

PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
11th March, 2011

Present:- Councillor Whelbourn (in the Chair); Councillors Austen, Gilding, J. Hamilton, Jack, License, P. A. Russell, Steele and Swift.

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor McNeely) and Councillors G. A. Russell and Whysall.

139. COUNCILLOR G. A. RUSSELL

The Committee wished Councillor Russell a speedy recovery following her recent operation.

140. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

141. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

142. CENTRAL ESTABLISHMENT CHARGES

Joe Johnson, Principal Accountant, presented the submitted paper updating the Committee on progress regarding the review of central establishment charges.

The paper covered:-

- explanation of central establishment charges
- need, under the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice, for the charges to be allocated to services in order for them to reflect the true cost of a service
- scope of the review
- review objectives
- current central establishment charges recording/processing systems and their application
- timescales for completion of the review

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues covered:-

- implications for contract/tender bids
- consultation with directorates
- IKEN system

- potential for a scrutiny review of central establishment charges
- need to widen the scope of the review
- funding options instead of applying charges

Resolved:- (1) That the information be noted.

(2) That Cath Saltis and Joe Johnston liaise regarding the possible need to widen the scope of the review.

(3) That a further report be submitted in August/September upon completion of the outstanding work, such report to include options, where possible, for better ways of working.

143. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Chairman welcomed Jessica Crowe, Executive Director, Centre for Public Scrutiny, who gave a presentation entitled "Overview and Scrutiny in Rotherham – Setting the Scene".

The presentation covered:-

- the changing landscape for local government
 - there's no money
 - Big Society
 - Self Regulation
 - web of accountability
 - what does it all mean for scrutiny?
- there's no money : it's all about the cuts
- levels of public trust are key
- "Big Society" – what does it mean
- What does it all mean for councillors and democracy
- Self-Regulation : who will be shining light on poor performance
- LGG self-regulation framework : key role for scrutiny
- Scrutiny – part of a wider web of accountability
- What does it all mean for scrutiny?
- essentially scrutiny needs to move from the committee room to the wider network
- innovative scrutiny works! – Warrington cemetery scrutiny review

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- financing, staffing and costs of the Centre for Public Scrutiny
- cuts programme not generally supported by the public
- concerns regarding the costs of involving the wider community at a time when cuts were being made
- “Big Society” and the role for Scrutiny
- scrutiny of big business
- elected members as an untapped resource gaining knowledge from others
- awareness of what was going on in the Council and need to be focused/organised in choosing what to look at
- value for money

Resolved:- That Jessica be thanked for an informative and interesting presentation.

144. REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - EMERGING FINDINGS

Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, gave a presentation entitled ‘Role and Function of Overview and Scrutiny in Rotherham – Future Arrangements’ regarding the above review undertaken by the working group.

The presentation covered:-

- Why we did the review
- Process
 - horizon scanning
 - revisiting Centre for Public Scrutiny self-evaluation
 - explore other models
 - questionnaires – all members and relevant officers
 - focus groups
 - input from University of Sheffield
- Questions
- Emerging Issues
 - scrutiny is valued but widespread view that it needs to be different
 - So what? What is impact and added value of panels?
- Recommendations
- Options for future arrangements and their benefits and risks:

- Timetable
 - Final report - PSOC 25th March, 2011
 - Cabinet - 6th April, 2011
 - Council - 20th April, 2011
 - Any new arrangements to be adopted May, 2011

Discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were covered:-

- scrutiny very successful in Rotherham and working from a good base but need to recognise the changing agenda
- essential need for increased dialogue with the Executive and partners
- essential for elected members to be active participants in the scrutiny process
- need to determine the way forward to improve the ability to scrutinise
- building on existing processes versus starting with a blank page
- possible alternative structure incorporating public accounts, public administration and scrutiny overview committees
- the model in Option 2 recommends a single health scrutiny function across all age groups
- need to plan ahead and not necessary to have the same approach for everything
- sharing resources with other local authorities
- options appraisal

Resolved:- (1) That the information be noted and the emerging recommendations be endorsed in principle;

(2) That a final report be submitted to this Committee on 25th March, 2011 based on a structure as identified in Option 2 of the presentation now received.

145. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th February, 2011 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

146. WORK IN PROGRESS

Members of the Committee reported as follows:-

(a) The Chairman on behalf of The Mayor (Councillor McNeely) reported that the latest meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel had reiterated a previous request that the effects of staff changes on services should be detailed to all Council Members.

Resolved:- That service areas be requested to provide details of the effects of any staff changes on services to all Members of the Council to facilitate awareness of the overall picture and not just the area covered by the respective scrutiny panels.

(b) Councillor Jack reported that the latest meeting of the Adult Services and Health Scrutiny Panel had considered:-

- Assistive Technology Review update
- Public Health White Paper consultation
- Winter Pressures
- Diabetes testing (practical session)

The next meeting would be considering keeping warm in later life.

(c) Councillor Austen reported that the latest meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel had been themed on community cohesion, connecting communities and equalities.

(d) Caroline Webb reported that the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Panel was involved in the consultations on reconfiguring children's cardiology services and the reshaping of children's centres.

147. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no formal call-in requests.