remit of the Independent Remuneration Panel and were paid under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972. A Civic Guide would be useful and it was noted that the Civic car had been purchased in 2001, which had been cost effective as the lease period was then due to expire. However, the car may now be nearing the end of its useful life and there was no contingency budget for future replacement.

It was recognised that the role of the Chair and Vice-Chair should be determined and appropriate resources allocated for the necessary duties involved. There was a need to determine the scope of any review and in this regard, it was suggested that this should include the role of the Chair and Vice-Chair, remuneration, the provision of transport, priorities, promotion of and support for the function.

The Administrative Assistant (Civic Functions) attended the Meeting and advised of the changing role of the Chair and Vice-Chair, particularly with regard to charity fund raising. It was hoped to raise the profile of the Chair through the Council's website shortly.

As the Chair of the Council in 2003/04, Councillor Bale relayed his experiences to Members, noting that the remuneration was less than the level paid to Policy Committee Chairs, although he considered the workload to be greater. He also felt there was a need to promote the Chair's position and that consideration should be given to outside visits to other authorities, along with the role of the business sector. With regard to fund raising for charitable purposes, he felt that this issue should be supported by the Chair, rather than treated as a priority for contribution purposes. Councillor Bale felt that the Civic car was an essential provision to support the Chair's workload, but felt that the Vice-Chair need not utilise the use of the car as much.

The Chair advised that the various elements of the scope of any review, as outlined above, would be subject to appropriate scrutiny review criteria and further information would then be requested accordingly.

OV/12. **MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT (SCRUTINY COMMITTEES)**

Following discussions regarding job descriptions at the last Meeting, there was a need to identify Members' training requirements specific to the Scrutiny function and separate from the normal ongoing training courses available for Members. In this regard, individual needs should be addressed and the Council's Training and Development Officer could advise of available training courses, perhaps to be undertaken in-house. It was reported that Councillor Murphy intended to produce job descriptions to assist the process and was to discuss the matter with the Training and Development Officer prior to the production of any training programme.

OV/13. **GUIDANCE FOR COMMISSIONING A SCRUTINY REVIEW**

Further to the discussions on this matter at the previous Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committee Meetings, guidance and a standard template had now been prepared, which was circulated to Members. The Chair considered that any request should also make reference to the key aims of the Council and this aspect would be added accordingly. The guidance on appropriate Scrutiny Reviews could be made available to Policy Committees and it was suggested that the document could be linked to the report to the Council Meeting on 23rd September 2004 relating to the possible amendment to the response period by Policy Committees (Minute No. OV/10 above refers).

OV/14. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was suggested that this Committee's Work Programme would be dictated by the items previously discussed at this Meeting. The Policy and Best Value Manager outlined those issues arising from the Work Programmes for the Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committees, including a report on the car parking study and visits to sheltered housing schemes. It was also noted that a Special Meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee would be held on 23rd August 2004 relating to finance issues and this Meeting would be attended by the Chair of the Finance and Management Committee.

The Chair requested an ongoing future agenda item relating to reports to Policy Committees.

K. HARRINGTON

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 5.40 p.m.