

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD

Wednesday, 5 January 2011

Present:

Councillor H Smith (Chair)

Councillors	C Meaden	G Watt
	J Hale	G Davies
	A Bridson	M McLaughlin
	S Mountney	P Gilchrist
	S Taylor	

40 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor Mrs C Meaden declared her personal interest in the work undertaken in the scrutiny review (see minute 44 post) by virtue of her daughter's employment in the Children and Young People's Department.

No further declarations were made.

41 MINUTES

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented the minutes of the meetings held on 26 October, 11 and 30 November 2010.

Further to minute 32 (3) (Scrutiny Training) (26 October 2010), he reported that the new Localism Bill could have implications to the way the Council's Scrutiny Function operated in the future and that a further report would be presented once more information had been received from the Government; and the political groups had had an opportunity to consider the way forward.

The Democratic Services Manager presented two documents for Members' consideration that had been produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) in relation to matters contained within the Localism Bill.

In response to a comment from a Member in relation to minute 32 (4), the Democratic Services Manager indicated that the request to the Health and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee to invite the Director of Public Health to provide an overview of health scrutiny to all Members of the Council, would be considered at its meeting on 18 January 2011.

Resolved –

- (1) That the minutes of the meetings held on 26 October, 11 and 30 November 2010, be approved.**

(2) That a Special Meeting of the Board be arranged for 6.00pm Thursday 10 February 2011, to give further consideration to the following documents, produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) –

**(i) Changing Governance Arrangements
– Policy Briefing 4 – December 2010**

**(ii) Localism Bill and Grant Allocation
– Policy Briefing 7 – December 2010**

42 CHANGES TO PETITIONS REQUIREMENTS

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented a letter from the Department for Communities and Local Government, addressed to the Chief Executive, in relation to changes to petitions requirements. This followed the withdrawal of the statutory guidance on the duty to respond to petitions under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and provided more discretion for local authorities to decide how to approach petitions locally.

In considering the approach to meeting the requirements of the petitions legislation, which remained in force, authorities were reminded to have regard to both the Government's commitment to remove unnecessary prescription for local authorities and the priority of cutting out all wasteful spending.

Resolved – That a further more detailed report be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

43 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - THE KIRKLEES' WAY

Further to minute 32 (26 October 2010), the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Democratic Services Manager had carried out research into the Kirklees Overview and Scrutiny function and provided an overview of its arrangements for Members consideration. In the light of the information presented, the views of Members were sought as to whether the Board still wished to visit Kirklees, perhaps to coincide with a meeting of their Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Resolved – That the proposed visit to Kirklees Council be deferred for the time being, in the light of possible changes to the Council's administrative arrangements arising from the Localism Bill.

44 ALCOHOL SCRUTINY REVIEW - FINAL REPORT

The Vice-Chair introduced the Final Report of the Alcohol Scrutiny Review that had been undertaken by a Panel of which she was a Member, together with Councillors Dave Mitchell (Chair), Sue Taylor and Ann Bridson, supported by Alan Veitch, Scrutiny Support Officer. She outlined the focus for the Review, central of which was the "access to alcohol by young people in Wirral". She commented upon the significant work undertaken by Panel Members and highlighted the main issues that had been identified in the scope document. The Panel had used a number of methods to gather evidence for the review, including meetings with key officers, visits to local communities accompanied by Youth Outreach Workers and written evidence. The final report was presented for consideration and contained eleven recommendations, which the Panel hoped would be accepted in full by the Cabinet.

Members thanked the Panel and the Scrutiny Support Officer for such a full and informative report and commented that some of the findings of the review were disturbing, particularly having regard to Wirral being ranked as 323 out of 326 local

authorities for alcohol-specific hospitable admissions for under 18's, in a study published by the North West Public Health Observatory.

Members referred to the need for resources to be allocated to address the issues highlighted in the review and commented upon the cumulative impact of the extension of openings hours and an increase in the number of licensed establishments selling alcohol, particularly in the Hoylake area, the vicinity of Victoria Park, Tranmere and low cost alcohol being sold by supermarkets across Wirral.

The Chair of the Panel, Councillor Dave Mitchell addressed the Board and thanked the officers involved for their support. He agreed that it was essential for the Council to address the problem of alcohol consumption by young people.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that the Health and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested a report on alcohol related hospital admissions to its March 2011 meeting.

Resolved –

- (1) That the contents and recommendations of the Alcohol Scrutiny Review be supported and it be put forward for nomination for a Good Scrutiny Award.**
- (2) That the Alcohol Scrutiny Report be forwarded to the Health & Wellbeing, Children & Young People and Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committees.**
- (3) That the Alcohol Scrutiny Report be presented to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting.**
- (4) That the Report be presented to the Chair of Wirral Magistrates, to the Merseyside Police Chief Constable.**
- (5) That the report be referred for consideration by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and to each of the Area Forums.**
- (6) That further reports be presented to the Scrutiny Programme Board to update members regarding the outcomes of the recommendations.**

45

WORK PROGRAMMES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Members received reports outlining the work programmes of the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which included indications of how each scrutiny topic was being dealt with, comments on progress and estimated timescales for work to be competed. –

- (a) Children and Young People
- (b) Council Excellence
- (c) Economy and Regeneration
- (d) Health and Well Being
- (e) Sustainable Communities

Councillor Gilchrist referred to the considerable work still to be undertaken by the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee and advised the Board that, having regard to the full agenda for the meeting on 31 January 2011, he had proposed that an additional Special Meeting of the Committee would be held on 2 February 2011.

Resolved – That the reports be noted.

46 **REVIEW OF SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair presented an updated Monitoring Report on the Scrutiny Programme Board's Work Programme and indicated that the matters contained within it were now largely complete.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

47 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Forward Plan for the period January to April 2011 had been published on the Council's intranet/website. Members had been invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Scrutiny Programme Board to consider, having regard to the work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within it and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

48 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved – That in accordance with section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The public interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

49 **EXEMPT APPENDIX**

Members gave consideration to the appendix to agenda item 4 – Overview and Scrutiny – The Kirklees Way (see minute 43 ante), which had been marked as exempt as it contained information related to the salaries of employees in another local authority.

Resolved – That the information be noted.
