

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Tuesday, 4 April 2006

Present:

Councillors:

P W Burrows (Chairman)
A R Giles (Vice-Chairman)

D J Cox
Mrs C E Drew
Mrs F I Newth
Mrs L A Roden

A J Toye
Dr H W Waterworth
Mrs E E Wragg

Also Present

Councillors:

Miss V Ash
T A Cope
G P Chamberlain
P A Diviani
Miss J M Elson
C Gibbings
S Hughes

R Mudge
J B Nicholson
A W J Reed
T G Reeves
Mrs P A Stott
A J Wilkinson
S Wragg

Apologies:

Councillors:

Mrs K J Bamsey
J Glanvill
H J Jeffery
Mrs A E Liverton
A T Moulding
Mrs M A Rogers

The meeting started at 7.16pm and ended at 8.12pm

***23 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 21 February 2006 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

24 Performance Management Framework

Consideration was given to the draft service plans for 2006/09 which had been previously considered by the Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees and the Executive Board. The Heads of Service had each identified the three main priorities for their service

Communities directorate service plan

The Corporate Director – Communities outlined the three main service priority areas for Environmental Health and Health Equalities, and Health and Social Inclusion. The Heads of Service were also present to answer any queries.

24 **Performance Management Framework** (Cont.)

Members noted the three priority areas for Environmental Health and Health Equalities which were:

- 1) Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act – new provisions for dog controls, noise, light and insect nuisance and general anti-social behaviour issues.
- 2) New food safety legislation and Food Standards Agency initiative “Safer Food Better Business”, changing the approach to food safety enforcement.
- 3) New Housing legislation – licensing houses in multiple occupation and changes in the way housing conditions were assessed.

It was reported that a Task and Finish Form was about to be set up on anti-social behaviour. It was noted that the remit of this TaFF would also involve Streetscene Services and Exmouth Town Council. Members were asked to note that the dog wardens were also community wardens. Only six months remained on their contract, therefore the TaFF would need to meet without delay.

The Head of Environmental Health and Health Equalities commented that the new housing legislation on houses in multiple occupation applied to very specialised premises. Most well-known landlords had already been informed of the new housing legislation. It was estimated that there were fifty to eighty of these properties within East Devon, but the exact number would only be known when the landlords applied for the licenses. East Devon District Council had a general responsibility to those in houses of multiple occupation which was wider than the legislation.

The three priority areas for Housing and Social Inclusion were as follows:

- 1) Implementing the recommendations of the Housing Stock Options Appraisal.
- 2) Providing more affordable housing to meet priority housing needs.
- 3) Maintaining tenants and leaseholders homes at or above the Decent Homes Standard, and continuing programmes of property improvement and adaptation.

Central Services directorate service plan

The Corporate Director – Central Services outlined the three priority areas for ICT, Legal and Member Services and Organisational Development. It was noted that Organisational Development were heavily involved with job evaluation. The Customer Service Centre programme, was also a major project involving Organisational Development and ICT. Supporting the progress of the new community was a major priority for the legal service. There were large council projects in which the support services played an important part to ensure that they were completed successfully.

The three priority areas for ICT were as follows:

- 1) The process mapping and re-design of all Council processes as part of the Customer Service Centre programme – significant effort from many areas of the Council would be needed to achieve this.
- 2) Integration of back office systems with front office systems – this would be a complex and time consuming task and could take two years to complete at current resource levels.
- 3) Standardisation of the LLGP (corporate local land and property database) as the single property database in use across the Council – likely to result in a recommendation to purchase a replacement GIS system (Geographical Information System).

24 **Performance Management Framework** (Cont.)

The three priority areas for Legal and Member Services were as follows:

- 1) Supporting major regeneration or development projects, and the delivery of affordable housing.
- 2) First full year of the Licensing Act 2003 – including enforcement and review procedures
- 3) Supporting good governance and democratic engagement within the Council, and externally including the town and parish councils.

Members noted the three priority areas for Organisational Development were:

- 1) Implement new pay and grading structure for the Council to ensure it met the national modernisation agenda in relation to public sector pay June 2006 – September 2006.
- 2) Provide Human Resources, recruitment and training to deliver the Customer Service Centre programme.
- 3) Co-ordinate four statutory customer satisfaction surveys to be undertaken during 2006/07.

