

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25th March 2009

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

Councillor Jones (Chairman) and Councillors Atkin, Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Plenderleith.

**Labour Group**

Councillors Bambrick, Lane and Mrs. Mead.

OS/43. **APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Mrs. Farrington (Vice-Chairman)(Conservative Group).

OS/44. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 21st January 2009 and the Open and Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th February 2009 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chairman.

OS/45. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bambrick declared a personal interest in respect of the item on the Community Transport Review, in his capacity as a Member of Derbyshire County Council and a representative of Swadlincote Community Transport.

OS/46. **COMMUNITY TRANSPORT REVIEW**

Members were reminded of the previous consideration of this review area and reference was made to the Derbyshire County Council review of Community Transport, on which documents had been circulated to the last meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Donna Meredith-Wood from Derbyshire County Council, who had been invited to provide an update on the County Council's review of Community Transport. An overview was provided of the 8 schemes in operation throughout the County, including the South Derbyshire scheme, based in Swadlincote. Whilst undertaking the review, it had been suggested that the 8 separate schemes give consideration to forming an "umbrella group" with a view to sharing best practice. Consideration had also been given to the adoption of a single tendering process, including a requirement for service level agreements to guarantee minimum service levels.

In receiving this update, Members raised a number of issues, to which responses were provided. Clarification was sought of the role of Community Transport and it was advised that the schemes undertook a high percentage of local community group work. The provision of services in each area was queried and it was noted that each scheme operated its own schedule. Cross boundary issues were also discussed. It was noted that, due to the

Swadlincote scheme's popularity, there were instances where requests from some local groups were refused, due to insufficient capacity. Details were requested of the training undertaken by the drivers and it was confirmed that all applicants were required to have undertaken "MIDASH" training. The facilities for disabled persons were discussed and it was confirmed that all buses had wheelchair access. The funding arrangements were questioned and it was advised that each scheme had to tender for contracts with the County Council. The core grant funded from the County Council was subject to differing criteria in respect of each scheme, relating to journey mileage and the numbers of passengers transported. Additional grants were available from a number of funding sources, relevant to each scheme.

There was discussion about the Swadlincote Community Transport Scheme, which undertook some commercial work, to secure additional funding. There was concern that community group services might be compromised due to the undertaking of this additional work. It was considered that additional information needed to be obtained from Swadlincote Community Transport on this issue. As a related issue, it was noted that a number of community groups within South Derbyshire made use of the East Staffordshire Community Transport scheme. It was therefore suggested that discussions also be undertaken with the East Staffordshire Community Transport.

**It was agreed: \_**

- 1) That the Committee awaits the outcome of the Derbyshire County Council review of Community Transport and confirms the offer to provide a local input.**
- 2) That the Managing Director of Swadlincote Community Transport be invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 6th May 2009.**
- 3) That subject to the outcome of the County Council's review, further information be sought from Derbyshire County Council about funding criteria for community transport schemes and further information be sought about the operation of the East Staffordshire Community Transport Scheme.**

OS/47. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2008/09**

The Committee considered its Draft Annual Report for the 2008/09 municipal year. The report included background on the composition and main purposes of the Committee. The main section of the report looked at the areas of activity and achievements. These comprised self-scrutiny, broadband provision, funding for Rosliston Forestry Centre, health scrutiny, budget proposals for 2009/10 and the financial plan to 2014, staffing arrangements/budgets, public and community transport, household drainage and joint scrutiny work. It was also suggested that a scrutiny focus session be undertaken, to determine the work programme for 2009/10.

Members considered that the report should be publicised widely, including use of the Area Forums, and in public buildings, within community groups including the CVS and on the Council's website. Members also expressed the desire to seek feedback and public input to the future work programme.

**It was agreed:-**

- 1) That Members comments be taken on board, particularly regarding publication arrangements and endeavours to seek public input into the future work programme.**
- 2) That the finalised Annual Report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6th May 2009.**

OS/48. **ADOPTION OF HOUSEHOLD DRAINAGE**

Further to Minute No. OS/28 of 10th December 2008, it was noted that a response had been received from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Concerns had been raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with regard to drainage controls. Problems had been encountered throughout the Country where drainage schemes were not constructed to the required adoptable standard. Concern had been raised regarding the potential liability of residents for sewers that were not adopted.

Defra had confirmed that from 2011, all existing private sewers and lateral drains should transfer into the ownership of the nine English water and sewerage companies. The Government had also decided that design and construction for all new sewers and drains that were proposed to be connected to the public sewage network, should be made mandatory and should automatically be adopted as part of the public system.

The regulations were currently being drafted and would be consulted on later in the year.

**It was agreed:-**

- 1) That the Committee notes the reply from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.**
- 2) That Officers report back to the Committee at suitable intervals to inform Members of the progress of the adoption of private sewers and lateral drains.**

OS/49. **SCRUTINY OF THE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT AND COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION**

A verbal report was provided on recent training events attended by Members of the Committee and an Officer, about Local Area Agreements and the Councillor Call for Action. The Chairman made particular reference to a focus session on obesity, for which resources would be made available for councils to undertake review work. Further information would be provided on this, when it became available. It was suggested that further consideration could be given to these topics at a focus session, to be held prior to the start of the next municipal year.

**It was agreed that the Committee notes the feedback provided and that the subjects of the Local Area Agreement and the Councillor Call for Action be discussed further at a scrutiny focus session, prior to the start of the next municipal year.**

OS/50. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee reviewed its work programme. It was reported that the Health Scrutiny reviews had now been submitted to the Housing and Community Services Committee and the budget scrutiny process had been completed through a report submitted to the Finance and Management Committee.

It was noted that the updated Overview and Scrutiny webpage had now been uploaded onto the Council's website.

Further to Minute No. OS/40, a report was provided on the external 'peer review' of the Overview and Scrutiny function that was currently being undertaken. Documents were attached to the work programme report to provide background and James Doble from Cherwell District Council was in attendance at the Meeting. He had met with Members and Officers the previous week, to hold a series of discussions. A pack of documentary evidence had also been submitted as part of the process. Mr. Doble provided initial feedback and concluded that this Council was building on a position of strength. His draft report would be received for Members consideration and comment, following which the final report would be submitted for the Council's use as required. On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mr. Doble for his considerable time and effort in undertaking the review.

**It was agreed that the Committee receives the work programme report.**

C. JONES

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.