

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SCRUTINY  
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON WEDNESDAY, 19 DECEMBER 2007**

**MEMBERS**

\* Cllr C M Pannell - Chairman

\* Cllr K J Baldry - Vice-Chairman

\* Cllr J H Baverstock

\* Cllr P H Cook

\* Cllr G J Fielden

\* Cllr R D Gilbert

\* Cllr J W Squire

\* Cllr J A Westacott

\* Denotes attendance

Also in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman:

Cllrs N A Barnes, B E Carson, T J Hewitt, P W Hitchins, R M Lawrence, D M O'Callaghan, J T Pennington, M F Saltern and R J Tucker

Officers in attendance for all items: Member Support Services Manager.  
Item 6, 7, 8 and 9 (minutes SC.31/07, SC.32/07, SC.33/07 and SC.34/07 below refer): Chief Executive;

Item 8 (minute SC.33/07 Below refer): Improvement Officer;

Items 8 and 9 (minutes SC.33/07 and SC.34/07 below refer): Improvement Programme Manager.

**SC.29/07 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Scrutiny held on 18 October 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**SC.30/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting, these were recorded as follows:

Cllr R D Gilbert declared a prejudicial interest in item 6: Dr David Radford, Chairman of Devon PCT and Ms Jenny McNeill, Director of Strategic Commissioning and Colin Pincombe (minute SC.31/07 below refers) by virtue of his wife indirectly working for the PCT. Cllr Gilbert left the room and did not take part in the debate on this item.

SC.31/07

**DR DAVID RADFORD, CHAIRMAN OF DEVON PCT, MS JENNY MCNEILL, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND COLIN PINCOMBE, NON – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DEVON PCT.**

Ms McNeill gave a presentation which informed Members of work that was being undertaken to improve communication between the Devon PCT and the community as it had been demonstrated that better decisions were made when there was greater understanding of a situation. The establishment of Local Involvement Networks (Links) was a national change and built upon the NHS duty to engage with the community. This change would result in the abolition of the six Devon Primary Care Trust Patients Involvement Forums in March 2008.

The role of Links was to promote and support involvement in the commissioning of services. Scrutinising Health and Social Care Services, would enable Links Members to visit and inspect premises.

During discussion, reference was made to:

- a) whether having one PCT had improved service delivery. Members were informed that it was still too early to provide specific examples of where service delivery may have improved. However, it was noted that, discussions were taking place for future strategic planning, which would incorporate issues raised through patient surveys. Managing to secure a financial balance would impact upon future services;
- b) patient surveys. Members were assured that patient surveys would still be undertaken despite the aim of Links being to liaise with local community groups;
- c) staffing levels of Links. Assurances were given that with the aid of a three year Government grant, administrative support would be provided. Findings of pilot projects clearly demonstrated that administrative support was essential;
- d) cost of patient transport. Members were informed that patient transport used to be operated by the Ambulance Trust but was often open to abuse leading to discussions as to who was eligible for free transport. Transport to and from Derriford Hospital was complicated by the hospital serving both the Devon and Cornwall PCTs, resulting in a tariff system. Assurances were given that those responsible recognised there was a problem and were working hard to address it;
- e) the apparent lack of NHS Dentists. Members were informed that the vacant positions were slowly being filled. However, the PCT could only influence contractors to open NHS dental surgeries. It was suggested that, the District Council could also help by identifying potential premises for surgeries;

- f) the levels of savings generated since the re-organisation of the PCT. Members noted that the savings so far was estimated at approximately £4 – 5 million. It was anticipated that this, in due course, would benefit service delivery;
- g) perceived improvements for the residents of the South Hams by having a centralised PCT. Members were informed that the benefits to date were better paid and trained staff, a strengthened public health team and the preservation of the community hospital structure;
- h) the minor injuries unit at Kingsbridge. Members were informed that due to refurbishment, the minor injuries unit at Kingsbridge hospital had been closing at 5 pm instead of its normal hour of 10 pm. Members were reassured that upon the completion of the refurbishment the opening hours would return to normal;
- i) GP appointments. Members were informed that GPs were contractors and therefore the NHS could not enforce the way that they operated their appointments. However they were being encouraged to trial a model that would mean 50% of appointments could be pre booked in advance and the other 50% could be same day appointments.
- j) a non group Member questioned whether there were measurable targets that could aid the assessment of performance in the future.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked the PCT representatives for attending the meeting and suggested that a yearly update would be of benefit.

SC.32/07

**CHIEF INSPECTOR TONY STEER OF DEVON AND CORNWALL CONSTABULARY**

Chief Inspector Steer provided a brief update on the issues that were raised at the Scrutiny meeting of 23 November 2006 (minute reference SC.40/06 refers). Firstly, the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) had been completed, with PCSO's proving to be a great asset to the Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

It was noted that the public satisfaction levels had risen, however anti-social behaviour was still proving to be of concern to the public. The satisfaction levels could be increased further with more time taken to inform victims of crime and what progress had been made in dealing with their cases. It was felt that PCSO's and Beat Managers would be a good method for providing such feedback. The fear of crime remained higher than actual recorded levels of crime, especially within rural areas. Members were informed that Police Officers were providing advice on crime prevention and workshops whilst also taking practical steps such as targeting specific areas of crime, for example violent crime, in order to try and alter this perception.

