

Time commenced - 6.00pm
Time finished – 7.55pm

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

13 JULY 2004

Present: Councillor Troup (Chair)
Councillors Ahern, Graves, Hussain, Jones, Latham, MacDonald,
Redfern, Repton and Travis

01/04 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Smalley and P Berry.

02/04 Late Items Introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

The Commission thanked Kate Owen, Democratic Services Manager, for all of her hard work, particularly with Scrutiny, and wished her well in her new job.

03/04 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Latham declared a Personal Prejudicial on the Roundhouse and would leave during discussions on the Asset Management Plan if the Roundhouse was specifically discussed.

04/04 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to Councillor Latham's apologies for absence being recorded under minute 108/03.

05/04 Call-In

There had been no call-in of a decision.

Items for Discussion

06/04 Performance Monitoring: Role of Overview and Scrutiny

David Armin, Head of Strategic Planning and Performance, introduced a report of the Directors of Corporate Services and Finance which made recommendations on the role of overview and scrutiny in the Council's performance management framework. The Commission was reminded that at its meeting on 8 June, concerns had been expressed on lack of opportunity for sufficient input to the Best Value Performance

Plan. At that meeting it had been suggested that commissions should look at performance data on a quarterly basis, supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officers. It was suggested that monitoring should be done on an exceptions basis, questioning one or two key areas in detail.

The Commission was asked to consider whether comments on performance management should go via the Scrutiny Management Commission back to Council Cabinet. Councillors Graves and Redfern were keen for Scrutiny Management to have a co-ordinating role. Councillor Troup was concerned that feeding back through the Scrutiny Management Commission would slow down the process and be unnecessarily bureaucratic.

Resolved

- 1. To note the role of Council Cabinet and the overview and scrutiny commissions in the Council's performance management framework.**
- 2. To confirm that the overview and scrutiny commissions should monitor the performance of the Council, giving attention to key indicators relevant to the Council priorities and objectives included in the Performance Plan that fall within the responsibility of each commission.**
- 3. To confirm that the overview and scrutiny commissions should comment on the draft priorities that form the basis of the Council's corporate and performance plans and budget planning process, taking account of performance monitoring information to identify key issues.**
- 4. To agree the co-ordinating role of the Scrutiny Management Commission.**
- 5. To agree the arrangements for the provision of performance information to support the executive and serving functions and rate the opportunities arising from the introduction of the 'Performance Eye' electronic performance information system during 2004-05.**

07/04 Topic Review

1. Over-lapping Areas of Control and Management Topic Review

Rob Davison, Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer, updated the Commission on the Over-lapping Areas of Control and Management Topic Review. The Topic Review Sub Group had met with John Cornall, Assistant Director, ICT and Performance Management, to discuss e-government issues. Further work was needed with Development and Cultural Services, but once all the relevant information had been collected, recommendations would be presented to the Commission.

It was recommended, for continuity, that Councillor Wynn should continue to sit on the Topic Review Sub Group. Councillor Troup would join the group making the membership Councillors Troup, Jones, Smalley and Wynn.

Resolved

- 1. To note the report.**
- 2. To appoint Councillors Troup, Jones, Smalley and Wynn to the Overlapping Areas of Control and Management Topic Review Sub Group**

2. Future Reviews

Councillor Troup presented a report to the Commission which recommended reviewing the Overview and Scrutiny function. He considered that this was an appropriate time to do a 'Scrutiny Health Check' as the scrutiny function had been fully functional for over two years. It was recommended that external consultants should be employed to carry out the work within an estimated cost of £10,000.

Councillor Latham spoke against scrutiny, she considered that it was an ineffective and suggested that it should be replaced by the old committee system.

Councillor Graves disagreed with Councillor Latham's concerns about scrutiny, but felt that it shouldn't be the topic of the next Topic Review. He pointed out that it was normal practice to ask members for ideas about what the commission should look at, evaluate these ideas and then make a decision.

Councillor Troup explained that he had come up with a suggestion for the Topic Review so that work could start on it over the summer. Having the election in June had meant that instead of two meetings before the summer break to discuss topics, there was only one.

Councillors Graves and Redfern made suggestions for the next Topic Review, but neither suggestion was felt to be within the remit of the Commission. It was agreed that all non-cabinet members would be invited to make suggestions on future topic reviews to Rob Davison by 16 August 2004. This would allow Rob time to analyse the suggestions before presenting them to the next meeting on 14 September 2004.

Councillor Graves went on to express his concerns about the current vacancy in Overview and Scrutiny and the imminent additional vacancy of Kate Owen's post. Steve Dunning, Assistant Director – Democratic Services, explained that the vacant Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Officer post had been advertised but it hadn't been possible to appoint. He gave assurances that the scrutiny commissions would be adequately supported whilst replacements were found.

Resolved to invite all non-cabinet members to make suggestions as to the topic of the Commission's next Topic Review.

08/04 Corporate Asset Management Plan

Chris Edwards, Assistant Director – Property Services, introduced a report of the Director of Corporate Services on the Corporate Asset Management Plan. He

explained that the Plan covered all property except schools, housing and highways assets. The Plan was based on last year's with general updating and some amendments. It included progress on property reviews, key property issues facing the Council and performance information. Appendix 3 detailed properties with little or no rent, all of these had been reviewed and the reasons for the little or no rent were still valid for most of them.

In response to a question from Councillor Graves, Chris Edwards explained that local Councillors were consulted on proposals to dispose or demolish any property in their ward. Local Councillors were involved in area property reviews views that were currently being carried out. It was suggested that Councillors needed to be informed as early as possible of any property issues in their ward.

Although there was a significant maintenance backlog, many other Local Authorities were in a similar position. It was noted that the backlog had not increased over the past year. Some progress was being made, not only through revenue and capital programmes, but also through property rationalisation.

Resolved to recommend to Council Cabinet that Councillors be kept informed of property issues in their ward.

09/04 Compact Forum

The Commission was asked to appoint two of its members to the Compact Forum.

Resolved to recommend that Councillor Lowe is appointed to the Compact Forum and that the remaining vacancy is filled at the Commission's meeting on 14 September 2004.

10/04 Customer Service Strategy

The Commission received a report from Sharon Jackson, Corporate Customer Services Manager, on the Customer Service Strategy. She explained that the Service Access Review had 28 recommendations to bring about significant change to the customer experienced over the next three years. Council Cabinet invited comments for consideration on 18 August 2004.

Sharon Jackson undertook to get back to Councillor Latham with details on the funding arrangements of the recommendations. It was noted that work had started on a Customer Charter which would summarise the customer experience and the process for complaints.

Councillor Redfern expressed her concerns about the Council's website, and in particular, the use of the website to consult. She was advised that improvements would be made to the website and that the website was only one of many methods used to consult. The timescales of improving the website would be sent to Councillor Redfern.

Resolved to recommend to Council Cabinet that before anything can be agreed

on the Customer Service Strategy more information was needed on the costing of the recommendations, the timescales for improving the website, and, the details of the technology to be used in the virtual call centre.

11/04 Forward Plan

No key decision items were identified in the July Forward Plan for consideration at a future meeting.

MINUTES END