

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 26 January 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Ball, Vice-Chair.

Councillors Browne, McDonald, Nicholson, Ricketts, Stevens, Thompson and Wildy.

Co-opted Representative: Jake Paget.

Apology for absence: Doug Fletcher, Co-opted Representative.

Also in attendance: Councillor Mrs. Stephens, Giles Perritt, Lead Officer, and Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 2 pm and finished at 4.30 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

88. MINUTES

With the permission of the Chair, the minutes of the budget scrutiny meeting on 12 and 17 January, 2011, were tabled for Members' consideration.

Agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 24 November and 22 December, 2010, and 5, 12 and 17 January, 2011.

89. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

The Chair reported that Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service had invited scrutiny to participate in consultation on its Corporate Plan. Members welcomed the invitation and noted that, as the consultation time-frame was 12 weeks, the Board would have to meet before the next scheduled meeting in March.

Agreed that –

- (1) the matter would be considered by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, subject to their availability;

- (2) one of the provisional dates would be used commencing at 1 pm instead of 2 pm, to allow for consideration of a call-in should one arise.

(In accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Chair brought forward the above item of business because of the need to consult Members).

90. **TRACKING DECISIONS**

The Board noted the schedule of previous decisions made. Concern was expressed at the delay in progressing post-decision scrutiny on the 'Final Sign Off of Devonport Regeneration Company Partnership (DRCP) Succession Strategy'. Whilst it was noted that the item was listed on the Board's work programme, no date had yet been identified.

91. **CALL-INS**

Members were aware that there had been two call-ins since the last meeting, namely –

- (a) Transfer of Freehold for Nomony Children's Centre
- (b) To agree to the Disposal of Land at Rocky Park Road

With regard to (a) above (minute no. 72 refers), Members were advised that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People was due to meet with ward members next week.

There were no further call-ins to report.

92. **URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Board noted that urgent executive decisions had been taken in regard to –

- Proposals for Changes to Planning Application Fees in England – Consultation Response
- Local Decisions: A Fairer Future for Social Housing Consultation

Discussion took place on the fact that the decisions had been urgent because of narrow consultation margins. Members were concerned that they had not been invited to participate in the consultations and that, in light of the change in Government, there could be many more of these consultations over policy changes in the pipeline. Members were reminded that the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel received regular updates on Government Policy and these concerns should be addressed there.

Agreed that a copy of the consultation response relating to 'A Fairer Future for Social Housing' Consultation be circulated to Members of the Board.

93. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Board noted that there had been two additions to the Forward Plan since the last meeting, namely –

- (a) Award of Contract for the Renewal of Insurance Policies
- (b) Award of Leisure Management Contract

With regard to (b) above, discussion took place on whether the scope of the consultation was wide enough along with the budgetary implications of undertaking consultations in general. Members heard that the focus of the consultation was limited to those directly affected by the operational management of the Life Centre. They were further advised that whilst there was no specific budget set aside for consultations, with most departments building the cost into officer time, there was a consultation officer within the Development and Regeneration Directorate. After some debate on the matter, it was concluded that, as progress of the Life Centre was in the work programme of the Customer and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, further questions or concerns should be directed there.

94. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Board considered recommendations to Cabinet received from the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel which were agreed as follows –

Minute 58 – Allotment Service Overview

- (1) that the panel support all efforts being made to find additional land for allotment plots and recommend all channels are explored including direct discussions with public and private land owners e.g. the National Trust;
- (2) that officers establish the funding available in the medium term to contribute towards the allotment service from capital receipts and Section 106 monies;
- (3) that rents are reviewed on an annual basis but any rent increase should not be such to disadvantage enterprise and other groups using the allotments (for example schools, community groups, groups with special needs, those on low incomes and also making good use of the neighbourhood profiles);
- (4) that a review of the plot sizes is undertaken.

Minute 59 – Review of Policing and Safety following Plymouth Argyle Football Match against Exeter City

- (5) that Ward Councillors should be consulted by the Safety Advisory Group;
- (6) that a review of the traffic management at the park and ride car park is undertaken on Plymouth Argyle match days and consideration is given

to a proposal to open the bottom end of the car park on match days to relieve congestion.

(Councillor Wildy, having attended the meeting of the Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, voiced her concern that recommendation (6) did not accurately reflect what was agreed and therefore did not offer her support to the proposal).

95. **BUDGET AND CORPORATE PLAN SCRUTINY 2011**

The Chair and Lead Officer presented for consideration the draft report arising from scrutiny of the Budget and Corporate Plan 2011. Members were advised that positive feedback had been received, both from the Executive and senior management, in regard to the professionalism with which the process had been undertaken and the high degree of challenge which had been demonstrated.

Discussion then turned to the report content and recommendations. Whilst the majority of the Board were happy with the report, the Labour Councillors on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board were concerned that some of the budget proposals did not fully support the areas of 'raising aspiration' and 'reducing inequalities' within the Corporate Plan. They considered that some of the delivery plans in the budget had the potential to disadvantage both families and vulnerable people in Plymouth. They believed that amendments to two of the recommendations, together with the inclusion of an additional recommendation, would enhance the scrutiny report and, if adopted, may help to alleviate many of the areas of disadvantage within this budget. Councillor Wildy therefore proposed the following amendment with regard to recommendations to the Corporate Management Team –

- R2.2 add 'that this is produced and is available to Members **before** the budget setting at Full Council';
- R2.11 add at end of final sentence 'and links to neighbourhood profiles are demonstrated in Service Delivery Plans';
- R2.14 add new recommendation 'Profiling of households should take place prior to final determination. These profiles should be carried out annually and made available to Members as part of the preparatory work of the budget setting process'.

