

REPORT FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Lead Members: Councillors B Dixon, Mrs Y R T Clarkson, J Kane and Mrs W Metherell

Since Overview and Scrutiny last reported:

1.OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee held its meeting on 15 March 2010.

Executive Decisions

Members reviewed the Executive decisions arising from its meeting on 9 March 2010. Members were advised that a special meeting of the Executive would be held week commencing 22 March 2010 in addition to the meeting in April due to a number of business items outstanding.

Review of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements – Consultation Paper to the Executive Meeting on 9 March 2010

Members considered a report of the Overview and Scrutiny Consultant to the Executive on the review of the overview and scrutiny arrangements, which asked for recommendations on the consultation process as appropriate.

The Overview and Scrutiny Consultant advised that the Executive had received a report on 9 March 2010 explaining what progress had taken place and the outcome of the Member's workshop on 26 February 2010 and favoured options for the proposed restructure. Executive had given feedback and favoured Option 3, proposing two committees – one overview and one scrutiny. However Executive had been mindful that Option 2 of one committee had been favoured by the 10 Members attending the workshop. OSC Management heard that Executive had proposed that both options be presented to all Members so that final comments on the proposals could be received.

Executive had also submitted observations, comments and recommendations on the following;

- Political balancing, recommending that one chair be from the opposition group and one from the controlling group, with vice chairs not being from the same group as the Chair
- Chairs being appointed from Council, not the committee
- Need for training, with Chairs signing up to training and the option to remove them if they don't and job descriptions clearly stating the roles and responsibilities
- A meeting of the Remuneration Panel soon to address potential changes
- Recognition that all members need to be engaged and that an Overview and Scrutiny Forum is called once or twice a year, led by Overview and Scrutiny where it reports what it has been doing to make a difference

- That protocols are needed and individual Members comment on those over the coming weeks
- Guidance is requested on how the Executive role fits in with the new structure
- Indication on a figure for the proposed separate Overview and Scrutiny budget and how it would be utilised
- Recognition that there is a clear mentoring role and the individual strengths. A programme of shadowing and mentoring to add to Member's skill sets be built into the new arrangements

Members welcomed the feedback from Executive and it was agreed that a special Scrutiny Forum be arranged for 26 March 2010 with I&DEA in attendance, to which all Members of the Council be invited.

Members debated the options to be presented at the Forum and following discussion it was agreed that the two overall favoured options – 2 and 3 – would be presented. Members favoured keeping the options clear at this stage in the review.

The Leader of the Council clarified why the Executive had favoured option 3 and she explained that it was a clear indicator of change and represented a good opportunity for the future of Overview and Scrutiny work in the Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Consultant advised that any option could be 'tweaked' to suit the Council and either option could be adopted on a trial basis. Both options had a strong case and could be viewed as successful pioneers.

Any Members who were unable to attend the special Scrutiny Forum on Friday 26 March were invited to submit any comments prior.

OSC Work Plans

Members went through each OSC Work plan.

On the Children, Young People and Healthy Communities OSC it was felt that Members wanted to keep a watching brief on the Closer to Home programme and access to dental treatment. All other items on the work plan would be forthcoming at their following OSC meeting on 1 April 2010.

The Economic Development and Enterprise OSC gave an update on its Task and Finish Group on Business Community Engagement. Further work would be taking place prior to 15 April 2010.

The Safer Stronger Communities OSC was working on its final Task and Finish Group (Kerbside Recycling) of the municipal year and would have completed its work plan by 29 April 2010.

Future Work Programming

Members discussed the work programme for the 2010-2011 and it was agreed that it would be put together at the beginning of the Municipal year. They identified a number of issues for consideration while reiterating the importance of keeping it manageable and allowing for up and coming and urgent matters.

For consideration are;

- Albion Square/Town Centre development
- Place Survey
- Customer First
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)
- Housing
- Nuclear
- Choosing to Change
- Corporate Plan

Work will commence on putting the Work Plans together in May. All Members are invited to submit their ideas for the new work programme for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny at the beginning of the next municipal year.

