

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** of the Teesdale District Council held at Teesdale House, Galgate, Barnard Castle on **Wednesday, 4 June** at 5.30 pm

PRESENT:
Councillors:

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| <i>RA Bell</i> | <i>P Ryman</i> |
| <i>M Bolden</i> | <i>PL Stubbs</i> |
| <i>K Coates</i> | <i>D Reed</i> |
| <i>KJ Hodgson</i> | <i>JR Watson</i> |
| <i>D Metcalfe</i> | <i>K Watson</i> |
| <i>GM Richardson</i> | <i>N Wood</i> |

Co-opted Members: Mr David Kinch and Mrs Pamela Spurrell

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors MJ Clark, AJ Cooke, MM English, JR Hinchcliffe and A Smith. Apologies were also received from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in respect of Minute number 10.

Officers in attendance:

P Wilding - Interim Deputy Chief Executive
D Roberts - Democratic Services Manager
A Lambert - Scrutiny and Member Support Officer

Also in attendance:

Police Chief Superintendent C Thompson, Area Commander,
P Murray, Childcare and Local Partnerships Manager, Job Centre Plus

6 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman confirmed that he wanted to raise two items of urgent business at the end of the meeting.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members.

8 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2008 and of the special meetings held on 28 February and 19 May 2008 be confirmed as accurate records.

9 DRAFT REPORT – RURAL POLICING

The Vice Chair of the Services Panel presented the final draft report on Rural Policing; the background to the review was outlined and it was noted that the co-operation of the police had been vital in completing the work. Members were afforded an opportunity to comment on the report and Chief

Superintendent Thompson responded to questions raised on a number of issues; she also extended an invitation to members to accompany police officers on local patrols.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the findings of the report be endorsed and considered at a future meeting of the Parish Forum.
- (b) That the report be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration.
- (c) That consideration be given to a joint press release being issued by the Council and the Police.

10 JOB SECTOR – EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS

The Committee considered a report from Pam Spurrell with regard to the above. Members were reminded of the background to the review and it was noted that representatives of the CAB and Job Centre Plus had been invited to attend the meeting. Phil Murray (Job Centre Plus) accordingly responded to a number of comments and questions from members. Members expressed their disappointment at the fact that no-one from the CAB had been available to attend the meeting. Mr Murray suggested that the CAB could escalate any issues/problems through the partnership board which was already established and which met regularly. He agreed to investigate any specific complaints if they were referred through the proper channels.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and that the CAB be requested to forward any specific complaints to Mr Murray; the CAB also to be informed of the Committee's disappointment at no-one being available to attend the meeting.

11 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The Chairman of the Committee, Councillor N Wood, submitted a report suggesting some improvements which could be made to increase members' understanding of the Council's performance management system and further embed the involvement of Overview & Scrutiny in the process. The main proposal was that a 'task and finish' group be established as an adjunct to the Improvement & Performance Board.

RESOLVED:

That the proposal, as detailed in the report (page 5), be agreed.

12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman of the Committee, Councillor N Wood, suggested that a special meeting of the Committee be arranged to discuss reviews which were currently being undertaken and to agree additional reviews that would need to be completed by the end of March 2009. It was noted that a press release had been placed in the local newspaper requesting members of the public to suggest any items or areas of concern that they would like the Committee to consider undertaking.

RESOLVED:

That a special meeting be arranged for Tuesday, 17 June at 5.30 pm.

13 DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

The final draft of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08 was circulated for comment. Members agreed that this item should be deferred to the special meeting in order to give members enough time to consider the report and to make any comments.

RESOLVED:

That the position be noted and that the report be finalised at the special meeting of the Committee to be held on 17 June.

14 WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08 OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FINANCE PANEL

The Chair of the Finance Panel, Councillor RA Bell, submitted a report outlining progress to date on a 'light touch' value for money review of the Council's refuse collection service.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

15 WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08 OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL

The Chair of the Performance Panel, Councillor K Coates, submitted a report outlining progress to date. It was noted that a draft report would be available once the outstanding replies to a questionnaire on value for money had been received from four of the Council's partnerships.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

16 WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08 OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SERVICES PANEL

The Chair of the Services Panel, Councillor P Ryman, updated members on the progress of the panel's work programme. The Chair confirmed that, now that the report regarding rural policing had been agreed, the panel would be in a position to commence work on those reviews agreed as part of the Committee's work programme for 2008/9.

RESOLVED:

That the information be noted.

17 WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08 OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ENVIRONMENT PANEL

The Chair of the Environment Panel, Councillor AJ Cooke, submitted a report which confirmed that, following completion of the review on fly posting, the panel had resumed work on the review 'Unauthorised Car Parking on Public Foot Paths/Use and Maintenance of Pavements/Provision of Pavements'.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

18 DRAFT 2008/09 TRANSITION PLAN (INCORPORATING THE CORPORATE PLAN AND BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN)

The Chair of the Committee referred to the above document, which had recently been circulated to members for comment. It was suggested that the author of the Plan, Assistant Chief Executive Rachel Bowles, be invited to the special meeting of the Committee on 17 June to discuss the Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Assistant Chief Executive be invited to attend the meeting on 17 June 2008 to discuss the draft Transition Plan.

19 GP SURGERIES

The Chair of the Committee referred to recent media coverage of a central Government proposal to change the way in which GP services were provided; it was noted that patients were being urged to sign a petition opposing the proposals and that the petition was available at local surgeries. It was suggested that more information was required about this issue.

RESOLVED:

a. That the Chair contact the Chairs of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees of neighbouring local authorities to ascertain whether similar concerns had been raised and whether any reviews were proposed.

b. That, if appropriate, a meeting be arranged with all interested parties to discuss the way forward on this issue.

20 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT - ICT

The Chair of the Committee referred to the above, which had been circulated as part of the agenda for the meeting of the Council's Audit & Governance Committee held on 2 June 2008. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he had conveyed to that Committee the Chair's concerns about some of the risks identified in the report, which he felt merited urgent action and, possibly, scrutiny by this Committee. The Interim Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that action had already been initiated and Members agreed that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee should closely monitor the outcome.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm.