

# Item 9a

## SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1

Conference Room 1,  
Council Offices,  
Spennymoor

Tuesday,  
11 January 2005

Time: 10.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillor J.M. Khan (In the Chair) and  
Councillors D.M. Hancock, G. Morgan, Mrs. I. Jackson Smith and  
K. Thompson

**In Attendance:** Councillors Mrs. B.A. Clare, V. Crosby, G.C. Gray, Mrs. J. Gray,  
J.E. Higgin, Mrs. E.M. Paylor and A. Smith

**Apologies:** Councillors W.M. Blenkinsopp, Mrs. K. Conroy, Mrs. A.M. Fleming,  
A. Gray, B. Hall, K. Henderson, J.G. Huntington, B. Meek and J.M. Smith

### **OSC(1).23/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members had no declarations of interest to declare.

### **OSC(1).24/04 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (F or copy see file of Minutes).

### **OSC(1).25/04 MODERN.GOV**

A demonstration was given of Modern.Gov, the electronic Committee system which allowed access to Agendas, Minutes and other information via the Internet. Members also explored the possible efficiency savings, which could be achieved when the system was fully developed.

Specific reference was made to the following facilities which the system provided :-

- Calendar
- Search
- Meetings
- Forward Plans
- Committees
- Parish Councils
- Councillors
- MPs
- MEPs

Members were reminded that e-Government targets required all Councils to e-enable 100% of services by December 2005. The

following targets related to Democratic Services:-

‘**R5** Public access to outline reports, minutes and agendas from past council meetings, including future meetings diary updated’

‘**R6** Providing every Councillor with the option to have an easy-to-manage set of public web pages (for community leadership purposes) that is either maintained for them, or that they can maintain themselves’.

The target had already been met, however further development was required to ensure that the full potential of the system could be realised and efficiency savings maximised.

Members queried whether Councillors could access the system from outside of the Council Offices. It was explained that as the site was still developing, Councillors could only access public documents via the Internet, until adequate security measures were in place. Access to all documents, including exempt pages, was available to Members on the Council Intranet.

It was hoped to develop Modern.Gov and encourage its use throughout the Council to ensure that efficiency savings could be maximised.

It was envisaged that a ‘subscribe’ service could be developed to enable users of the system to receive e-mails to notify them that a document within their area of interest had been published. This service could be beneficial to all involved with the Councils decision-making processes and would result in savings to the Council.

Members welcomed the development of the Modern.Gov system and the use of new technology to secure efficiencies. The use of the Modern.Gov system by Members would depend on the roll out of laptops to Members and associated training.

CONCLUDED: That the Modern.Gov system be welcomed

## **OSC(1).26/04 WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman of the Committee setting out the Committees work programme for consideration and review. (For copy see file of Minutes).

Members were updated on the progress of the ongoing reviews.

With regard to the Review of Area Forums, it was reported that a questionnaire had been distributed to each person on the mailing list for each Area Forum. The response rate had been good with approximately 50% of questionnaires returned. Members were also informed that consultation had commenced with Town and Parish Councils.

With regard to the review of Recruitment and Retention it was explained that an exercise was being carried out to assess how the grading of posts at Sedgefield Borough Council compared to the same posts at other local authorities. Although a number of authorities had been contacted only a small number of responses had been received.

With regards to future items for review, some Members were of the opinion that Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 should give consideration to Large Scale Voluntary Transfer. It was however pointed out that this item was within the remit of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2.

Reference was made to the Stewart Report relating to mobile phone masts. It was suggested that a report, advising the Committee of the health risks associated with the erection of mobile phone masts, be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 for consideration. However, it was noted that a training programme had been developed for Development Control Committee, which would include mobile telephone masts.

Reference was also made to the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). Members pointed out that at the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2004, it was suggested that Performance Indicator information should be reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committees on a regular basis to enable Members to monitor performance.

It was reported that the Head of Service Improvement was in the process of reviewing Performance Indicators. When this work was concluded, Performance Indicators would be reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committees on a regular basis.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the Committees work programme, as outlined in the report, be agreed.

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**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

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