Monday 7 July 2008 at 6.00pm



Scrutiny Committee

MEMBERSHIP:-

Councillor MARSDEN (Chairman) Councillor STANLEY (Deputy Chairman), Councillors BELSEY, GOODWIN, Mrs HEAPS, PURCHESE and Miss WOODALL.

1 Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2008 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

2 Declarations of Interest.

None were received.

3 Annual Monitoring Report 2007/08 and Annual Programme.

The Committee considered the report of the Scrutiny Co-Ordinator providing Members with information regarding the Scrutiny Committee's activities for 2007/08; in addition the report gave Members the opportunity to consider the Annual Programme for 2008/09.

The report provided a factual review of items that had been discussed over the past year. Members noted the suggested continuing improvements for the Scrutiny process and further development of the programme detailed within the report.

Members were reminded that a meeting had been held with the members of the Committee including the substitute members. Councillors were given a list of all previous reviews and were requested to 'brainstorm' some ideas for the forthcoming year. To aid the process all Members were provided with a suggested review form providing the Chair and Deputy Chair with as much information as possible to assist in selecting the reviews. The deadline for submission of these forms was 20 June 2008.

At the time of writing the report only three of the 11 suggestions detailed within the report had been scoped by members. Members noted that not all of the items suggested would be reviewed. The items would be dealt with in a number of formats from full scrutiny reviews, to briefing notes, reports and potentially presentations to the Committee.

The committee considered the list of suggested items and assigned the various suggestions as follows;

- Green Infrastructure Vandalism of / verges This would be considered at the September 2008 meeting of the committee.
- Homelessness this item was removed in the light of the update received under the Performance Indicator item.
- Private Renting This required further information from Councillor Mrs Hough.
- DDA Staff awareness This would be passed to the Council's Human Resources Department for action.
- Tourism Promotion / Marketing of Eastbourne The relevant Director and Cabinet Spokesperson would be invited to the Scrutiny monthly meeting in July 2008 to develop a 'seminar' style meeting of the Scrutiny Committee later in the year.
- Recycling / waste stream. The relevant Director and Cabinet Spokesperson would be invited to the Scrutiny monthly meeting in July 2008 to develop a 'seminar' style meeting of the Scrutiny Committee later in the year.
- Airbourne Admission Charging. This would be discussed at the next Scrutiny Monthly meeting in July 2008.
- Underage / Street drinking / Youth facilities This item required further scoping by Councillor Mrs Heaps – the deadline for this was set at 22 July 2008, which coincided with the Scrutiny Monthly meeting.
- Planning Enforcement This item required further scoping by Councillor Mrs Goodall - the deadline for this was set at 22 July 2008, which coincided with the Scrutiny Monthly meeting.
- Affordable Housing This required further information from Councillor Mrs Hough.
- Staffing Restructure this would be carried over to 2009/10 Annual Programme.
- Traffic Enforcement within Eastbourne This required further information from Councillor Stanley.

RESOLVED: (1) That the monitoring report be noted.

- (2) That the continuing improvements outlined in 5.0 be agreed.
- (3) That the draft Annual Programme of routine work outlined at Appendix A be agreed.

4 Audit Task Group.

The committee considered the report of the Principal Auditor providing members with a draft risk based audit plan for 2008/09.

Members were advised that the current Strategic Audit Plan covering 2007-2010/11 had only been valid for one year. However there was a move within the auditing profession to full risk-based auditing which was being championed by the external auditors (PKF) and towards which all best practice internal audit departments were working.

The premise of process was to take high risk areas from the Strategic Risk Register and also for Internal Audit to conduct their own risk assessment of all the functions of the Council. Only high and medium risk areas would form the audit plan which would be regularly and formally reviewed and reported on quarterly to the Audit Task Group. A new plan would be

produced each year and no strategic four year plan would be formulated. Any changes to the plan would be reported by exception to Corporate Management and Scrutiny. Only when high risk audits had been completed would any medium risk areas be considered for auditing.

Attached to the report was a proposed plan developed using the process described and included audits of main systems that PKF required to be audited annually until they felt that controls were adequate at which time they could be audited according to their risk level.

Members noted that a proposed restructure was currently with Human Resources. Once the restructure had been completed and the posts filled it should be possible to complete all the high risk areas within the financial year. However, as no decision had yet been made with regard to this restructure it may be necessary to employ agency staff in order to ensure that the audit reviews were completed.

Some areas within the Council had not been audited previously and because of this they had been allocated as high risk as their true risk level was unknown and untested. However, covering these areas was beyond the time available from the current level of audit staff. These audits had therefore been shown as supplementary to the main plan. If all other high risk audits were completed in the year then work would begin on the ones included in the supplementary list.

The revised plan was agreed by the Audit Task Group on 5th December 2007 and by the Corporate Management Team on 25th March 2008.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the annual Risk-Based Audit Plan be approved.

5 Performance Indicators – End of Year – 2007/08.

The committee considered the report of the Assistant Director – Strategy and Democracy informing Members of the Council's annual performance as measured by National Best Value Indicators.

Members were advised that the Council reported on a number of statutory Performance Indicators each year as set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and administered by the Audit Commission. This was the last year that the Best Value Performance Indicators would be measured in this form as the new National Indicator Set replaces it for 2008/9 onwards.

The Council's Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny Committee monitored the performance of a selection of the PIs throughout the year in order to keep track of the Council's overall performance in key areas and highlighted any areas of concern as they arose - the full list at year-end prior to the data being returned to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Most of the performance targets being used had been set locally taking into account past performance, national performance data, local issues and any statutory targets that the Council must strive to achieve.

Of the 76 Performance indicators being reported this year (including 1 local indicator), 43 are being reported as on target and 28 were below target with the remaining 5 not having meaningful local targets applied. Compared to the outturns for 2006/7 performance had improved in 33 indicators and worsened in 18 cases. The remainder had stayed the same were not suitably comparable to the previous year.

Compared to the performance quartiles of 2006/7 for All England authorities, the Council had 13 indicators within the top quartile, 13 in the second, 12 in the third and 23 shown as bottom quartile. This was a purely indicative measure as it compared one year's performance to a previous year's standards and the 2007/8 quartile ranges were different. Members noted the off target indicators as detailed within the report.

Members had requested to give further information on the following targets;

- a) BV109b and BV109c Speed of Decision Making Mr K Hilson was in attendance to answer Member's questions. A report was distributed at the meeting regarding the performance of the Planning department further detailing the reasons for the decline in performance including changes to the government requirements for planning applications, staff vacancies and staff redundancies.
- b) BV213 Housing Advice Service Preventing Homelessness Mrs S Burlumi was in attendance to answer Members questions. Members were advised that there was now a new way of working, using services commissioned by the Council using a Government grant of £130,000 with CRI which included support for young people, and Court representation and also engagement with private landlords. The Members congratulated the department on their efforts.
- c) BV126, 127a, 127b and 128 Domestic Burglaries, Violent Crime, Robberies and Vehicle Crimes Mr B Gough was in attendance to answer members questions. Mr Gough outlined the methods used to reduce crime and development of neighbourhood panels and working groups. The Members congratulated Mr Gough and the Crime Reduction Partnership for their efforts.

RESOLVED: That the annual performance of the Authority be noted.

The meeting finished at 7.35 pm.

Councillor Marsden Chairman