

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3rd April 2006

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Lane (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillor Mulgrew.

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin and Bale.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Murphy (Chair), Councillor Isham (Labour Group) and Councillor Bladen (Conservative Group).

COS/26. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 30th January 2006 and of the Meeting held on 13th February 2006 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

COS/27. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**

Councillor Atkin referred to the Rural Development Programme and explained that he had obtained copies of various consultation documents. He understood that these would be considered by a Policy Committee. Many local authorities had signed up to the Rural Development Charter, but South Derbyshire had not to date. He explained the information available via the internet on this topic and felt there was a need for further research. The Deputy Chief Executive explained the Council's approach in responding to consultation documents. Officers would take away the issue raised and respond to the Member and the Chair of the Committee. Following further discussion, the Chair raised the related question of whether it was appropriate for this Council to sign up to the Rural Development Charter.

COS/28. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES ANNUAL REPORT 2005/06**

The first draft of the 2005/06 Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees had been circulated. The Constitution required Overview and Scrutiny to report to Council each year, to make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if applicable. Consideration was given to the draft Annual Report, it being noted that specific work areas for 2006/07 needed to be identified. The document would be submitted to the Overview Committee on 10th April 2006, prior to being finalised and submitted to the Annual Council Meeting.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the report had also been considered by the Community Scrutiny Committee the previous week. The report had been structured in the same way as in previous years. He took

Members through the draft report, reminding of the issues raised by the Community Scrutiny Committee.

There was a discussion, in response to a question from Councillor Atkin, about the call-in procedure. Officers highlighted issues under this Committee's terms of reference. It was noted that some small amendments were required to the text in relation to the Strategic Planning Project and the dates of the budget proposals. Further discussion of the Work Programme could take place at the Overview Committee. It was questioned whether there was a requirement to ask Policy Committees about the areas they would like Scrutiny to look at for the following year. Following research, the Deputy Chief Executive explained the Constitutional requirements for the Annual Report and he confirmed that Scrutiny Committees set their own work programmes. There was, however a responsibility to receive requests from Policy Committees. Members then discussed the approach to Scrutiny this year.

With regard to future work areas, reference was made to the matrix of outstanding projects and reports. In particular, the Committee discussed Member Champions, the 2007/2010 Budget Proposals, Performance Management and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) project, which was still to be scoped. This issue concerned the Council's relationship with the LSP, its governance, how it was resourced and how partners worked together. Members were asked to feed further contributions on this item to the Principal Policy Officer by Thursday, in order that these could be incorporated in the report to the Overview Committee.

COS/29. RESPONSE FROM FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING REVIEW

Copies of the Strategic Planning Review report were circulated. This had been considered by the Finance and Management Committee at its Meeting on 23rd March 2006. The Chair asked Members how they wished to proceed with this matter. Councillor Atkin understood that the report's findings had been agreed and he felt that Finance and Management Committee should be given time to implement them. Another Member agreed that the Scrutiny Committee could monitor this matter.

The Chair explained that some of the recommendations had been accepted in part, whilst others had not. It was suggested that Members read the report and give further consideration to it at the next Committee Meeting. It was also agreed to invite the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Finance and Management Committee to that Meeting.

COS/30. LSP PROJECT

The Chair referred to the consultation document on reviewing LSPs, considered at the 9th March Council Meeting. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that there was a consultation from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on the future of LSPs and he explained the background to it. The Chair reminded that the LSP had been discussed at the last Meeting and a Scrutiny Review might now be premature, or it could duplicate other work. It was assumed that at the end of the consultation process, the ODPM would issue further guidance about the future operation of LSPs. If Members were minded undertake a review based on the LSP, a possible project could

look at its current effectiveness. In response to a question from Councillor Atkin, there was a discussion about the LSPs response to the ODPM consultation document. A number of organisations involved in the LSP had submitted their own responses. Some partners were concerned at the proposals and if the revised arrangements became too bureaucratic or transparent they might be less willing to be involved in the LSP. The operation of such boards was always a compromise and the view was expressed that if the LSP became an “arm” of a local authority, it could make other partners less willing to be involved.

The Committee discussed whether the LSP had made a difference. A review of this might be timely at the end of the first year of the LSP’s Action Plan. The Committee could ask stakeholders if they felt that the LSP had made a difference. The Chair was mindful of the potential scope of such a project. Councillor Atkin felt that such a review would need to be focussed. In response to a further question from Councillor Bale, Officers considered there was value in the LSP and referred to the success of some of its projects. The Chair felt there was a need to refine this project and to talk to the Council’s representatives on the LSP. The Action Plan outcomes could be reviewed later in the year. With regard to governance issues, it was felt the should not be pursued at this present time.

COS/31. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was noted that there was one further Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in the current municipal year. There was a need to shape the work programme for the next year and to include details in the Annual Report. It was presumed that after Annual Council, the Scrutiny Committees would arrange another “away day” to finalise their respective work programmes. Reference was made to the Member Champion project, it being questioned whether the Overview Committee would need to undertake this as it crossed both Scrutiny Committees areas of responsibility. There was a need to re-visit the list of projects agreed at the last Scrutiny “away day” and it was requested that this be circulated for discussion at the next Meeting.

Councillor Atkin raised the issue of Scrutiny of the Police Authority. Officers noted that the Police Authority operated on County boundaries and such a review might be more appropriate for the County Council’s Scrutiny function. Councillor Atkin felt that as a precept was raised in South Derbyshire, this Council should have an input on such matters. Alternatively, if Derbyshire County Council undertook such a review, this Council could contribute to it. Reference was made to the current consultation on the review of constabularies. The Deputy Chief Executive commented on the presentation received on the review and the level of information provided. There was a discussion around Police service delivery, the structural change and the complex relationship between the Police Authority, the Derbyshire Constabulary and its consultative forum.

Councillor Atkin raised a further issue for consideration as part of the work programme. This related to the Council’s e-mail system and whether efficient use was made of it. There were occasional problems with “spam” and reference was made to the volume of e-mails. Officers quoted an example elsewhere, where an authority had periodic days where internal e-mails were not permitted. It was agreed to discuss this issue further at the next Meeting, as part of the future work programme.

R. LANE

CHAIR

The meeting terminated at 5.10 p.m.