

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**At a Special Meeting** of the **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee** held at County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 21 August 2008** at **10.00 a.m.**

#### **Present:**

**Councillor J Armstrong** in the Chair

Councillors Alderson, Arthur, Avery, B Bainbridge, R Bell, Blakey, Bleasdale, Bowman, Boyes, Brunskill, Burnip, Campbell, C Carr, Chaplow, Crute, Dixon, Freeman, Gittins, Graham, Gray, Hancock, N Harrison, Hopgood, Hugill, G Huntington, S Iveson, Laing, Lee, Martin, Moran, D Myers, Napier, O'Donnell, B Ord, R Ord, Paylor, Plews, C Potts, Savory, Shield, Simmons, Stoker, Stradling, Temple, Tennant, Thompson, Thomson, Walker, Wilkes, Wilkinson, Williams, Wood, Wright, and R Young.

#### **Other Members:**

Councillors Charlton, E Huntington, B Stephens and Todd.

#### **Co-opted Members:**

D Bates, M English, B Howarth, M Iveson, D Kinch, P Mackie, P Spurrell and A Tallentire.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brookes, D Maddison, M Potts, and C Woods, and Mr B Birch, Ms M Fish, Mrs E Hunter, and Mr K Ibbotson.

#### **A1 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **A2 Developing the Blueprint**

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Corporate Policy about Developing the Blueprint (for copy of slides of presentation see file of Minutes)

The presentation included the Blueprint's format and content, an introduction, transformation, Vision and Values, improving outcomes, local outcomes, national/regional agenda, the approach in relation to Customer Focus, Community Empowerment, Modern and Flexible Services, Efficient and Effective Use of Resources, Governance and a Design of the New Council.

The Chairman advised that no decisions had been made on the Blueprint, and that Overview and Scrutiny Members would have the opportunity to look at the Blueprint in detail. It was to be considered by the Cabinet on 11 September and the County Council on 1 October so they would be able to consider this during that time period.

The Head of Corporate Policy explained that developing the Blueprint was work in progress, and that there was no draft document yet. There had been some discussions with Cabinet and the key measures coming out of it were contained in her presentation.

The Head of Corporate Policy advised that they are currently in the process of holding public meetings to consult on the Blueprint. These comments would be brought in to form part of the Blueprint.

It was pointed out that there was to be an all party working group meeting on 13 September to consider the Governance arrangements.

The Senior Management structure of the Authority was currently out for consultation. If by 1 October the top layer of the Council was agreed this would form part of the Blueprint.

Councillor Hopgood advised that she was surprised that in the proposed structure there was no Corporate Director for Communities and there was no community development service.

In response the Chairman advised that Overview and Scrutiny had responded to the consultation document and this point had been made, together with a number of other issues including where scrutiny was to be placed within the structure. He advised that a copy of their response to the consultation document had been given to Leader of the Council and they would meet with the Cabinet later next week to discuss these concerns.

Councillor B Ord referred to the meeting of 4 June and asked for feedback on the issues he raised. Feisal Jassat in response advised that at the meeting of the Economic Scrutiny Committee on 7 September, Members would receive information on the Economic Development Action Plan. At the Health Scrutiny Committee in October where they would look the dentistry being a NHS priority. In connection with the issue concerning ambulances in the Bishop Auckland area, it has been made

clear to the PCT that they should not do anything until Overview and Scrutiny had looked at this.

Councillor Bates advised of his concern that the document did not include anything on the empowerment to Town and Parish Councils.

The Chairman advised that this was an integral part of the workstream being undertaken on LGR. He pointed out that the Blueprint was a summary of the work that had been undertaken to date.

The Head of Corporate Policy advised that the presentation gives high level headings that they are working too on the blueprint and that part of the document refers to local partnership working. She advised that there had been many meetings which had been attended by representatives of Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor Martin advised that it was difficult to consider the issues when they had not received any papers in advance of the meeting. He understood that the Cabinet were to consider the Blueprint on 11 September and make recommendations to the County Council on 1 October. He questioned why scrutiny was not receiving the same presentations as the Cabinet. He suggested that there be specific scrutiny working group to look at IT issues and new websites.

The Chairman advised that the timescales involved were out of the control of the Committee, Members from Overview and Scrutiny could get involved in the detail after the blueprint was agreed on 1 October, when they would have a general steer on the way ahead. He advised that the Blueprint would be considered further on 24 September at meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Councillor Wilkes suggested that the document did not mention changes to the environment, and that at every meeting it be discussed how proposals would fit in with environmental targets. In terms of buying new IT, he was concerned that many items would have been bought for the new authority prior to the policy being adopted.

The Head of Corporate Policy advised that there is an Environment Board meeting as part of a workstream on LGR, which is looking at service delivery and sustainability. There would be clear guidance on how to tackle this issue. Some of this work is now complete, and therefore this would influence anything new that would be bought.

The Chairman pointed out that Sustainable Community Strategy is high on the agenda of Overview and Scrutiny, and there was a working group set up to look at the consultation document that is currently out for consultation.

Councillor Huntington advised that he was interested in the Management Structure and wished to ensure that there was expertise from all authorities in the new structure. He hoped that elected members would be involved in the recruitment process.

The Chairman advised that Chief Officer posts are made by the Chief Officer's Appointments Committee, which is a cross party committee. He agreed that it was important to get the right people in the right jobs, and he was aware that there was a work stream to look at the appointment process.

Councillor D Myers asked for re-assurance that the workstreams were looking at areas in sufficient detail. He gave the example of a service request being made and then tracked.

The Head of Corporate Policy advised that there were 6 Programme Boards and 36 workstreams, and that they were looking at issues to that detail.

Councillor Stoker expressed concern that it appeared that environment was not one of the top ten priorities.

The Chairman pointed out that it does feature in SCS and the bid document and that slide 4 shows that they have a prosperous, safe and sustainable future.

In response to a question from Councillor R Bell asking whether Overview and Scrutiny members could meet at the same time as the Cabinet, the Chairman advised that it would be possible to meet on 12 September 2008, the day after the Cabinet.

In response to a question from Councillor Hopgood about which Committee of Overview and Scrutiny had met to respond to the consultation document on the management proposals, the Chairman, upon clarification, advised that it had been a meeting comprised of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Scrutiny Committees; and he was happy to circulate the notes of that meeting to Members.