

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON
MONDAY 6 APRIL 2009 AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL**

Present: Councillors J Holdich (Chairman), I Walsh (Vice-Chairman), J Goodwin, M Fazal, S Lane, Y Lowndes, N North, N Sandford and M Todd

Officers Present: Louise Tyers, Performance Scrutiny Manager
Alex Daynes, Senior Governance Officer
Paul Phillipson, Executive Director Operations
Helen Edwards, Solicitor to the Council
Mike Kealey, Interim Head of Human Resources
Christina Wells, Programme Director: Performance and Improvement
Mike George, Senior HR Consultant

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Seaton and Maggie Kirkbride.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

Cllr Holdich declared an interest in item 5 as members of the Greater Peterborough Partnership Executive Board. Cllrs Sandford and Walsh declared an interest in item 5 as members of the Greater Peterborough Partnership Board.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 March 2009

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2009 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Officer Key Decisions

Members of the committee expressed concern at the lack of scrutiny opportunity available regarding recent applications for and awards of council funding. Councillors identified up to £3million that could have been spent without proper scrutiny whether through the Growth Area Fund (GAF) or council budget.

Members of the committee commented that it was difficult for Ward Councillors to respond to residents' queries about funding for projects when they were unaware of the funding being allocated.

ACTION AGREED

1. To receive a report on GAF funding at a future meeting.
2. To receive reports on potential GAF spending administered by partners including Opportunity Peterborough.

5. Comprehensive Area Assessment

The committee received a presentation on the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The committee was advised that the Comprehensive Area Assessment was a new approach to assessing the performance of local public services in the area. The CAA would look at how well the council and other local partners were delivering better outcomes and improving the quality of life for local people.

Members were shown the organisational structure and the core aims of the CAA and how the Scrutiny Committee would engage with the reporting process. The reporting officer advised that a briefing session could be set up to increase the committee's understanding of CAA objectives and procedures. Members were advised that the CAA assessed the performance of the partnership arrangements involved in the delivery of the Local Area Authority targets rather than scrutinising the individual partner organisations.

ACTION AGREED

To hold a briefing session for committee members on the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

6. Councillor Call For Action

A report was submitted to the Committee detailing the Councillor Call for Action initiative. Members were advised that best practise guidance would be put in Members' group rooms.

Members were advised that Councillor Call for Action would be split into two categories; Local Government matters and Crime and Disorder matters. The initiative would deal with Ward issues and should be used as a final resort once all other avenues of action had been investigated to resolve persistent issues.

Observations and questions were raised and responses given including:

- This initiative should enhance Ward Councillor participation
- This would not compromise the ability of Ward Councillors to recommend agenda items
- Members of the public can already address committee meetings.

ACTION AGREED

1. to note the requirements of the Councillor Call for Action.
2. that work is continued to develop protocols and necessary amendments to the Constitution.

7. Performance Monitoring 2008/09 - Quarter 3

A report was submitted to the committee to provide Members with information and analysis on the performance of the council between 1 October 2008 and 31 December 2008. Members were asked to note the contents of the report and identify any areas of concern it had.

Members were advised that although the quarter 3 report contained data up to December 2008, the quarter 4 report was similar in its results so far. The reporting officer advised that the report was a summary of the results to allow easier reading. However, because of this, the level of detail previously provided was not available here.

Members were advised of some of the successes in the last quarter including the continued house building projects, the development of the University Centre and the improvements to public transport and environmental services. Observations and questions were raised and responses given including:

- Many new bus shelters were being and had been installed that required less maintenance enabling the reduction in maintenance budget.
- Feedback on all 12 environmental indicators can be provided at a later date.
- A review will be conducted on subsidised bus routes which will involve consultation with Members.
- The Solution Centre is part of the performance framework and is used to resolve ongoing issues through the Council's partnerships work.
- More involvement with schools was being undertaken to tackle teenage pregnancy rates and identify 'at risk' young people.

ACTION AGREED

1. To note the report.
2. To receive a briefing on the Comprehensive Area Assessment at a future meeting.
3. To receive information on the Solution Centre at a future meeting.

8. Human Resources Key Performance Indicators

The committee received a six-monthly HR People report including benchmarking activities and HR Customer Satisfaction Survey results from October 2008. Members were requested to note current and future HR initiatives and key performance indicators which contributed to an efficient and effective Council.

The interim Head of Human resources updated members on the officer redundancies so far that would contribute to the required 400 reduction in staff numbers. The committee was advised that the Trade Unions had been involved throughout the process and had received training with council managers to assist staff in the process.

The committee was advised that 5 members of staff were still going through the job evaluation process that started last year.

Observations and questions were raised and responses given including:

- The council does have a train to gain contract and Peterborough Regional College and Peterborough College of Adult Education are partners in this.
- Funding for NVQ level 2 was provided as some staff already possessed this.
- Schemes are in place to develop existing managers and potential managers and senior managers of the future.
- It is sometimes necessary to bring in outside staff for specific tasks.
- Results of the HR review process should be seen in 12 months and then staff potential and future managers could be identified and training applied accordingly.
- Better communication is needed throughout the organisation.
- Cooperation with the Trade Unions has improved since December 2008 following the resolution of outstanding issues.
- 400 posts would be removed over 18 months, this does not equate to 400 people.
- It is the responsibility of job agencies to carry out immigration checks.
- The use of agency staff is monitored by the procurement team not through HR.
- HR handling of grievances is improving although incidents have not fallen.

ACTION AGREED

1. to receive information on the total number of posts occupied by consultants and interim managers.

2. to receive a report at a future meeting concerning Grievances through HR.

9. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The latest version of the Forward Plan, showing details of the key decisions that the Leader of the Council believed the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would be making over the next four months, was received.

There were no items specific to this Committee to consider.

The committee was advised that the City Council would become responsible for land drainage issues (damns, water courses, dykes etc). It was recommended that a future agenda item should consider the implications of this.

A committee member raised a concern that the Sustainable Communities Act had been rejected for the Council without seeking the recommendation and opinion of the Scrutiny Committee. It was requested to receive a future report on this issue.

ACTION AGREED

1. to note the contents of the Forward Plan.
2. to receive a briefing note on the Sustainable Communities Act.
3. to receive a report on future drainage issues.

The meeting began at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.50 pm

CHAIRMAN