

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 DECEMBER 2009

Present: Councillors B. Dixon, Chairman; Mrs Y Clarkson; Mrs M Docherty; Mrs E Eastwood; G Garrity; J Kane; P Whalley.

Officers: F McMorrow, Acting Chief Executive; K Parker, Acting Corporate Director Quality of Life; M Jepson Head of Legal and Democratic Services; T Capper, Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence: Councillor K Hitchen.

MGT 52/09 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2009 be signed as a correct record.

MGT 53/09 Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chair referred to the recent workshop on the future of overview and scrutiny at Copeland which would be the first in a series of such events. He then offered the compliments of the season to all present.

MGT 54/09 Resources for Nuclear and Sustainability

The Acting Chief Executive gave a progress report on the present position in relation to the nuclear industry in the Borough including new build, decommissioning and waste disposal, which was noted.

MGT 55/09 Local Strategic Partnership

The Acting Chief Executive outlined the current position on discussions on changing future arrangements for the Local Strategic Partnership in Copeland, which had taken place in the West Cumbria Local Leadership Committee. A report setting out options for future partnership arrangements, and their implications for the LSP Coordination Unit would be considered by the Executive and Council in January 2010.

RESOLVED – That a special meeting of the OSC Management Committee be held on 14 January, with all Members invited, to enable the Committee to express a view on the proposals before consideration by Council.

MGT 56/09 Comprehensive Area Assessment

The Acting Director circulated summary findings of the Audit Commission following the CAA inspection of Cumbria, full versions of which were available on the Council's website, which were noted.

MGT 57/09 Workshop Recommendations

Members reported on the workshop held on 14 December 2009. It was decided that the debate should be now widened. Consideration was therefore given to a proposed timetable of events following the overview and scrutiny workshop, which was agreed subject to the next workshop being on 11 January 2010.

MGT 58/09 Work Plan

Consideration was given to the Work Plan of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which were noted.

MGT 59/09 Executive Decisions

Consideration was given to the reports considered in public by the Executive at its meeting on 14 December 2009.

RESOLVED - that the decisions made by the Executive at its meeting on 14 December 2009 be noted.

The meeting closed at 3:15 pm

Chairman.....

Date.....

SPECIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2010 AT 4:00PM

Present: Councillors B. Dixon, Chairman; Mrs M Docherty; Mrs E Eastwood; G Garrity; K Hitchen J Kane; and Mrs W Metherell.

Officers: F McMorrow, Acting Chief Executive; A Johnson, Interim Scrutiny Consultant, and C Willoughby, Member Services Technical Support Officer.

Also Present:

Councillors A Mossop; J Bowman; D Banks; G Clements and N Williams.
S Stokes-White, Local Improvement Advisor.
C Shaw, Copeland Association of Local Councils.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Mrs Y Clarkson; P Whalley; W Southward; G Sunderland; A Holliday and Ms E Woodburn.

MGT 60/09 LSP/Community Partnerships: New Arrangements

The Committee considered the LSP/Community Partnerships new arrangements in order to make recommendations to the Executive.

The Chair introduced Sheila Stokes-White who is a Local Improvement Adviser (formerly called Neighbourhood Renewal Advisers) funded through the North West Economic Improvement Partnership in collaboration with West Cumbria to carry out a review of the West Cumbrian Partnership arrangements.

The Chair also pointed out that he had received concerns from UNISON in relation to the staff, and from the Chair of the West Cumbria Partnership Forum, Willie Slavin.

Members considered a report from the acting Chief Executive Fergus McMorrow who addressed the meeting in respect of its contents. The report was due to go to the Council's Executive on Monday, 18th January 2010 and Council on Tuesday 19th January 2010.

They heard that while the trigger for the review had been due to budgetary pressures in the first instance, indicating financial uncertainties with no sustainable way forward, there were other emerging concerns around insufficient levels of partnership engagement and a disconnect with locality working and community leadership, also picked up in the Place Survey.

It is recognised that there will still be strong working at County level, and that the thematic groups would be progressed. Effective local strategic partnership arrangements have to be put in place, which is where Sheila Stokes-White comes in.

Members were advised that the Council is the host employer for the staff, who had been through a period of consultation over the past 8 months, and that costs would be proportioned between the three Councils, Cumbria County, Allerdale and Copeland. They were also told that Allerdale Borough Council had already made their decision, in support, as had their Local Area Committee. The matter would be coming before Copeland's Local Area Committee in this cycle of meetings.

The Acting Chief Executive expressed the view that if the new proposals were agreed they would lead to an improvement in community leadership, an increased ability for Copeland members to influence decisions, directly based on locality and therefore not as diluted as previously.

Finally the principles, supported by Allerdale Borough Council, will not involve moving away from West Cumbrian working, but recognise that both Boroughs need to engage more with their local communities.

Members debated the report. Concerns around a potential perception of a division by for example Government Office NorthWest, and isolation by the County, were allayed by assurances that the two authorities would still be working together, but with a more focused agenda, as experience has shown that it is not always appropriate to work together on all things, given their diverse nature. The impact on the Sustainable Community Strategy and whether there had been an analysis of good and bad LSP workings was raised, and whether the Council had sufficient information to make an informed decision. Concerns around lack of clarity in the report and level of consultation with partners were expressed, but given Allerdale had already come to a view, Copeland needed to do so as soon as possible, as new arrangements needed to be in place by 1st April 2010. Members were advised that the normal expectation from Government was for there to be an LSP at County and District level, and it was unusual to have the joint arrangement now under review. Resource and capacity implications were raised with regard to in house support, particularly in the light of the current service level agreement. It was pointed out that there is some current duplication, and a need to re-prioritise and refocus which should address some of these concerns.

Chris Shaw a CALC representative was permitted to contribute to the debate, stating that Copeland Councillors had not engaged with the current LSP arrangements. It was suggested that this may also have applied to some extent at Allerdale. Members acknowledged the importance of the point made, considering the wider issue of feedback from outside bodies generally, the allocation of positions, the workloads of and need to support portfolio holders and other members, apolitical working, and voicing their concerns that ways must be found to address this in the future, possibly through the choosing to change programme.

The Local Improvement Adviser commented that she was currently at the information gathering stage, but thought the debate had been extremely healthy and welcome at this stage. She looked forward to pulling some draft ideas together by the end of January with input from relevant stakeholders, including overview and scrutiny members.

The Chair asked that the letter from the Chair of the West Cumbria Partnership Forum be circulated to members of the Executive so they had it before them at their meeting on 18th January 2010.

Members expressed the view that they felt happier about the reasons for change from what they heard, and the way forward.

RESOLVED – That the following recommendations be forwarded to Executive:

1. That they consider the letter from the Chair of the West Cumbria Partnership Forum in their deliberations at their meeting on 18th January 2010
2. Arising out of the debate at the Overview and Scrutiny Special Committee on 14th January 2010, that, whilst members are now better informed regarding the process relating to the review of the Local Strategic Partnership arrangements, that the work in moving forward on this new arrangement is done in collaboration with Members of Overview and Scrutiny to ensure Member involvement in the future Local Strategic Partnership, and is not left simply to officers to develop, this recommendation to be taken forward to Council on 19th January 2010.

The meeting closed at 5:45 pm

Chairman.....

Date.....