The proposal, having been seconded by Councillor McDonald, was put to the vote and declared lost. At Councillor Wildy's request the vote was recorded as follows -

For: Councillors McDonald and Wildy

Against: Councillors Ball, Browne, James, Nicholson, Ricketts and Thompson

At the suggestion of the Board, a few minor amendments were then made to the main body of the report as follows –

- P. 12 paragraph 8 – delete the word 'agreed';

- P. 15 paragraph 13 – delete the word ‘noted’ and replace with ‘were informed of’;
- R2.10 renumber second 2.10 to 2.11 and then change remainder of numbering to run consecutively.

Agreed the Budget and Corporate Plan Scrutiny Report 2011.

(Councillor Stevens was absent for the vote on the proposed amendment).

96. **QUARTERLY SCRUTINY REPORTS**

The quarterly reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and scrutiny panels were submitted for consideration. The Chair reported that there was no report this time from the Support Services Panel as the meeting had been moved due to budget scrutiny commitments. Members commented on the different reporting formats and styles and praise was given to that of the Growth and Prosperity Panel which was particularly eye-catching. With regard to the report of the Customers and Communities Panel, Councillor Ball highlighted that the attendance statistics were incorrect and that both Councillors Martin Leaves and Mrs. Bragg had attended twice.

The quarterly reports were noted and it was agreed that future reports should be consistent in terms of how Member attendance was reported, the Growth and Prosperity reporting format being the preferred option.

97. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

(a) To consider and approve work programmes for each of the Panels, to include a progress update from each of the Chairs

The work programmes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and scrutiny panels were submitted for consideration and approval. The Chair again drew Members’ attention to the fact that there was no report from the Support Services Panel due to budget scrutiny commitments. Each of the Panel Chairs presented their work programmes, highlighting any pertinent issues.

With regard to the Children and Young People’s work programme, concern was expressed that no further date had been set to monitor progress with the School Building/Capital Programme. It was suggested that the matter be considered sooner rather than later and a date for consideration be identified within the work programme as soon as possible.

Councillor Nicholson drew Members’ attention to the inclusion of a new item on the Growth and Prosperity work programme relating to Localism. He highlighted that some elements of the Bill would fall outside the Panel’s remit and these would need to be picked up elsewhere. Councillor James commented that any cross-cutting issues identified would be managed through the Board.

In considering the work programme of the Management Board, it was noted that Data Sharing between Agencies was closely related to the item referred from Audit

to Support Services on ICT related problems with the Devon Audit Partnership.

Councillor Ball reported that Recycling Performance had been added as a new work programme item. He suggested that if Members had any questions on this, or indeed any other subject matter on the work programme, that they would like raised with officers when items were being considered, they should contact him before the meeting and he would be happy to raise on their behalf. The Chair, commended this suggestion and stated that it should be applied across the Board.

Reference was again made to budget scrutiny and concern was expressed that written answers to some of the questions raised had still not been received.

Agreed that –

- (1) a date for consideration of the School Building/Capital Programme be identified by the Children and Young People's Panel as soon as possible;
- (2) Data Sharing between Agencies be removed from the work programme of the Management Board and added to that of Support Services;
- (3) should members have questions relating to items on panel work programmes, they be raised with the respective Chairs direct;
- (4) written responses to the questions raised during scrutiny of the budget be sought as a matter of urgency.

(b) To consider and approve Project Initiation Documents

Agreed the PID for Transforming Community Services.

(c) To receive Task and Finish Group Updates/Reports

The Board welcomed Councillor Mrs. Stephens who was in attendance to present the Young Carers in Plymouth task and finish group report. Members were advised that –

- (i) the small task and finish group had worked well together on what had been an emotional review and that they had, at times, been quite shocked by what they had heard;
- (ii) the review had focused primarily on –
 - reviewing relevant parts of the Carer's Strategy, along with the provision of support and services provided
 - ascertaining how effective current strategies were in identifying young carers
 - reviewing the effectiveness of multi-agency working in identifying support for young carers

- considering what could be done to improve identification and support for young carers
- (iii) young carers were not getting the recognition nor support they required;
- (iv) the review had been a starting point in raising awareness of the plight of young carers and much more work would be needed to ensure the relevant support mechanisms were established and maintained.

Members commended the excellent work of the task and finish group and offered their congratulations on the comprehensive and excellent quality of the scrutiny report submitted.

Agreed that the Young Carers in Plymouth report be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration, subject to the following -

- (1) inclusion of an additional recommendation to the effect that –
- “the Council uses its links through the Local Strategic Partnership to seek comments on the report from other agencies, such as the family court, probation, Children’s Trust, etc;”
- (2) amendment of recommendation 11 to the effect that –
- progress be reviewed after six months by the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Panel.

98. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.