

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SCRUTINY
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON MONDAY, 18 DECEMBER 2006**

MEMBERS

* Cllr S M Fairman - Chairman

* Cllr B C Evans - Vice-Chairman

* Cllr G J Fielden

* Cllr G Rothwell

* Cllr P W Hitchins

* Cllr J W Squire

∅ Cllr C M Pannell

∅ Cllr J T Pennington

* Denotes attendance

∅ Denotes apology for absence

Officers in attendance:

All agenda items - Strategic Director (Resources);
Item 6 (see SC.45/06 below) - Corporate Improvement Officer;
Item 7 (see SC.46/06 below) - Internal Audit Manager.

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:
Cllrs D W May, M F Saltern and R O Yonge

SC.43/06 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny held on 23 November 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SC.44/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but none was made.

SC.45/06 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Consideration was given to a report which presented the Council's performance against selected national and local indicators for the period July 2006 to September 2006.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- (i) the production of a joint tourism guide with Teignbridge District Council which presented an opportunity for cost savings;
- (ii) an increase in the number of abandoned calls, exceeding the 5% target. Members were advised that this had been largely as a result of the restructuring of the household waste collection rounds, which increased the volume of calls during September

and into October and, consequently, the number which were abandoned. However, call volumes had now returned to normal levels. A Member requested that the indicator be revised to show the number of successful calls rather than those abandoned;

- (iii) a slight dip in performance in September for the processing of new housing and council tax benefit claims. Members were advised that the implementation of the new benefits system had resulted in a 7-week backlog in the processing of claims. However, it was anticipated that performance levels would return to normal in January 2007;
- (iv) a Member's concern that some residents were unaware of how to dispose of shredded paper. For clarification it was noted that this could be disposed of in either the dry recycling bags or brown bin. It was suggested that this be published in the next South Hams magazine and that Members be encouraged to raise this at Town / Parish Council meetings;
- (v) the impact of staffing issues within the Development Control service on the determination of minor planning applications within 8 weeks. Members were advised that this would be resolved shortly;
- (vi) the target to complete 100 new affordable homes per annum. Members discussed the problem of site availability in the context of achieving this target. It was requested that this indicator be presented in conjunction with CR19 – the number of affordable homes being developed on site;
- (vii) the target for the cost of delivering the household waste collection service and concerns that this was for both urban and rural authorities for which the cost varied significantly. It was thought that the target represented the upper quartile performance of rural authorities only, but clarification would be sought.

Members were strongly of the view that where the performance of the selected indicators was not on target, supporting notes should be provided by officers in all instances to explain why this was the case.

RESOLVED

That:-

1. Scrutiny has commented on the unaudited performance for quarter 2 (July to September 2006) against selected national and local indicators for the current year ending March 2007 and found them to be satisfactory subject to comments outlined above;

2. the indicators selected for monitoring at a corporate level are suitable.

SC.46/06 **INTERNAL AUDIT – REPORT ON PROGRESS AGAINST THE 2006 / 2007 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN**

Members considered a report on the principal activities and findings of the Internal Audit service against the 2006 / 2007 Internal Audit Plan.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- (i) the provision of additional support to the Internal Audit service by the European Grants Officer which was estimated to be 80 days for the 2006 / 2007 year. Members were advised that this was an under estimation and the level of support provided was likely to exceed the 80 days quoted;
- (ii) the implementation of the SX3 Council Tax system which had been delayed pending improvements to its functionality. This had now happened so implementation had taken place. There was no additional cost to the Council as this was one component of a broader system previously purchased;
- (iii) the inclusion of the Internal Audit service in phase 1 of those to be considered for joint delivery with Teignbridge District Council. Members were advised that a business case would be developed for a formal shared delivery arrangement. Should this not be viable, closer working relations would still be pursued;
- (iv) use of 34 days of unplanned work against 59 budgeted. Whilst this meant that there showed a surplus of unplanned work days at the end of November, this was only a problem for the service if future unexpected activities in which it would be involved were of a significant nature.

It was then:-

RESOLVED

That, in accordance with section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item of business as the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act is involved

Members considered a summary of the main issues raised for all audits by service area where a final audit report had been issued.

RESOLVED

1. That Scrutiny has considered the progress made against the 2006 / 2007 Internal Audit Plan and has commented on the summary of issues arising as outlined above;
2. That the public and press be readmitted to the meeting for the remaining items of business.

SC.47/06 **AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OF SCRUTINY**

Members considered a schedule of future items for consideration.

In particular, Members wished to see progress being made with the proposed item on "Liaison with Devon County Council on integrated transport and areas of responsibility for street cleaning."

(Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and finished at 6.00 pm).

Chairman