



Minutes

Name of meeting	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and time	6 DECEMBER 2007, 6.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs Muriel Miller (Chair), Ivan Bulwer, William Burt, Heather Humby, Geoff Lumley, Lady Pigot, Garry Price, Margaret Webster
Co-opted Members (voting)	Mrs Sue Poston, Mr Charles Rogers
Co-opted Member (non voting)	Mr Bob Blezzard
Parent Governor Members (voting)	Mrs Sara Sheath, Mr Adrian Smith
Officers Present	Mr Steve Beynon, Mr David Burbage, Miss Andrea Lisseter, Mr Chris Mathews, Mr Paul Thistlewood
Other Members Present	Cllrs Barry Abraham, Gill Kennet, David Pugh, Alan Wells, David Williams
42.	Notes of Previous Meeting Members requested an update on the call in of the delegated decision on Shanklin Theatre and the Committee's recommendations on the car parks enquiry. <u>RESOLVED</u> : i. THAT the notes of evidence arising at the meeting held on 13 September 2007 be agreed. ii. THAT the Committee receive an update on call-ins and recommendations made by the Committee at a future meeting.
43.	Declarations of Interest Mr Bob Blezzard declared a personal interest in Minute 44 – 49 as he was a Member of Sandown Town Council.

Cllr Margaret Webster declared a personal interest in Minute 48 as she had children in the education system.

Mrs Sara Sheath declared a personal interest in Minute 48 as she had children in the education system and was involved with education on the Island through various roles.

Mr Adrian Smith declared a personal interest in Minute 48 as he was a school governor and had a child in the education system.

Mrs Sue Poston and Cllr Muriel Miller declared personal interests in Minute 48 as they were school governors.

44. **Public Question Time**

Mr David Miller asked a question regarding the recently published Key Stage 2 results and questioned why the results published in the County Press appeared to conflict with those published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The Director of Children's Services provided a response.

Mr Miller asked a supplementary question asking whether the Council would now prefer a two tier option following their expression of disappointment on the Key Stage 2 results. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Director of Children's Services provided a response stating that it was recognised that there were problems with the transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and these would be addressed following the consultation on schools reorganisation.

45. **Appointment of Vice Chair**

Mrs Sue Poston was nominated and seconded for the position of Vice Chair of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

THAT Mrs Sue Poston be appointed as Vice Chair of the Committee.

46. **Forward Plan**

The Leader of the Council attended for this item to respond to comments made by the Committee relating to the content of the Forward Plan.

Members asked questions regarding who was responsible for the Forward Plan, the process involved in getting a decision to appear on, and consequently be removed from, the Forward Plan, and the process for decisions being changed on the Forward Plan. The Committee asked whether more detail could be included for each decision and whether a date could be added to show when an item first appears on the Forward Plan. Members requested that items be put on the

Forward Plan at the earliest opportunity. The Leader thanked the Committee for their questions and provided responses to each of the questions from the Committee. The Leader stated that he would request to see the Forward Plan before it was published as he had overall responsibility for the Forward Plan.

The Democratic Services Manager informed Members that work was currently being undertaken on the database used to produce the Forward Plan and comments made by the Committee would be taken on board.

Members asked questions relating to specific decisions on the Forward Plan. The Leader explained that the Pan Development was making good progress and that a paper would go to the Cabinet the following week regarding tourism. The economic strategy was still being developed along with the Eco Island vision and a decision would not be made on this before March 2008. The Leader stated that with regard to consultation with communities on the Boundary Review, people should make their own representations to the Boundary Commission.

The Chair asked a question regarding blue papers and the Leader stated that it was up to the relevant Cabinet Member to decide what happens to the recommendations in a blue paper when it is received.

The Democratic Services Manager hoped that blue papers could be tracked through the revised database when it had been updated. The Leader suggested that Scrutiny Committee could publish its work programme via the database.

RESOLVED:

- i. THAT the responses from the Leader be noted.
- ii. THAT the Leader works with the Democratic Services Manager to consider comments on the Forward Plan made by the Committee.

47. **Revenue Budget 2007-08**

The Interim Director of Finance attended for this item and provided the Committee with a presentation on the revenue budget.

The Interim Director drew the Committees attention to the current budget pressures which included concessionary fares and car parking income. A copy of the report on the revised revenue budget that went to Cabinet was attached to the agenda.

The Interim Director explained that there was a need to stabilise the revenue budget. If the Council made efficiency savings then more money could be accessed. Members were informed that the Council could obtain money to address issues such as the lack of resources in the planning department by either disposing of property or borrowing prudentially. Members were informed that the Council had healthy reserves.

Members were informed that there was a revenue budget gap of £6-9 million over 3 years. It was anticipated that the Council could achieve savings if planned properly over three years. £16 million was unearmarked and can be used as part of the budget strategy.

In summary the Council needed to stabilise the budget, increase investment in areas such as planning and find savings to pay for this, and develop the medium term financial strategy over the next three years.

The Interim Director agreed to provide the Chair with a copy of the presentation.

Members asked questions regarding the breakdown of figures for organisational development and clarification on what was included in doubtful debts. The Interim Director explained that a schedule could be provided.

Members raised questions relating to pressures such as landfill tax. The Interim Director explained that the Council needed a waste management strategy to address this.

Members asked the Interim Director why car parking income was down. It was thought that this was because more people were using buses as a result of concessionary fares and because of the £50 parking permit. The interim Director stated that the Council needed to look at the trends and see where the big differences were.

RESOLVED:

THAT a copy of the presentation be forwarded to the Chair along with more information on organisational development and doubtful debts.

48. Improving School Attainment

a. Response to Scrutiny Committee enquiry SC12/06

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Director of Children's Services attended for this item to provide a response to the Committee on the report and recommendations arising from the Committee's enquiry into Improving School Attainment. The responses from the Cabinet Member were attached as an appendix to the report.

Members asked questions relating to the responses received from the Cabinet Member.

RESOLVED:

THAT the responses be noted.

b. School Attainment 2007

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Director of Children's Services attended for this item.

The Committee considered details relating to school attainment for 2007. The provisional figures were attached to the report as an appendix.

The Cabinet Member stated that the Council was disappointed with the Key Stage 2 results. The Director of Children's Services stated that while it appeared that Key Stage 3 results had improved, this was a reflection of children in middle schools sitting GCSE's early and not a reflection of high schools improving at Key Stage 3.

Members questioned why Key Stage 2 results had fallen. The Director of Children's Services stated that this could have been due to teachers concentrating on pushing up Key Stage 3 results; however, there was no evidence to support this.

RESOLVED:

- i. THAT the Committee consider at their next Informal meeting whether to look at school improvement on an annual basis.
- ii. THAT the Committee add to their work plan the revised school improvement strategy at the end of January 2008.

49. **Progress Report on Other Current Enquiries**

It was noted that the waste management paper would appear on the agenda in January and that dates were being sought from Safer Communities before work could continue on the antisocial behaviour enquiry.

CHAIRMAN