

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 22 June 2005.

PRESENT

Dr. M. O'Callaghan CC (in the Chair)

Mr. J. G. Coxon CC
Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. M. J. Hunt CC
Mrs. Betty Newton CC
Mrs. R. Page CC

Mrs. J.A. Dickinson CC
Dr. S. Hill CC
Mr. J.S. Moore CC
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

1. Appointment of Deputy Chairman.

It was moved, seconded and carried:-

That Mr. Mike Jones CC be appointed Deputy Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2006.

2. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held on 20 April 2005 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

3. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been asked under Standing Order 35.

4. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

Mr. Hunt CC asked the following questions of the Chairman of the Commission:-

- “1. Could the Chairman explain why members and staff are apparently permitted to send emails without restraint, but staff are being asked not to send emails to members at personal or district council addresses or to allow forwarding to district council addresses?
2. Could the Chairman ask for a review of committee services in favour of a more modern, flexible and electronically delivered service, maintaining and enhancing respect for special needs?”

The Chairman replied as follows:

- “1. It is not the case that members and staff are permitted to send emails without restraint. Staff are governed by a strict e.communications policy which ensures that confidential or personal information is not sent via

the Internet and the general approach to communications with and by members has been modified to comply with the same principles to protect the Council's position. The issue was the subject of discussion at the Constitution Committee on 9th March 2005 where advice was received about the legal requirements upon the Council relating to information security and data protection. The Committee noted that encryption was seen as the solution to the security issue and that officers were exploring how this could be implemented at the earliest possible date.

2. I understand that Mr. Hunt has already agreed with the Chairman of the Working Party on Member Development that the issue of ICT services for members should be discussed by that Working Party in the near future and that these discussions can be readily expanded to cover how member services can be improved through the use of ICT. Mr. Hunt is a member of that Working Party. Members' services fall within the terms of reference of the Constitution Committee so if decisions are required at member level that is where they must be taken and that is the body to whom the Working Party must report. However, it is believed that, provided there is agreement across the political groups, it will be possible to make progress within the framework of the Council's current policy on Members Services."

Mr. Hunt CC asked the following supplementary question in relation to the first part of his question:-

"A number of members are still confused by the latest policy and could the Chairman explain why staff are able to send emails to officers at District Councils but not to members at their district council email address?"

The Chief Executive, on behalf of the Chairman replied to the effect that staff had to abide by the e.communications policy which required them to ensure that any emails sent via the Internet did not contain personal or confidential information.

5. Urgent Items.

There were no other items of urgent business.

6. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

7. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations made under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

8. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

9. Annual Plan (Best Value Performance Plan) 2005-06.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the draft Annual (Best Value Performance) Plan 2005/06. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions the Commission was advised as follows:

- the Annual Plan would be produced in two parts: Part 1 would be a summary of the major issues and Part 2 the Performance Indicators and Targets
- the format of the document was being reviewed and consideration would be given to making it available on CD-ROM
- in the case of a number of PI's, the information was not available as it obtained from surveys which were undertaken every three years
- that in the case of some service areas, eg Supporting People, there were no specific PI's required for inclusion in the Plan. However, the Department would have detailed statistical information on effectiveness and cost of provision.

the aim of moving on the Equalities Standard from Level 1 to Level 5 has been acknowledged as an ambitious target

- six monthly performance reports were circulated to all members.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the following performance indicators be drawn to the attention of Scrutiny Committees and that the Committees be asked to satisfy themselves that action is being taken/proposed to address the variations in performance:

Working with Partners to deliver Quality and Responsive Services

BV 117 Visits to Libraries

Achieving Excellence in Education and Learning

BV33 Youth Service Expenditure

BV159 Percentage of permanently excluded pupils offered full-time or alternative education provision of 20 hours or more.

BV181 Achievements at Key Stage 3 in Science

BV194 Achievements at Key Stage 2 in English and Maths

Making Priorities Work

LG1 Action in Biodiversity Action Plan assigned to Museums, Arts and Records Service

Creating a Better Transport System

BV102 Local Bus Services (passenger journeys per year)

b) That the Cabinet be advised that the Commission notes and welcomes the new format of the draft Annual Plan 2005-06, subject to further consideration being given to:

- (i) BV33 – Youth Service Expenditure – the inclusion of targets for 2005/06 in Part 2
- (ii) BV99 – putting the reductions in the context of the national reduction in the number of people (including children) killed or seriously injured.

10. Improving Scrutiny Practice

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning discussions at a meeting of the Scrutiny Reference Group and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen concerning the operation of the Scrutiny process and how it might be improved. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission was advised that whilst the paper did not specifically address the issue of holding the Executive to account there were a number of ways this could be done including:

- raising issues of concern or patch issues with the relevant Chief Officer;
- at the regular meetings proposed between the Chairman and Spokesmen and the relevant Cabinet Lead Member/Chief Officer;
- reviewing decisions taken by the Cabinet and their impact;
- calling-in key decisions.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals outlined in the report aimed at improving the scrutiny process be noted.

11. Scrutiny Review Panel

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the establishment of a Scrutiny Review Panel. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a Scrutiny Review Panel be established to consider Community Safety Issues.
- (b) That the Chairman and Spokesman be asked to appoint members to serve on the Panel.
- (c) That the Panel be asked to determine the scope of the review, how the task is to be undertaken, a timetable for the review and agree this with the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Commission.
- (d) That the Panel be asked to appoint a Chairman from amongst its membership.

12. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED that the next meeting the Commission be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 31 August 2005.

22nd June 2005
3.00pm – 4.35pm

CHAIRMAN

