

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL
Thursday, 3rd June, 2010

Present:- Councillor Austen (in the Chair); Councillors Cutts, Dodson, J. Hamilton, Hughes, Johnston, Mannion, Pickering and Tweed.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Currie, Littleboy, Parker and Sims.

1. MINUTE'S SILENCE

The Scrutiny Panel held a minute's silence as a mark of respect and recognition for the recent death of Councillor Michael Clarke, Freeman of the Borough.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman gave an update on the current situation regarding co-optees to this Scrutiny Panel. Parish Council representatives were to be agreed at the Parish Network Meeting next week.

One community representative, Joanna Jones, had expressed an interest to continue being a co-optee. In light of there being no further expressions of interest for this Panel,

It was suggested that the nominations of people who have expressed an interest in joining multiple panels should be discussed at the forthcoming Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee meeting.

Resolved:- (1) That the Parish Council representatives be confirmed in due course.

(2) That Joanna Jones be approved as a nominated community representative.

(3) That the necessary course of action to seek a further community representative be pursued.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

4. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

5. PRIORITIES OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT, COUNCILLOR MAHROOF HUSSAIN

The Scrutiny Panel offered a warm welcome to Councillor Mahroof Hussain MBE, Cabinet Member for Community Development and Engagement who gave a presentation which provided a review of performance on key issues over the last municipal year and identified ongoing and future activity for the current municipal year during his term of office.

The presentation drew specific attention to:-

- Equality and Diversity and the “Excellent” accreditation achieved by the Council.
- The encouragement and participation in Local Democracy.
- Community Engagement Activities.
- Connecting Communities.
- Targeted Support Fund.
- Rotherham’s One Town One Community.
- Proud Theme Board Cohesion Priorities.
- Cohesion Projects.
- Activities and Events – Uniting Communities, Promoting Shared Values.
- Partners working together on Prevent.
- Prevent Projects.
- One Town One Community Next Steps.
- Advice Review.
- Rotherham Local Involvement Network (LINK).
- Parish Councils.
- Future Plans.

A discussion and question and answer session ensued and clarification was provided on:-

- Funding/budget provision for the One Town One Community engagement.
- Promotion and marketing of the small grant funds - to be launched in June, 2010.
- Links with the Area Assemblies and allocations of grant funding for projects in communities.
- Liaison with the Area Partnership Managers.
- Criteria and monitoring for small organisations to access the small grants fund.
- Armed Forces Day and the flag raising ceremony.

Resolved:- That Councillor Mahroof Hussain be thanked for his very informative presentation.

6. ROTHERHAM VOLUNTARY SECTOR UPDATE

The Scrutiny Panel offered a warm welcome to Janet Wheatley, Chief

Executive for Voluntary Action Rotherham, who gave a snapshot of the current position, where the voluntary and community could make a difference, key issues and the challenges and opportunities for the future.

The presentation drew specific attention to:-

- The recent survey (December, 2009).
- Size and diversity of the voluntary and community sector.
- Beneficiary groups.
- Financial position and sources of income.
- Prospects post 2011.
- Gender balance of those employed in the voluntary and community sector.
- Volunteering.
- Funding advice and support for volunteers.
- Different roles performed by the voluntary and community sector.
- Preventative and focus on early intervention.
- Specialist knowledge offered to service users.
- Contributions to the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.
- Volunteer Centre and supporting people back into work through volunteering.
- Social Enterprise Team working with those wanting to set up social enterprise activity.
- Swinton Lock Adventure Centre.
- Get Sorted Academy of Music.
- Crossroads Care.
- Voluntary and Community Strategy.
- Eastwood and Springwell United.
- Rush House.
- Apna Haq.
- Key issues for the voluntary and community sector.
- Voice and Influence.
- Service support.
- Access to a highly professional skilled workforce.
- Funding and investment sources.
- Voluntary Action Rotherham's role.
- Provision of a range of services and support for organisations to operate.
- Act as a voice for the voluntary and community sector and support to have a voice.
- Challenges and opportunities facing the voluntary and community sector.

A discussion and question and answer session ensued and information was sought on why the number of volunteers nationally appeared to be reducing, which was not the case in Rotherham.

Resolved:- That Janet Wheatley be thanked for her very informative

presentation.

7. DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

Further to Minute No. 87 of the meeting of this Panel held on 22nd April, 2010, consideration was given to a report which set out to the Scrutiny Panel its draft work programme for the 2010/11 municipal year that included the key matters for scrutiny known to date.

The report also set out several options for the Panel to consider concerning future reviews, frequency of Crime and Disorder meetings and moving meetings around the borough.

Discussion ensued on the areas suggested for scrutiny review and following debate the consensus appeared to opt initially for a review into public access to the Council's website. It was noted that a six month evaluation of the website was to be done shortly, so it was suggested that the outcome of this evaluation and possibly a half day session at Millside around the website's functionality be undertaken by agreement during August, 2010.

The Scrutiny Panel were also in agreement to taking forward a review into the community leadership role of councillors and to explore the particular problems around failing indicators relating to domestic violence and substance/drug misuse.

The Scrutiny Panel also considered how often the designed Crime and Disorder Committee should meet whilst noting the recommendation of at least once a year. This was debated at some length and the consensus was that meetings should take place initially on a quarterly basis with the Co-Chairs of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in attendance.

Reference was also made to the benefits of holding Scrutiny Panel meetings within the community. Some felt that the remit of this Panel was so diverse that it was preferable to hold the meetings more centrally, however, the idea did receive some interest.

Resolved:- (1) That the work programme for the 2010-2011 municipal year be noted.

(2) That the Council's website be considered as the initial area for review.

(3) That the Crime and Disorder Committee should meet initially on a quarterly basis with the Co-Chairs of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in attendance.

(4) That some initial investigations into the practicalities of holding meetings around the borough take place before the next meeting.

8. 2009-2010 YEAR END SRP PERFORMANCE SUITE RETURNS

Consideration was given to the information contained within the 2009/2010 Year End Safer Rotherham Partnership Performance Suite Returns.

Resolved:- That the contents of the report be noted.

9. 2009-2010 SRP YEAR END PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Consideration was given to the information contained within the 2009/2010 Year End Performance Summary.

Resolved:- That the contents of the report be noted.

10. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 22ND APRIL, 2010

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 22nd April, 2010 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

11. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE HELD ON 16TH AND 30TH APRIL, 2010

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 16th and 30th April, 2009.

Resolved:- That the contents of the minutes be noted.