

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD

Wednesday, 2 March 2011

Present:

Councillor	AR McLachlan (Chair)	
Councillors	C Meaden	G Watt
	J Hale	G Davies
	A Bridson	M McLaughlin
	S Mountney	P Gilchrist
	S Taylor	

54 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 Meaden declared her personal interest in agenda item 4 – Good Scrutiny Awards (see minute 57 post), insofar as it relates to the Alcohol Scrutiny Review, by virtue of her daughter's employment in the Children and Young People's Department.

55 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 5 January and 10 February 2011, be approved.

56 EQUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT - COUNCIL PROGRESS TOWARDS EXCELLENT STATUS

At its meeting held on 4 March 2010 (minute 43 refers), the Scrutiny Programme Board considered a report 'Equality and Diversity – Council Progress' and agreed to further develop the scrutiny function to incorporate the criteria of the Equality Framework for Local Government. The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported upon the Council's achievements in being awarded Level 3 of the Equality Standard in November 2009 and highlighted the role for scrutiny to ensure that the Council reached 'Excellent' status of the new Equality Framework by November 2011.

An Action Plan for reaching 'Excellent' status, developed by the Corporate Equality and Diversity Team, was currently being refreshed and the Council's Corporate Equality and Cohesion Manager gave a detailed presentation upon the measures that were required. She outlined the requirements of the new Equality Framework

and highlighted the general and specific duties contained within it. She set out the Fairness Agenda contained within the Government's Equality Strategy and referred in particular to the role of scrutiny to demonstrate that the Council had met its general and specific duties and was able to demonstrate improvements and outcomes as a result of its equality objectives. She commented also that the Council's 'Equality Watch Scheme 2009 – 2012' was due to be refreshed, to take into consideration the Equality Act 2010 and, consultation would take place across the Council, with partner agencies and among members of the Council's equality watch scheme.

In response to comments from Members with regard to the new standard report format, the Council's Democratic Services Manager indicated that the template had been agreed by the Executive Team and that all reports should now be prepared in the revised format.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress made to date with regard to the Equality Standard for Local Government be noted.**
- (2) That each of the five themed Overview and Scrutiny Committees be requested to receive the presentation by the Corporate Equality and Cohesion Manager, to assist them in further developing the Council's scrutiny function so that the Council is on course to achieve Excellent status of the new Equality Framework for Local Government in November 2011.**
- (3) That the presentation be forwarded to Scrutiny Programme Board Members.**
- (4) That the Board places on record its dissatisfaction with the new report template, in that the recommendations appear at the beginning of the report rather than at the end, and recommends that it be further revised following consultation with Members.**

57 GOOD SCRUTINY AWARDS

Further to minute 44 (5 January 2011), which supported the content and recommendations of the Final Report of the Alcohol Scrutiny Review and agreed that it be put forward for nomination for a Good Scrutiny Award, the Democratic Services Manager reported that the deadline for the submission of entries to the Centre for Public Scrutiny was 31 March 2011. However, she commented that the Alcohol Review did not easily fit any of the categories that had been announced for this year's awards and, in addition, entrants were required to demonstrate how the review had influenced decision-makers and how it had led to positive change and better outcomes. The Review was scheduled to be considered by the Cabinet on 17 March 2011 and would be considered in due course by Area Forums, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and other partners. However, at this early stage, it was not possible to demonstrate its impact or outcome for positive change and the views of Members were sought as to whether or not the Alcohol Scrutiny Review should be submitted for a Good Scrutiny Award at this time.

Resolved –

- (1) That an evaluation be undertaken later in the year, in order to assess the impact of the Alcohol Scrutiny Review and an update report be presented to a future meeting of the Board.**
- (2) That, subject to the outcome of the review, the Alcohol Scrutiny Report be considered for submission to next years Good Scrutiny Awards.**

58 FORWARD PLAN

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Forward Plan for the period March to June 2011 had now 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 its work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

Members commented that the Plan contained too many items, many of which had been on it for some time, without having been reported to the Cabinet. In addition, there was no information in respect of items within the Plan and no indication of reporting timescales.

Resolved – That Chief Officers be requested to consider reducing the number of items within the Forward Plan and provide more information in future, in respect of Plan key decisions.

59 WORK PROGRAMMES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Members received reports outlining the work programmes of the Council Excellence and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees and noted that they had not been provided for Children and Young People, Economy and Regeneration, and Health and Well Being.

Resolved – That the reports be noted.
