

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD ON MONDAY 6 DECEMBER 2010 FROM 7PM TO 8.25PM**

*Present:- Norman Jorgensen (Chairman), Michael Firmager (Vice-Chairman),  
Alistair Auty and Jenny Lissaman*

*Also present:-*

*Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer  
Madeleine Shopland, Senior Democratic Services Officer*

## **PART I**

### **36. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 9 November 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **37. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Alistair Auty, Chris Bowring and Stuart Munro.

Councillor Bowring did not attend the meeting because he had not participated in the scrutiny review.

### **38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **39. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

### **40. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

### **41. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY COMPANIES AND THE EXECUTIVE TRADING AND ENTERPRISE SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Panel considered the draft report of the review of governance arrangements of local authority companies and the executive Trading and Enterprise Sub-Committee.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:

- Members felt that the tense of the report should be amended in parts to add emphasis.
- Various minor amendments were made.
- With regards to the frequency of updates to Members on the activities of the Company the Panel agreed that updates should be provided on a quarterly basis for the first two years of trading, subject to a review of this frequency at the end of this period. Members felt that this would also be appropriate for any other companies that the Council may establish in the future.
- The Panel decided that any amendments made to the draft report would be agreed by email by the Panel members.

- Members agreed that it was appropriate that the reviews recommendations be made to the Executive. It was noted that the Audit Committee had expressed an interest in viewing the report so as to inform their investigations. The Vice Chairman would present the report at the January Audit Committee meeting and answer any questions that Committee members may have.
- The Panel felt that their concerns regarding the potential risks that the Council and backbench Members acting as Company Directors should be further amplified in the report.
- The Panel requested that their thanks to the Democratic Services Officers and Paul Ohsan Ellis, Principal Internal Auditor for their work on the scrutiny review, be formally recorded.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) the Panel's thanks to the Democratic Services Officers and Paul Ohsan Ellis, Principal Internal Auditor for their work on the scrutiny review, be formally recorded.
- (2) any amendments made to the draft report would be agreed by email by the Chairman and the other Panel members present at the Panel meeting on 6 December 2010.
- (3) Subject to any amendments made to the draft report the report be taken to the Executive on 27 January 2011 and the Audit Committee on 26 January 2011.

*These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel*

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## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### PROCESSING OF CONSULTATION

##### **Purpose of Review:**

1. To review the impact of public responses in the Council consultation process, how these responses are assessed and acted upon by Officers and Wokingham Borough Council and recommend alterations to the process as appropriate.

##### **Key Objectives:**

1. To assess the Council's existing approach to Consultation, identify the ways in which the Council consults with residents and other bodies and to determine whether any further improvements can be made to this process.
2. To ensure that the existing approach to Consultation is up to date, meets the Council's requirements and is consistently followed during consultations.
3. To ensure that all stages of the consultation process, including the assessment of responses are as transparent and open as possible.

##### **Scope of the work:**

1. To review the ways in which the Council consults with residents and local persons and to determine whether any further improvements can be made to this process.
2. To review the consultation design, assessing whether respondents are fully able to give their views or being asked to respond to questions which do not offer respondents sufficient opportunities to express their position.
3. To establish how consultation responses are assessed and to understand how value judgements are applied by officers in deciding whether responses are relevant or not or if they should be rejected. To examine how consultation responses are publicised, both before and after aggregation.
4. To consider the predicted benefits of consultation against the anticipated costs and whether the cost effectiveness of the process could be improved.

The proportionality of the process should also be appraised; the resources needed to consult appropriately given the issue under discussion. The extent to which engagement should be proportionate to the significance of the issue – both to the Council and to local people – and to the benefits to be gained from involvement will also be discussed.

5. To evaluate the reporting of the feedback and if the impact of public comments can be demonstrated in the process.
6. To examine the way in which documents are prepared for public comment, considering both length (15 pages maximum) and choice of words (avoiding use both of acronyms unless included in a glossary and terminology not necessarily in common use outside the Council).
7. Research to ascertain what other local authorities are doing and look at examples of best practice.
8. To report back to the Executive on the findings of the review and any recommendations.

## BACKGROUND:

Councillor Singleton reported some perceived dissatisfaction with the consultation process. Firstly, the consultation questions were queried, in particular whether they offered respondents an opportunity to offer their personal viewpoints. The issue of closed questions, which did not allow respondents to offer more varied responses or justify their views, was also raised. Secondly, the manner in which the Council appraised responses, and the transparency of that process, was questioned. Councillor Armstrong suggested that the Council's consultation process be reviewed at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 26 July 2010. Councillor Armstrong raised concerns over the consultation process for social care charges; given the overlap between these areas, it was decided to combine these as one review. On 26 July 2010 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee referred the matter to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

## INFORMATION GATHERING:

### Potential Witnesses

Name	Organisation/Position	Reason for Inviting
Mark Redfearn/ Carla Tanswell	WBC	Policy Manager – Performance. Responsible for consultation/ Council's Consultation Officer
Nick Spencer	WBC	As Council's Website Manager regarding online consultation
Representative from Police?	Police	Involved with Neighbourhood Action Groups
TBC	WBC	Officers who have recently used the Council's consultation process
Parish Council representatives?		
Representatives from other best practice authorities?		

**Information to be obtained from**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Information to be Requested</b>
National Guidance	Eg: Strengthening Local Democracy consultation
	Information relating to the Localism Bill

**TIMESCALE**

**Starting:** January 2011

**Ending:** April 2011?

**Referred by the Management Committee to:**

Corporate Services Overview  
and Scrutiny Panel

**Terms of Reference agreed by:**

**Panel Members involved in  
the review:**

Alistair Auty  
Chris Bowring  
Michael Firmager  
Norman Jorgensen  
Jenny Lissaman  
Stuart Munro

**Panel Lead Member:**

Norman Jorgensen

**Executive Member:**

David Lee/ UllaKarin Clark

**Reporting Lines:**

Executive