



Minutes

Name of meeting	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and time	THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2011 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs Wayne Whittle (Chairman), George Cameron, Vanessa Churchman, Heather Humby, Julie Jones-Evans, Ian Stephens, Gary Taylor, Ian Ward, Margaret Webster
Officers Present	Steve Beynon, Sharon Betts, Dave Burbage, Chris Mathews, Claire Robertson, Paul Thistlewood
Cabinet Members (non voting)	Cllr George Brown
Other members present (non voting)	Cllrs Paul Fuller, Geoff Lumley, Jerry White Mr Paddy Noctor (Co-opted member)
Apologies	Cllr David Pugh.

8. [Minutes](#)

RESOLVED :

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [28 July 2011](#) be confirmed.

9. [Declarations of Interest](#)

Councillor Gary Taylor declared a personal interest in Minute 10 as his wife was employed by the NHS.

Councillor Margaret Webster declared a personal interest in Minute 12(a) as her son in law was an employee of Wightcare.

10. [Consultation and Engagement Strategy](#)

Members considered the draft Consultation and Engagement Strategy following a request made at the last meeting. The Chief Executive outlined the draft had involved working in partnership with other public sector providers on the Island and in particular the NHS. The strategy was linked with a supporting toolkit for use by officers.

The Strategic Manager – Resident Information and Consultation advised on the range of activities that were part of any engagement or consultation process. The key principles would be used throughout the Council. A worked example was provided of the range of activities involved in the recent consultation exercise undertaken regarding changes to the waste collection service.

Members expressed some concerns as to the wording within the draft strategy which they believed was not particularly clear. It was noted in some instances focus groups were asked to look at the information contained within key consultations to assist in their clarity. The Committee identified problems that a number of older people had with the content of the recent waste collection consultation. Officers agreed that when the next phase of public consultation is undertaken steps would be taken to ensure that the content is looked at by the relevant community groups.

The Committee expressed the view that greater use should be made of elected members and also town and parish councils in helping with consultations. For key issues a specific member briefing could be held before the consultation/engagement exercise was commenced.

It was noted that feedback on each consultation was available on the Council's website. Some members were concerned as to the increasing use of the internet for Council services and consultation and the ability of all Island residents to access this.

Members considered that a forward plan of consultations would be useful. The involvement of scrutiny in looking at feedback was also discussed. .

.RESOLVED :

- a. THAT subject to ensuring that all the content is in Plain English the Consultation and Engagement Strategy be approved.
- b. THAT a standing item be included on future scrutiny agendas relating to any consultations.
- c. THAT officers consider ways of improving member briefings on key consultation/engagement exercises being undertaken by the Council.

11. **Annual Report on Complaints**

The Shared Services Manager submitted the annual report on complaints and the Local Government Ombudsman's annual review letter. An outline was given of changes to the Council's processes.

The number of complaints had decreased over the previous year. The figures for each service area where complaints had been received together with those that had been upheld were highlighted. It was noted that safeguarding had seen not only a large increase in complaints but also a major percentage of these being upheld. The Committee considered that it would be beneficial if each Scrutiny Panel looked in more detail at the complaints coming within their remits.

A large proportion of complaints were now being made through the Council's website. A particular issue was raised by a member as to the maximum number of characters that can be used in filling in a complaints form on-line and this was not highlighted.

Clarification was given of the how the Habitual and Vexatious Complainants Policy was applied.

With regard to complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman during 2010-2011 these had slightly increased. Whilst noting that one case of maladministration had been issued against the Council the Committee identified that there had also been a number of local settlements. There was no comparison with other local authorities against which benchmarking could take place.

RESOLVED :

- a. THAT the Committee and each panel consider a more in depth report on complaints made, number upheld and learning outcomes for those service areas coming within their respective remits.
- b. THAT the Head of Shared Services investigate whether there is a limit on the number of characters that can be included within the on-line complaints form so that this can be highlighted.
- c. THAT more detail be supplied to the Committee on the local settlements arising from complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman.

12. **Budget and Performance**

(a) **Budget**

The Strategic Director of Resources together with the Chief Executive gave a powerpoint presentation on budget monitoring for 2011/12 and preparation for the 2012/13 budget. Additional information was also circulated of an analysis of the cross directorate savings target and delivery plan for 2011/12 together with a projected outturn budget summary by service to 30 September 2011.

