

ITEM

ITEM

Council – 15 July 2010

ANNUAL REPORT OF SCRUTINY AND THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

Report of the Member Support Services Manager

Statutory Powers: Local Government Act 2000

Financial Implications: None

Purpose:

To report to Members on the working of Scrutiny and the Policy Development Groups during the 2009/2010 municipal year and to make recommendations for future work programmes and amend working methods where appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council RESOLVES to note the work programmes of Scrutiny and the Policy Development Groups.

Background

1. Council Procedure Rule 6.7 states that:-

“Scrutiny and the Policy Development Groups must report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future programmes and amended working methods if appropriate”

2. Set out at Appendix A is an outline of the issues considered by Scrutiny and each Policy Development Group (PDG) during the 2009/2010 municipal year.

Scrutiny

3. As part of its remit, Scrutiny may:
 - (a) review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the Executive and/or council officers both in relation to individual decisions and decisions made over time and may question members of the executive and/or officers whether generally or in relation to specific decisions, initiatives or projects;
 - (b) review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
 - (c) make recommendations to the Executive and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
 - (d) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address Scrutiny and local people about their activities and performance; and

- (e) question and gather evidence from any person with a relevant knowledge, expertise or responsibility (with their consent).
- 4. During the 2009/2010 municipal year, Scrutiny invited seven external organisations to attend meetings to provide Members with the opportunity to review and comment on the services they provide. In each instance, Scrutiny appreciated their attendance and the resulting discussions raised a number of areas either of concern, or to be followed up. As a result, letters have been sent by Scrutiny on behalf of the council, to the appropriate organisations.
- 5. Scrutiny has also considered a review of internal services including ICT on two occasions, Corporate Services, Financial Services and Street Sweeping, and regular monitoring of the Leisure Centres, Sport and Healthy Lifestyles contract with Tone Leisure.
- 6. At its meeting of 2 July 2009, Scrutiny received a report which gave an overview of the Call In procedure (minute ref. SC.05/09 refers). A full discussion took place and as a result Scrutiny recommended to Council that Scrutiny Procedure Rule 18 Part (a) be slightly amended, to allow for regular monitoring of the operation for provisions relating to Call In. The Constitution was further recommended for amendment following the item Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 (minute ref. SC.06/09 refers). This amendment to the Terms of Reference in the Constitution (Part 2, Article 6), was to enable Scrutiny to discharge the functions of a Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 7. Also at its meeting of 2 July 2009, and following a request from the Programming Panel at its meeting of 26 March 2009, Scrutiny reviewed the Annual Treasury Management Report, and endorsed the Treasury Management Strategy for 2009/10 (minute ref SC.03/09 refers).
- 8. The Scrutiny Group have also begun to undertake shared meetings with their colleagues at West Devon for issues which are of relevance to both authorities. On 5 October 2009 a joint informal meeting of Scrutiny took place to hear a presentation from the Independent Chair of the Devon Safeguarding Children Board on the Serious Case Review Process in Devon.

Policy Development Groups

- 9. As part of their remit, the PDG's may:
 - (a) assist the Council and the Executive in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of current provision, performance and policy issues;
 - (b) instigate research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues, possible options and the development of policy;
 - (c) regularly involve members of the Executive and occasionally members of other bodies of the Council and officers to find out their views on issues, proposals and policy affecting the area;

- (d) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address Scrutiny and local people about their activities and performance;
 - (e) question and gather evidence from any person with a relevant knowledge, expertise or responsibility (with their consent);
 - (f) consider reports from any individual councillor on matters relevant to the terms of reference of the group to enable the views of constituents and other organisations to be taken into account; and
 - (g) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.
10. The Prosperity PDG has provided a forum for early debate on fees and charges for outdoor recreation, waste services, car park and pannier markets and the Dartmouth Lower Ferry. The Group has also received regular monitoring reports on the operation of the Dartmouth Lower Ferry.
11. Of several items received by the Environment PDG, at the meeting of 14 October 2009 the review of the Stokenham Pilot (minute ref. EPDG.14/09 refers), was presented. This item included the attendance of witnesses and, following a detailed discussion, recommendations were made to the Executive. The Environment PDG has also taken a lead on the establishment of task and finish groups (e.g. Beach Management and Dog Control Orders), in order to look at specific areas in more detail.
12. The Community PDG has received a number of items, many of which relate to the Council's top corporate priority of affordable housing. In addition, updates have been received from Cllr Baverstock in his role as Member Champion for Children and Young People, and the work of the Public Spaces Working Group has been monitored.
13. Scrutiny and the PDG's have also received presentations on how each service is run from the appropriate Head of Service within their remit. This process will have provided Members with a detailed analysis of each service and will have aided understanding during the budget setting process.
14. Scrutiny and the PDG's also had a valuable input into the 2010/11 Budget Setting Process. Each Group had a meeting solely to consider the Budget process. Wherever possible, their recommendations were incorporated into the Executive's final recommendations, which were subsequently adopted by Council at its meeting on 4 February 2010.

Review of the Overview and Scrutiny function

15. At the meeting of Scrutiny on 23 July 2009, the Chairman and Vice Chairman both commented on courses they had undertaken, one of which identified other methods of working, and the other advised of funding available to undertake an independent review (minute ref. SC.16/09 refers).

Following a successful bid for funding, a review of our Overview and Scrutiny function was undertaken by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Their evaluation report has now been received, and the outcomes and recommendations are currently being discussed at each of the Scrutiny and PDGs. All comments will be forwarded to a future meeting of the Political Structures Working Group.

Role of the Programming Panel

16. The Programming Panel (which comprises of the Chairmen or Vice Chairmen of Scrutiny and each Policy Development Group and the Leader of the Council or Deputy Leader of the Council) meet on a regular basis to oversee the workloads of the five bodies to ensure efficiency of the scrutiny and policy development process.
17. Attached at Appendix B is the current future work programmes for Scrutiny and the PDG's. This is a 'rolling' programme which has evolved from the policy development review programme and Member and officer requests for items to be considered.

Risk Assessment

Risk	Mitigation
Impact on corporate priorities, targets and commitments	Co-ordination of the work of the PDGs by the Programming Panel ensures that the Council retains a focus on its corporate priorities.

Conclusion

18. Whilst full Council has no authority to amend the work programmes of either Scrutiny or the PDGs, the annual report does provide an opportunity to inform Council of issues which are coming forward for consideration. Similarly, it also enables discussion to take place on current working methods.

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Council
15 July 2010

Darryl White
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Background Documents:
The Council's Constitution