

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 4 June 2014.

PRESENT

Mrs. R. Camamile CC  
Mrs. J. A. Dickinson CC  
Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC  
Mrs. J. Fox CC  
Mr. D. Jennings CC  
Mr. J. Kaufman CC

Mr. P. G. Lewis CC  
Mr. K. W. P. Lynch CC  
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC  
Mr. L. Spence CC  
Mr. G. Welsh CC

99. Appointment of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that Mr. S. J. Galton CC has been appointed Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2015 in accordance with Article 6.05 of the Constitution.

100. Election of Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC be elected Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2015.

101. Appointment of Chairman for the Meeting.

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. S. J. Galton CC, Mr. Shepherd CC took the Chair.

Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC - in the Chair

102. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 April were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

103. Question Time.

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

104. Questions asked by Members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

105. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

106. Declarations of Interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

107. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

108. Presentation of Petitions.

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

109. Corporate Complaints and Commendations Annual Report 2013 - 2014

The Commission considered a report of the Director Corporate Resources concerning the Corporate Complaints Annual Report, covering the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. A copy of the Annual Report, marked "Agenda Item 10", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The small rise in complaints in 2013/14 had been expected, not least due to the financial challenges the Council faced. Response times for dealing with complaints had, however, been maintained to a good standard;
- A focus would increasingly be placed on staff to ensure that "everyday" administrative tasks were carried out effectively. Many complaints made against the Council related to simple tasks not being carried out with care;
- There would be an increased emphasis on developing and maintaining open and honest relationships with customers. To this end, the Customer Relations Manager would continue to develop his role as "the voice of the customer" and was in ongoing discussions with senior management to ensure that standards of customer service and customer care were maintained and any trends or themes in the nature of complaints were reported at a departmental level;
- Benchmarking of complaints performance against other local authorities was known to be a complex area, not least because there was no single, agreed definition of what constituted a complaint applied amongst councils across the country;
- A change in one reporting category this year ("cause of complaint") meant that direct comparison with previous years was not possible in this particular area. The Director stated that he expected this category to remain unchanged in future years which it was hoped would enable comparison from 2015 onward;

- A pilot exercise had commenced which aimed to embed plain English language techniques amongst staff. If successful, this was likely to lead to ongoing training for staff;
- It was noted that a number of statistics in the Annual Report (which compared performance this year with that of the previous year) appeared to be inaccurate. The Director indicated that he would look again at the figures and issue members of the Commission with a response accordingly;
- Complaints raised by the public in relation to major highways schemes were not always escalated to the Corporate Complaints system. The Director undertook to investigate this area in more detail.

The following two suggestions were made by members for inclusion in future Corporate Complaints Annual Reports:

- Year-on-year comparisons across a longer timeframe (5-6 years) would give a better long-term picture of performance;
- It was felt that a geographical analysis of the origin of complaints would be helpful, perhaps broken down by district/borough.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Corporate Complaints Annual Report, covering the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014, and the comments made by the Commission thereon, be noted.

110. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14.

The Commission considered a report of the Scrutiny Commission concerning the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14. A copy of the Annual Report, marked "Agenda Item 11", is filed with these minutes.

The Chief Executive reported that, if approved by the Scrutiny Commission, the Annual Report would be submitted to the County Council meeting scheduled for 2 July 2014.

Members of the Commission praised the clear, concise and logical format of the document and commended the document for consideration by the County Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14 be commended for submission to the County Council meeting scheduled for 2 July 2014.

111. Date of next meeting.

It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on 11 July at 2.00pm.