

At a meeting of the MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 23RD JUNE, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Tate in the Chair

Councillors Copeland, A. Cuthbert, D. Forbes, M. Forbes, P. Gibson, L. Martin, Mordey, J. Scott, Walker and T. Wright.

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular those Members who were new to the membership of the former Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee, viz Councillors Copeland, M. Forbes, P. Gibson and L. Martin.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies as all Members of the Committee were in attendance.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee held on 23rd April, 2009, Part I

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Review Committee held on 23rd April, 2009, Part I (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)

There were no interests declared.

Annual Work Programme and Policy Review 2009-2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) for Members to determine the Annual Work Programme for the Scrutiny Committee during 2009-10, including the main theme for a detailed policy review.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Charlotte Burnham, Head of Scrutiny proceeded to brief the Committee on the report. She highlighted the remit of the Committee and referred Members to the table detailed at paragraph 4.2 of the report which included all topics suggested by Members along with the proposed method of enquiry, including the discussion held at the Scrutiny Conference on 11th June, 2009 during the Management Scrutiny Committee's breakout session. She also drew attention to the draft Work Programme for 2009-2010 which had been tabled at the meeting as Appendix B.

Ms. Burnham emphasised that the Committee would be involved in the ongoing development of the Council's Scrutiny function and the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan and emerging issues from the Comprehensive Area Assessment, as well as receiving quarterly performance/budget monitoring reports and managing the work of the other Scrutiny Committees. There would be an emphasis on developing working practices and procedures between the Council's Scrutiny function and its partners through the Sunderland Partnership.

The Chairman suggested that with regards to Emergency Planning and the current swine flu pandemic that a briefing be arranged for all Members to provide them with the necessary assurances that the Council's current management and joint arrangements with neighbouring Authorities are fit for purpose.

Councillor Walker advised that the Health and Well-Being Scrutiny Committee was to receive an update at its July meeting.

Mr. Mike Lowe, Assistant Head of Performance Improvement advised that Scrutiny would also have a co-ordinating role around the Local Area Assessment priorities which would be picked up and managed as an outcome.

Councillor M. Forbes' enquired as to how the approach to developing links between Scrutiny and the Sunderland Partnership would differ from undertaking a policy review.

In response, Ms. Burnham advised that developing links between Scrutiny and the Sunderland Partnership involved building a dialogue with the Partnership. She stated that the Chairman and herself had been invited to deliver a presentation to the Partnership on Scrutiny and would be working together to agree a protocol for joint working.

In response to Councillor Forbes who asked whether this would give Members adequate information as to how the Partnership operates, Ms. Burnham stated that aspects would be picked up by Scrutiny and others looked at corporately.

Mr. Lowe added that the Council undertook an annual evaluation of its significant partnerships and the information this provided would also be available and form part of the ongoing development to establish effective linkages between the Council's Scrutiny Function and the Sunderland Partnership.

Ms. Burnham stated that the IDeA Peer Review had recommended that Scrutiny Committees needed to be smart in terms of how they operated. Where there were single issue items of interest to the Committee, the value of having these items on the agenda was questionable and Members may better be served by receiving this information in an alternative way for example by a Member briefing or the information under separate cover. The Committee was recommended to focus its efforts where more value can be gained. Ms. Burnham added that the intention was for the Committee's Work Programme to retain sufficient flexibility to allow the Committee to respond to issues that emerge during the year.

Councillor L. Martin stated that he was very happy to look at the Scrutiny processes across the Council and that he had wanted a Management Scrutiny Committee to be established for a long time.

Full consideration having been given to the report, it was therefore:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) approval be given to the draft Annual Work Programme for 2009-10 except that the Committee will not undertake a policy review and will focus on the ongoing issues detailed in the table at paragraph 4.2 including development of the Council's Scrutiny Function, developing links between Scrutiny and the Sunderland Partnership, the ongoing Comprehensive Area Assessment, the Council's Budget Setting Process, the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan; and
- (ii) arrangements be made for a Members' briefing on the Council's current management and joint arrangements with neighbouring Authorities in relation to the current swine flu pandemic.

Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes 2009-2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) requesting the Committee to approve the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme of the seven Scrutiny Committees for 2009-10.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Charlotte Burnham, Head of Scrutiny referred Members to Appendix A to the report which had been tabled at the meeting and was in replacement of Appendices A to F marked copy to follow. The appendix detailed the policy review topics selected by the other six Scrutiny Committees and the topics selected to be scrutinised by Task and Finish Groups of those Scrutiny Committees and which had been submitted for endorsement by the Management Scrutiny Committee.

Ms. Burnham pointed out that a number of the topics were emerging issues from the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

In response to Councillor L. Martin who stated that he would like the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee to look at home zones, Ms. Burnham commented that she would feed this back to the relevant Scrutiny Committee. She added that she was aware that the issue of 20mph speed limits outside of schools were to be considered as part of the policy review and that she would feed in the issue raised by Councillor Martin as colleagues were in the process of scoping the policy review.

Councillor L. Martin commented on the importance of the policy review topic selected by the Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee, the need for the Council to look at how it can kick-start the economy and come up with a 'Plan B' and that he would watch with interest the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee.

3. RESOLVED that the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2009-10 be approved.

(Signed) R.D. TATE,
Chairman.