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SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD

Wednesday, 4 January 2012

Present:

Councillor A Hodson (Chair)

Councillors	S Mountney	P Hackett
	P Glasman	T Smith
	A Bridson	A Sykes
	RL Abbey	KJ Williams
	C Blakeley	

20 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.

No such declarations were made.

21 MINUTES

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2011. He advised Members that at its meeting held on 17 October 2011 (minute 48), the Council had approved the recommendations of the Scrutiny Programme Board to amend the Constitution, to streamline the call-in process (minute 12 (8 September 2011) refers).

A Member referred to the summary of complaints that had been made under the Members' Code of Conduct and to the detailed information in relation to outcomes and costs that had been sought from the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management (minute 13 refers). The Director indicated that a summary report had been presented to the Standards Committee (minute 3 (29 September 2011) refers). He proposed to circulate this to Members by email, together with information in relation to costs and would include it on the agenda for consideration at the next meeting of the Board.

Resolved –

- (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2011 be received and the decision of the Council in relation to the call-in process be noted.**
- (2) That information in relation to the outcomes and costs associated with complaints made under the Members' Code of Conduct be circulated to Members by email, and included on the agenda for consideration at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Board.**

22 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented Policy Briefing 12, dated September 2011, from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) in relation to Equality Impact Assessments, which were an intrinsic part of the requirement under the Equalities Act 2010 for public bodies to ensure that people were not subject to discrimination and to take positive steps in the policy development process to build an understanding of the needs of people from different minorities. The briefing explored how scrutiny itself could use Equality Impact Assessments to examine Council and partner policy changes and how scrutiny could mainstream an understanding of equality into its own work, in order to become more effective.

The Chair, and other Members, expressed concern that the CfPS Policy Briefing documents that were included on the agenda (see also minute 23 post) had not been accompanied with covering reports from officers, to highlight those parts of the documents which were of particular relevance to Wirral and specifically to the function of the Scrutiny Programme Board. The Head of Legal and Member Services undertook to ensure that the reports that had been requested by Members would be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Board.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Policy Briefing 12 in relation to Equality Impact Assessments be noted.**
- (2) That a summary report from officers on the content of the Policy Briefing, and its implications for Wirral, be presented to the next meeting of the Board.**

23 NEW LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK - UPDATE

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented Policy Briefing 14, dated December 2011, from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), which examined the provisions of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, the Localism Act and the Health and Social Care Bill, which was expected to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2012. The briefing drew some conclusions from the new legislative framework about the future of scrutiny and would be complemented by a forthcoming revision to the CfPS guide to scrutiny legislation, 'Pulling it Together', to be published in early Spring 2012.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the timescale for Wirral changing its Committee arrangements, the Head of Legal and Member Services indicated that the matter had been considered by the Democracy Working Party and that he would circulate the most up to date information, if available, to Members by email. Members referred also and sought information in relation to the Police and Crime Panel, a body to be made up of local councillors from all authorities in the Force area, which would be set up under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Policy Briefing 14 in relation to provisions of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, the Localism Act and the Health and Social Care Bill be noted.**
- (2) That a summary report from officers on the content of the Policy Briefing, and its implications for Wirral, be presented to the next meeting of the Board.**
- (3) That the most up to date information from the Democracy Working Party in relation to changing Committee arrangements be circulated to Members by email.**
- (4) That information, if available, in relation to the establishment and operation in Merseyside of the Police and Crime Panel be also circulated to Members by email.**

24 FORWARD PLAN

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Forward Plan for the period January to April 2012 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 the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

In response to a comment from a Member, the Head of Legal and Member Services indicated that the Forward Plan identified those key issues, which would form the basis of reports to future meetings of the Cabinet. Its publication enabled Members to identify any matters within their remit which would benefit from pre-scrutiny or to recommend matters for inclusion within the work programmes of the themed Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

25 WORK PROGRAMMES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented the work programmes of each of the themed Overview and Scrutiny Committees for Members information and consideration, in accordance with the Board's terms of reference to review and co-ordinate the scrutiny work programme so as to avoid duplication. The terms of reference also allowed the Board to identify matters for scrutiny which were cross-cutting or strategic issues not covered by other committees.

Members commented that it should not be the role of the Scrutiny Programme Board to determine or influence the work programmes of other Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Scrutiny Work Programmes be noted.**
- (2) That a report be presented to the next meeting upon the role of the Scrutiny Programme Board.**

26 REVIEW OF SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Programme Board was requested to consider whether any matters should be added to its Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year, having regard to its terms of reference and available timescales.

A Member referred to the Final Report of the Alcohol Scrutiny Review, which had been presented to the Board on 5 January 2011 (minute 44 refers). The focus of the Review was the 'access to alcohol by young people in Wirral'. It had been widely circulated and Members requested an update upon the outcome of the recommendations contained within it.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Work Programme be noted.**
 - (2) That a report be presented to the next meeting of the Board upon the outcomes arising from the Alcohol Scrutiny Review.**
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