Service planning template

Consideration was given to the service planning template circulated with the agenda. Members recognised the importance of the document but felt that the plans could be streamlined. The Corporate Director – Central Services advised that the main function of the service plan was to help teams understand its key functions and key strategies, and how these related to the Council's priorities, together with the resources required for their implementation. The service plan also helped Members to understand how the services related to the Corporate Strategy. A third function of service plans was to assure any inspector that there were robust plans in place for the Council to achieve what it said it would.

Members felt that it would be impossible to streamline the service planning template through the Committee and that a small, brief Task and Finish Forum should be set up to examine the template and produce suggestions for the formatting and production of service plans. The TaFF would consist of three councillors, the Corporate - Director Central Services and Karen Jenkins as a Head of Service representative. The Portfolio Holder for Resources would also be invited to attend the TaFF.

Service planning framework and template

The Corporate Director – Central Services outlined the two major changes proposed to the service planning framework and template. The current timetable and a possible alternative had been circulated with the agenda papers. These proposals would also be considered at the next meeting of the Executive Board, with the Scrutiny Committee's comments reported verbally to the Executive by the Corporate Director – Central Services. It was noted that the Corporate Director – Central Services would also discuss the Scrutiny Committee's comments with the Chairman of the Overview Committee.

The first change would be to move the quarterly monitoring of service plan improvements and Performance Indicators (PIs) from the Executive Board to the Scrutiny Committee. The second would be to involve the Scrutiny Committee in the service planning process at a much earlier date (September as opposed to January, at present). This would allow the Scrutiny Committee to debate key priorities for the years to come for the service plans and have a meaningful input into the process.

24 **Performance Management Framework (Cont.)**

Members debated the merits of holding a joint meeting with the Overview Committee when initially considering the service plans. Members felt that a joint approach would be preferable and that a combined meeting should be held as the issues were the same for both committees. When considering service plans and the medium term financial plan it was important not to have too many items on the agenda so that reasonable time could be devoted to these issues.

RESOLVED that a small, brief Task and Finish Forum be set up to examine the service planning template and produce suggestions for the formatting and production of service plans. The TaFF to consist of Councillors P W Burrows, Mrs F I Newth and Dr H W Waterworth; the Corporate - Director Central Services; and the Head of Organisational Development as a Heads of Service representative. The Portfolio Holder for Resources would also be invited to attend the TaFF.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) that the Executive Board monitors Corporate Strategy measures and Performance Indicators, and the Scrutiny Committee monitors service plan improvements quarterly;
- (2) that during September the Scrutiny and Overview Committees consider the service plans in light of the Corporate Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Plan and make recommendations to the Executive Board;
- (3) that consideration of (2) above be held as a joint meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committees.

*25 **Topics for discussion at future meetings**

Members were encouraged to suggest topics to consider at future meetings. The following suggestions were made:

- To call in the Chairman of the Environment Think Tank and Head of Planning and Countryside Services following concerns on the lack of progress in providing a gypsy traveller site in East Devon, as per ODPM guidance. They would be requested to discuss and explain the current situation.
- To discuss our elderly populations's access to services.

Members felt that there was a need for a mechanism for reviewing performance. This was done on a quarterly basis by the Executive Board, and it was being proposed that the Scrutiny Committee take on this quarterly monitoring process under the revised service planning template and framework. However, members felt that there was a need for performance review on a more frequent basis than quarterly and requested a monthly agenda item to consider and review performance figures. The Corporate Director – Central Services explained that Executive Board monitored selected PIs monthly and that all councillors received a copy of the Executive Board agenda. The Executive Board members did a lot of work behind the scenes and the Corporate Director - Central Services suggested that the Scrutiny Committee ask, through herself or the Scrutiny Chairman, that the appropriate Portfolio Holder/officer be invited to attend a meeting to discuss any particular PIs and issues. A request was then made for a reminder to be included on every Scrutiny Committee agenda to notify the Director of Central Services if members felt that there were any particular PI areas which needed addressing.

The Chairman invited Members to bring additional suggestions to the next meeting of the Committee.

*25 **Topics for discussion at future meetings**

RESOLVED

that future Scrutiny Committee agendas include an item to notify the Director of Central Services of any particular Performance Indicator areas to be addressed.

Chairman Date.....