Chief Inspector Steer then proceeded to inform the Group that the strategic policing sectors had been realigned. This was due to the patterns of criminality such as individuals committing offences in Kingsbridge whilst living in Plymouth. The realignment had resulted in the creation of a dedicated Detective Inspector for the South Hams as well as 7 Neighbourhood Beat Managers and 9 PCSO posts for the Western area of the South Hams (Kingsbridge and Ivybridge areas). The Eastern area (Totnes and Dartmouth areas) of the South Hams benefited from 9 Neighbourhood Beat Managers and 8 PCSO's.

The Chief Inspector was encouraged by PCSO's and Street Scene staff undertaking joint partnership training which was considered the first step to the Police and District Council working closer together.

During discussion, reference was made to:

- a) Police Officers being required to demonstrate competent swimming ability. The Chief Inspector admitted that this was a topical issue which had recently been inflamed further by some mis-information. Members were reassured that new recruits were required to undertake swimming test and life saving certificates in their first two years of service. PCSO's were slightly different but these arrangements were under review with a decision expected in March 2008. There was also a trial in Totnes and Dartmouth whereby police vehicles would contain 'throw lines' that could be used to rescue people from rivers;
- b) the PCSO's having done valuable work in talking to groups of youths who congregated on Friday and Saturday evenings. However some residents had expressed concern at the apparent inconsistency when dealing with illegal parking. Chief Inspector Steer informed Members that he would feed this concern back to those responsible;
- c) some residents in rural areas feeling that they received less police time than those in the more urban areas. The Chief Inspector was unable to provide a comparison of figures on the number of Police Officers being on duty in the urban and rural areas, but would provide the figures following the meeting. However, if officers were allocated based on crime levels, the numbers would be significantly lower in the South Hams. The Force recognised the difficulties that the area was faced with for example travelling distance;

- d) the speed in which a road was reopened following an accident. Members were informed that if medical treatment could be administered at the scene then recovery rates are far greater. Also, in a collision it was not always obvious whether a criminal offence had been committed. Therefore every effort must be made to contain the scene and preserve any evidence. Officers endeavoured to keep traffic flowing, however, in the case of the A38 there were no immediate diversion routes;
- e) CCTV in Kingsbridge. A Member requested the Chief Inspectors support for Kingsbridge Town Council's bid to get the CCTV camera system monitored by the central system at Teignbridge District Council. The Chief Inspector would explore the idea with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and Teignbridge District Council;
- f) the lack of available transport for PCSO's. Members were informed that a review of the fleet distribution was being undertaken. There was also an agreement in place with the bus companies allowing PCSO's to travel for free whilst on duty. PCSO's could also use their private vehicles and reclaim for their mileage.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Inspector for attending the meeting and providing Members with answers to their concerns.

**SC.33/07 EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2006-2007**

Members considered a report which provided an overview of progress made with respect to the Action Plan within the Corporate Equality Scheme. The report provided a context to the statutory obligations contained within the Local Government Equality Standard (LGES) covering the six strands of equality and confirmed the Council's commitment to obtaining Level 2 achievement as set out by the ESLG.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) the cost of the handbook for overseas workers. Members were informed that the handbook was paid for by sponsorship money and therefore was cost neutral to the Council.
- b) appendix B to the circulated report, and in particular 'staff disability'. Members were informed that the Council did not operate a 'quota' policy and recruited the best person to undertake the job regardless of any disability.
- c) a Members concern that breaking down the ethnicity into categories would racialise the document. In response it was noted discussions had been held with Devon Equalities Partnership which concluded that by categorising ethnicity, the Council was recognising the inherent differences.

**RESOLVED**

That the progress against the Council's duty to promote equalities be noted; and

**RECOMMENDED**

The Executive be **recommended** that the updated Equality Impact Assessment Timetable and Corporate Equality Scheme Action Plan be approved.

SC.34/07 **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – PROGRESS REPORT**

Members considered a report that informed Members of achievements against selected Performance Indicators for Quarter 2 within 2007/08.

During discussion, reference was made to:-

- a) whether the Performance Indicator ABC7: 'total number of households accommodated in B&B,' should be a pro-rata figure rather than yearly. Members were informed that the lower the figure the better and that to provide pro-rata figures would be difficult due to seasonal variations;
- b) Performance Indicator BV12: 'working days lost due to sickness absence.' Members were informed that steps were being taken to ensure that levels were controlled and monitored. Some Members felt that the figures were a little misleading, officers agreed to seek clarification and report back to Members.

**RESOLVED**

That the Part A, Part B and Part C on the performance against the national and local indicators which form the Council's Balanced Scorecard, set out in Appendix A of the presented report, for the 2007/08 performance indicator year be noted.

SC.35/07 **NEEDS OF YOUNGER PEOPLE – PROGRESS UPDATE FROM THE SCRUTINY SUB-GROUP**

Members considered a paper that was tabled at the meeting. The Group discussed whether the work should be undertaken by the Children and Young Peoples Champion solely. This was subsequently agreed and the Member Champion advised that he would provide regular updates.

**SC.36/07 SCRUTINY SHADOWING ROLES**

Members provided an update on the progress of their respective shadowing roles. Cllr Gilbert informed the Group that he had received his first report from Cllr Hewitt since his appointment to the Executive and advised that the waste overspends had been reduced with efforts continuing to reduce it further.

**SC.37/07 AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OF SCRUTINY**

Members requested an annual update from the PCT, along with the opportunity to scrutinise the process undertaken by the Standards Board, when allegations had been made against a Member. On the matter of the Standards Board, officers agreed to do some research and report back to Scrutiny at its next meeting on 17 January 2008.

(Meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.10 pm).

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Chairman