Members Communication

Members discussed the item which had arisen from the meeting of the Management OSC on 15 February 2010. At that meeting Members has discussed the reforming of the Members IT Sub Group. It was clarified that Members were only in a position to recommend this. Cllr Hitchen suggested and it was agreed that recommendations be made that a new Task and Finish Group be established in the new Municipal year to address the issues around Member's communication.

2. SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting was held on 4 March 2010. Members were working towards completing the final parts of their Liveability work plan, scoped in February 2009. The purpose of this meeting was to receive presentations on some of the issues identified by the Liveability Task and Finish Group. The information received at this meeting will go towards determining the outcomes of the final report scheduled for 29 April 2010.

Site Visit of Moresby Parks Depot

Members were given a site visit of the Moresby Parks Depot by the Parks Operations Officer, the Acting Parks Development Officer and the Enforcement Manager.

Members heard and saw how the depot was arranged and what was stored and were shown several types of machinery and vehicles for use by the parks and open spaces teams. Members were told how they were sourced and how some were purchased or hired depending on value for money and where savings could be made.

Quality of Parks/Green Spaces

Members received an Update and Presentation on the Quality of Parks/Green Spaces from the Acting Parks Development Officer.

Members considered how the benefits of effective Green Spaces and Quality Parks which included working towards Beacon status, Tourism (with a large proportion of the borough in the Lake District National Park) and part of the National Standard.

Members received information on Green Flag and Green Heritage award criteria.

In terms of wider Liveability and community cohesion the focus was on 6 key areas including Quality, Design, Management, Access, Promotion and Sustainability. Sustainability should be built through into the design of service improvements through 7 areas: Ownership Design; Integration; Management; financial planning; Environmental education and Subsidiary.

Members agreed that community participation was central to the success of the Parks and Open Spaces and the Acting Parks Development Officer highlighted what they were doing to ensure this through working with schools, community groups and housing associations, keeping up with good practice, landscape design within housing estates and playground improvement. Professional advice, publicity and drawing in external funding were all vital too.

Members welcomed initiatives such as Schools in Bloom and the Millom Together We Can project which saw engagement with the public and especially school children.

Grass Management, Herbicide Management and Nature Conservation

Members received an update and presentation on Grass Management, Herbicide Management and Nature Conservation from the Parks Operations Officer.

Members heard how grass management was taking place over a longer period of the year, and how the team were carrying out more cutting between February and November.

Clarity was sought on what the service's contract with Capita covered in terms of maintaining grass verges, adopted footpaths and footways adopted by the County Council. The Parks Operations Officer also confirmed the arrangements for grass maintenance on Copeland Home estates and advised that clearing of cuttings was not part of the contract with Copeland Homes.

Members also heard how nature conservation and environmental impact are central to the way in which the team carries out its duties.

Environmental Crime – Education and Awareness

The Enforcement Manager gave a presentation on Environmental Crime. Members considered the Environmental Enforcement Mission and its focus on education and advertisement and legislation covering this area.

Members were advised of what the Enforcement team could do in terms of dealing with environmental issues and what action could be taken in the following areas: Fly-tipping and littering; Dog Fouling; Dog barking and nuisance; Stray dogs; Graffiti and fly-posting; Nuisance and abandoned vehicles; Commercial waste; Residential waste; Gypsy and Travellers and Fixed Penalty Notices.

Work plan

A Task and Finish Group has been established to consider Kerbside Recycling and it will report its findings within the final Liveability Report on 29 April 2010.

3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORUM

A Scrutiny Forum was held on Friday 26 March 2010 to which all Members were invited. This was facilitated by IDeA Member peers Glen Sanderson and Susan Dungworth.

The outcome is outlined in the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to Full Council, "Choosing to Change Programme, Governance and Leadership -Overview and Scrutiny Review". This report advises Full Council on the recent review of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, and makes recommendations following a consensus reached by Members who attended the forum.