

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2014

**PRESENT:-**

**CONSERVATIVE GROUP**

Councillors Mrs Plenderleith (Chairman), Atkin (Vice-Chairman), and Mrs Patten

**LABOUR GROUP**

Councillors Bambrick and Pearson

OS/01. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Heath, Mrs Hood and Mrs Mead.

OS/02. **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee agreed its core work programme for the year. This would consist of reviews into issues that were important to both the Council and the wider South Derbyshire community. The reviews agreed by the Committee were:

- (a) How are we going to meet the challenges of Individual Electoral Registration?
- (b) Are there sufficient NHS dental services to meet new and existing demand from South Derbyshire people?
- (c) Are we doing enough to make sure that we will have sufficient cemetery space to meet the district's needs in the future?
- (d) Do we have the right leisure services in place to meet the needs of local people?

During the discussion about the first investigation, it became clear that a key area of concern for members was whether those who have never registered before, such as young people, could be successfully persuaded to put their names down on to the electoral register. The Committee noted that other authorities were already doing a lot to encourage 'hard to reach' groups to register.

Members were keen to find out how South Derbyshire intended to meet the challenge locally. As a first step, it was agreed that the Chief Executive should be requested to attend the Committee's meeting in **September 2014** to discuss this.

The Committee then looked at the review on dental provision for the district, which would be led by Councillor Patten. As part of this, members made it clear that they would like to hear from local people about what their experiences had been and whether they had found it difficult to find a dentist. There was a general consensus that in order to get the views of local people, an effective communications strategy would be required. It was also thought that a variety of engagement techniques ought to be used. These included on-line questionnaires via the Council's web site, the use of social media and face-to-face meetings with the public.

The Committee supported this approach and was especially keen that the public be involved extensively in this review. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services, as the Council officer with overall responsibility for communications, agreed to help progress this. In this context, it was agreed that he should meet Councillor Patten to determine the best way forward. The findings from this consultation would then be discussed by the Committee at its meeting in **October 2014**. Following on from this, the Committee's conclusions and recommendations would be passed to the relevant NHS bodies responsible for dental service provision, such as the Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health.

Finally, Committee members discussed the review on leisure provision. They identified two key areas which they would like to focus on. First of all, who are the users of the leisure services and do a significant number live outside of the district? Second, are there any parts of the district where people cannot access leisure services, because of poor transport links etc. and are there groups who are excluded because the leisure centres do not offer the right services for them? It was agreed that the Director of Planning & Community Services should be requested to attend the Committee's meeting in **January 2015** to discuss these issues with members.

**RESOLVED:-**

**That the Committee work programme for 2014-15 be approved.**

OS/03. **CEMETERY PROVISION IN THE DISTRICT.**

The Committee then turned to the question of whether we are doing enough to make sure that we will have sufficient cemetery space to meet the district's needs in the future? Members were reminded that although cemetery provision was important, it was not a statutory service, which the Council had to provide. The Culture & Community Manager gave the Committee an update about what action had happened since it last considered this matter, over a year ago. He summarised the current capacity of the district's cemeteries and the actions that had been taken to increase the number of spaces available.

Members welcomed these measures. However, they recognised that the Council would ultimately need to decide on the long term future of the service. Members were informed that work had already taken place to identify possible new sites on Council owned land and also sites that would require the use of land that the Council did not own. This could be prohibitively expensive, especially if the land had to be acquired in or close-to the built-up areas.

In this context, members were told that there may be scope as part of any Section 106 planning decisions to require developers to help fund new cemetery provision in the district. However, it was pointed out that in order to do this the Council would need to first set out what its 'vision' for the service is. In particular, does it want to establish a new central cemetery for the district or does it want to identify several locations for new cemetery spaces, which could then be potentially expanded?

The Committee discussed the issue of local church cemeteries and how they are used. Members felt that this discussion highlighted the importance of assessing cemetery provision for the sub-region as a whole and for a co-ordinated approach to be developed between the different areas.

The Committee felt it important that there should continue to be cemetery provision in the district, but that for this to happen it would be necessary to develop a planning framework setting out the Council's vision for the service and for discussions to take place with neighbouring areas. The officers agreed to carry out further work on this and to report back to the Committee about what progress had been made.

**RESOLVED:-**

**That the Committee considers this issue at its meeting in December 2014.**

OS/04. **WORKING WITH OTHERS**

The Committee considered a briefing paper prepared by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) setting out the role of different agencies in holding to account various public service providers. The paper explained the different policy and operational areas which they cover, their powers and how joint projects could be organised that would be mutually beneficial to various scrutiny bodies.

Members welcomed the briefing paper and the possible ways in which the Committee could co-operate with other scrutiny bodies. It was suggested that a representative of the Centre for Public Scrutiny be invited to meet with the Committee to discuss this further with members.

OS/05 **RESOLVED:-**

**That the Chairman arranges a meeting between the Committee and a representative of the Centre for Public Scrutiny to discuss the opportunities for joint working with other scrutiny bodies.**

The meeting terminated at 6.45pm

CHAIRMAN