

At a meeting of the MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 15TH MARCH, 2012 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Tate in the Chair

Councillors G. Miller, Mordey, Walker, S. Watson, Wilson and Wood.

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that Councillor Rolph was convalescing at home after surgery. He advised that he had been asked to convey Councillor Rolph's thanks to the Committee for the cards and good wishes Members of the Committee had sent to her.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Oliver and Rolph.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 16th February, 2012

(i) Welfare Reform – Presentation

Councillor Miller commented that the Committee had asked a number of questions at the meeting in relation to Welfare Reform data and impacts and expressed his dissatisfaction that this information remained outstanding one month later.

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that Ms. Fiona Brown, Head of Transactional Services had advised that further drilling down into the analysis was required and that once this was received from the Intelligence Hub she would circulate a paper to all Members of the Scrutiny Committee.

Mr. Cummings added that he would pass on Councillor Miller's comments to Ms. Brown.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 16th February, 2012 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the removal from the 'Apologies for Absence' of the names of Councillors S. Watson and Wilson and the addition of Councillor Rolph.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no interests declared.

Policy Development and Review 2011/12: Progress on Reviews

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an update on the progress in relation to the two policy reviews being undertaken by the Management Scrutiny Committee into self regulation and illegal money lending respectively.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer briefed the Committee on the report highlighting the final self regulation workshop which took place on 5th March. Mr. Cummings referred the Committee to Appendix 1 of the report, the interim report from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), 'Accountability Works for You'. The research document set out the Centre's vision for accountability, transparency and involvement in the delivery of public services and had helped to develop a framework to help organisations going through significant organisational change, to evaluate and improve their governance arrangements.

Councillor G. Miller expressed his disappointment that the pilots did not include a Council similar to Sunderland City Council and commented that as such the results of the pilots were of limited benefit.

The Chairman asked that the above comments be fed back to the CfPS.

Mr. Cummings proceeded to update the Committee on the policy review on illegal money lending and drew attention to the comments received from the Sunderland MPs.

Members commented positively on the Shontal performance which had been very powerful and illustrated the dangers of borrowing from a loan shark.

The Chairman asked that the congratulations of the Committee be conveyed to the production company on bringing home the message about the dangers of using illegal money lenders.

Mr. Cummings advised that Councillor Rolph had asked that a report be submitted to the Committee on how the Council intends to administer the Social Fund if and when it is devolved to the Local Authority to include information as to whether it was known yet how much this would be and whether it would be ring fenced.

Full discussion having taken place on the report it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the information in the report is noted;
- (ii) the comments outlined above concerning the pilots undertaken by the CfPS be fed back to the Centre;
- (iii) the congratulations of the Committee as detailed above be conveyed to the Shontal Production Company;
- (iv) the final draft policy review reports be circulated to Members for comment prior to discussion at the next meeting in April 2012; and
- (v) a report be submitted to the Committee on the Social Fund as detailed above.

Centre for Public Scrutiny Parliamentary Seminar

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) advising that feedback would be provided from the delegate who attended the Centre for Public Scrutiny Parliamentary Seminar held on 14th February, 2012 at the meeting.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Mordey advised that the Seminar had been very worthwhile and had provided an opportunity to share best practice. It was evident that Scrutiny in Sunderland City Council was a lot more developed than in some Authorities. The second part of the Seminar had focused on the development of chairing skills. Unfortunately he had not had the opportunity of seeing a Parliamentary Scrutiny Committee in operation. Councillor Mordey encouraged Members to attend future Seminars if the opportunity arose.

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer advised that he would check the dates for future Seminars and circulate them to all Members of the Committee.

3. RESOLVED that the feedback on the Seminar be received and noted.

Scrutiny Committees Work Programmes for 2011-12

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information the variations to the Scrutiny Committee work programmes for 2011/12 and providing an opportunity to review the Committee's own work programme for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The respective Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees who were present each briefed the meeting on the work their Scrutiny Committees had undertaken over the course of the year.

Councillor Wood commented that he had enjoyed participating in the Management Committee policy review work and in particular the policy review on illegal money lending. He hoped the policy review would result in something constructive in terms of helping people not to become victims of illegal money lenders.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their update.

4. RESOLVED that the variations to the Scrutiny Committees Work Programmes for 2011-12 and to its own work programme as detailed on appendices 1 and 2 to the report be noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st March 2012 – 30th June 2012

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st March 2012 – 30th June 2012 which relate to the Management Scrutiny Committee

(For copy report – see original minutes).

5. RESOLVED that the Executive's Forward Plan for the above period be received and noted.

The Chairman closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) R.D. TATE,
Chairman.