

Review Committee – 5 June 2007

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **5 June 2007** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr Mrs L M Cox

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn

Cllr Mrs S A Harper

Cllr T Livings

Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr P R Robinson

Cllr Mrs C A Weston

VISITING

Cllr C I Black.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren – Chief Executive

P Gowers – Overview and Scrutiny Officer

J Bostock – Principal Committee Administrator

174 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

175 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Cllr Mrs S A Harper was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

176 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

In opening this, the first meeting of the Review Committee for this municipal year, the Chairman welcomed all Members and made a number of observations, including that:-

- The Committee's membership represented a mixed length of service and experience that can be brought to bear on the Committee's work. In its previous year of operation the Review Committee had found communications skills training to be extremely beneficial for Members to carry out the Scrutiny role and it would be good to see a similar training session this year.
- The Committee has a collective responsibility to undertake the Overview and Scrutiny function for the Council. For the Committee to be effective it should be seen to hold the Executive to account and contribute to the improvement of performance and delivery of public services. Arising from the Scrutiny process, the Committee can make recommendations to Full Council or Executive Board or Area

Committees and it should report annually to Council and make recommendations for the future work programme.

- In determining its own work programme the Committee should be realistic and undertake projects that are manageable within the resources available. It is important not to attempt to tackle too many issues at the same time and to be able to retain the flexibility to address urgent issues if they arise.
- If obtaining information from witnesses/advisers it is important that Members are not seen to be pre-judging issues/giving their own opinions and that witnesses/advisers are made to feel as comfortable as possible.
- The final report on the Anti-Social Behaviour Review undertaken by the Review Committee during the last Municipal Year is being prepared for submission to the July meeting.

177 OVERALL WORK PROGRAMME AND METHODOLOGY

The Committee gave consideration to its work programme and associated methodology.

There was general consensus that, initially, it would be appropriate to commence work on those areas already suggested by the Council. The possibility of undertaking work in other areas could be considered in four months time when the Committee would have a developed picture of workload.

It was recognised that, as with the previous year, some review subjects lent themselves to the smaller project team approach. It was noted that:-

- work on planning appeal procedures would help develop Member understanding of the Appeals process and include benchmarking against other Authorities.
- Detailed scoping forms would be brought forward to the next meeting.
- Commencement of the review of Mental Health Services/provision is subject to Essex County Council agreeing to delegate powers to the Review Committee. An initial outline scoping form/project plan had been submitted to the County.
- The community can benefit when the District Council learns about services offered by other organisations.
- The review of the new political structure would include monitoring of the Performance Plan.
- The Head of Environmental Services had offered the services of his team with regard to the global warming item.

During discussion on the review of local health services/provision reference was made to the value of identifying how aware individuals are of available services and to ascertaining the views of home carers. Reference was also made to the possibility that District Authorities will find that, in the future, they have some responsibilities for addressing issues of global warming.

In terms of the way forward for each review area it was

Resolved

- (1) That Councillors Mrs H L A Glynn, P R Robinson and Mrs C A Weston, form a project team (project leader to be determined) to consider planning appeal procedures and the effectiveness of different forms of representation.
- (2) That the approach on the review of mental health services/provision, specifically with respect to the emerging new facility at Rochford, be finalised at the next meeting by which time confirmation will have been received that the County Council has delegated authority to the Review Committee. In the meantime, Members to advise the Overview and Scrutiny Officer of any areas that they would like seen written into the project's scope.
- (3) That Councillors Mrs L M Cox and Mrs S A Harper form a project team (Project Leader to be determined) to consider the operation of the new political decision making structure.
- (4) That the review of the implications of the global warming agenda on Rochford District and the role of the District Council and its communities might play be a whole Committee project. In the meantime, Members to advise the Overview and Scrutiny Officer of any areas they would like to see included in the project's scope. (HICS)

178 CONTRACT DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

On a motion, moved by Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn and seconded by Cllr P R Robinson, it was:-

Resolved

That the Chairman of the Committee (Vice-Chairman to deputise) be appointed to represent the Review Committee in the overview of the refuse collection and recycling contract process.

179 TRAINING

The Committee concurred with the observation of the Chairman that, if possible, it would be appropriate for all Members of the Committee to attend a course on communication skills for scrutiny delivered by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) trainer utilised during the last Municipal Year.

Review Committee – 5 June 2007

Resolved

That arrangements be made for all Members of the Committee to attend a training session on communication skills for scrutiny delivered by RADA. (HICS)

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.