Reference was made to the actions taken in relation to the 2010/11 budget. There was a slight underspend at the end of that year due to the result of containing budget pressures and implementing a range of service changes and savings.

Full Council in February 2011 had approved a schedule of savings for 2011/12 to achieve a balanced budget. The Committee had requested a report on the progress in achieving these. The latest position at quarter 2 end was reported with projections for the remainder of the financial year. An explanation was given of the main areas of change. Members were advised that it was projected that the 2011/12 budget would be underspent by £1.8m based upon current assumptions.

The Chief Executive reported on the actions being taken with regard to the 2012/13 budget. Taking into account the projected revenue budget gap and the on-going savings there was a net gap of £3.835m. A range of potential areas for possible savings had been identified in a report to full Council in September 2011. The Committee was also made aware of the implications of the council tax freeze announced by the Government together with revisions to grant monies connected to business rates.

Within the 2012/13 budget timetable were a series of consultation meetings with stakeholders. The Committee believed that it would be useful if a scrutiny member could attend these meetings to listen to the views being put forward by stakeholders. This information would assist the Committee and panels when looking at the potential areas for further savings.

In debating the budget members received clarification on the main areas of overspend in 2010/11. The £100,000 increase in the economy budget had not yet been allocated pending the outcome of bids made to the Government in connection with specific regeneration/economic development schemes.

RESOLVED :

- a. THAT the Leader of The Council be requested to give consideration to the ability of a scrutiny member being able to attend the forthcoming budget consultation sessions.
- b. THAT each Scrutiny Panel should look in greater detail at progress with the proposed savings for 2011/12 and the potential areas to be developed for 2012/13.

(b) Quarterly Performance Management Report – Quarter 1 2011/12

The Committee had before them the performance report for Quarter 1. The Chairman raised the availability of the information for Quarter 2 which according to the Forward Plan was to have been reported to Cabinet on 8 November 2011. The Cabinet meeting had been cancelled and it was noted that the timescales required for compiling the relevant report would not have enabled a report to be compiled within the deadline for that meeting.

Members did seek an update on progress with the remodelling of County Hall project. It was noted that there several issues had to be resolved during quarter 2 which had caused some delays but it was anticipated that the project would be back on track in quarter 3.

RESOLVED :

THAT the report be noted.

13. **Review of Scrutiny Arrangements**

Members considered the Internal Audit review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements. This had identified 3 medium risks, 5 low risks and 2 advisory

matters. Arising from the review a focussed action plan had been drafted dealing with the key issues.

In discussing the content of the review a number of members that had been interviewed believed that their comments had not been fully reflected. They were advised to let the Overview and Scrutiny Officer know of these so that they could be raised with Internal Audit.

Amongst the proposed actions was the rescheduling of meetings of the Committee so that these occurred before the Cabinet. Whilst the chairmanship of the Committee was stipulated in the constitution there was no such restriction on the panels. It was intended that a role profile would be drafted for scrutiny chairs. The Committee also raised the need to look at call in arrangements due to the comments made in the Internal Audit review and asked that this be included within the action plan.

RESOLVED:

THAT the action plan be approved together with an additional action relating to a review of the existing call in process.

14. **Forward Plan**

The Chairman reported that he had been advised of a delegated decision that had not appeared in the forward plan and which could not await the publication of the next edition. He had been satisfied with the reason why it had been necessary to disapply inclusion in the forward plan and the call in provisions. The decision related to contract arrangements at White Lodge, Newport.

Members were also made aware of the contents of the forward plan for November 2011 to February 2012.

RESOLVED :

THAT the report be noted.

15. **Public Question Time**

The Chairman allowed two questions to be raised by members of the public who had not been in attendance at the start of the meeting when this item was dealt with.

Mr Steve Goodman, an island resident, asked that the relevant scrutiny panel should look at the anticipated savings to be made by the Council and the implications of expenditure on the Highway PFI. The Chairman of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel indicated that this matter will be dealt with appropriately.

Ms Tanja Rebel, an Island resident, raised a query in relation to the Riverside Centre. The Chief Executive reiterated that the Council did not intend to dispose of this asset and the dispute was with Riverside Ventures Limited.

16. [Progress Report on Recommendations](#)

The Committee was advised of progress and actions in relation to recommendations made at previous meetings. It was noted that the delegated decision regarding the capital receipts programme for 2011-14 had now been published.

RESOLVED:

THAT the progress report be noted.

CHAIRMAN