

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (INTERNAL)

25TH OCTOBER 2007

PRESENT	Councillor V. Shuttleworth (Chair) Councillors Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Todd, Des Wilson
APOLOGIES	Councillor Mrs. Jopling
ADVISERS	R. Bowman, Scrutiny Manager

06. VERBAL UPDATE BY THE SCRUTINY MANAGER ON THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE ON INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Scrutiny Manager had analysed the responses of the survey of members' views on internal communication. During his verbal update several points from the research were brought to the attention of the committee:

- A majority (60%) of respondents use the telephone to contact officers
 - Speed (6) and convenience (6) were the two most commonly cited reasons for using the telephone
 - Telephone users were split over whether there were any problems with the method. 6 stated that there were 'no problems' with using the telephone, whilst 10 had problems with it
 - A large majority (11) of telephone users stated that face-to-face communication would be a better method of communication
 - 4 telephone users believed that email would be a better method of communication
 - Of these, 3 responded 'other' when asked why then they didn't use email, if that was the better method:
 - One respondent had a computer but needed training to use it for email
 - Another respondent had no access to the Wear Valley District Council email directory
- Face-to-face communication with officers was also common among members
 - Speed (4) and a better response (3) were the main reasons that members used face-to-face communication
 - A majority (5) stated that there were 'no problems' with using the face-to-face method
 - 4 members had problems with the method

- 5 members believed there to be a better method of communication, the most popular being the telephone (3)
- A large majority (8) of all responses stated that face-to-face was the 'better' method of communication, although lack of time prevented them from using it
- Email was used by 2 members as their usual method of communication
 - 1 email user cited convenience as the reason they used the method
 - The other email user had a full time job and stated that the other methods were inconvenient
- Telephone (53%) and post (30%) were the most commonly utilised methods by officers to communicate with members
 - Of those receiving telephone communication from officers, 11 had 'no problem' with the method
 - 4 were 'not always available to respond in time'
 - Those receiving post from officers were split, 4 stating that there were 'no problems' with officers posting information to them
 - 3 stated that they received large amounts of information through the post
- Of those receiving email from officers, 1 found the method to be unproblematic, whilst the other found that they were often unable to respond in time
- Those receiving face-to-face communication from officers were evenly split. 2 found the method to be unproblematic, whilst two responses stated that there were problems

Members thanked the Scrutiny Manager for his update and proceeded to discuss the findings. There was a particular emphasis in the discussion on the efficiency of email as a method of communication.

It was decided that the results of the survey should be brought to the attention of Chief Officer's Management Team, for their information.

Chair

The meeting concluded at 5:55pm