

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY 28 JUNE 2011 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.40 PM**

Present:- Norman Jorgensen (Chairman), Michael Firmager (Vice-Chairman), Parry Batth, Chris Bowring and Jenny Lissaman

Also present:-

Kevin Jacob, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Mark Redfearn, Policy Manager, Performance

PART I

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Panel held on 21 March 2011 and 19 May 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Ken Miall.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

9. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

10. CONSULTATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

In introducing the report set out on Agenda pages 6 to 13, the Chairman reminded the Panel that it had previously agreed in January 2011 to undertake a review of the Council's approach to Consultation, but that the review had subsequently been postponed in light of the Judicial Review of the Council's Master Planning and Strategic Development Location process.

Kevin Jacob informed the Panel that at its meeting on 1 June 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had considered a scrutiny review topic submitted by Councillor Phil Challis on the subject of how Wokingham Borough Council worked in partnership with Town/Parish Councils and the implications of the Localism Bill for the future of partnership working between the Council and Town/Parish Councils within the Borough. It had been decided by the Committee that the possibility of combining Councillor Challis's suggestion with the existing review of consultation should be considered by the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel. In light of this decision and the possibility that the outstanding legal issues around Master Planning might have now been resolved, it had been felt timely to bring the matter of the review back to the Panel.

He commented that on reflection, he did not feel it was practical or appropriate for Councillor Challis's suggestion to be incorporated into the existing consultation review.

Jenny Lissaman and Michael Firmager suggested that Councillor's Challis's suggestion was potentially an issue that might be considered by the Borough Parish Working Group, but Kevin Jacob commented that he did not think that the Borough Parish Working Group would be appropriate given the limited nature of its remit to primarily plan for the annual Borough Parish Conference and its lack of capacity and expertise in undertaking such an enquiry.

In discussion, Members felt that the Consultation Review should be progressed at the earliest opportunity in September within the previously discussed and agreed Terms of Reference. It was felt that trying to incorporate Councillor Challis's suggestion would broaden the focus of the review excessively and did not fit with the goals of the review.

Mark Redfearn, Policy Manager Performance commented that as the Officer with lead responsibility for how Council undertook consultation, he was comfortable with the Terms of Reference as previously agreed.

With regard to the specifics of Councillor's Challis's suggestion, he outlined a number of provisions within the Localism Bill that had the potential to impact upon the way principal local authorities, (such as District, County and Unitary) authorities worked in Partnership with Town and Parish Councils. This included changes to allow for extra freedoms for Town and Parish Councils, changes to the planning system and reform of the social housing process. He commented that whilst the Bill proposed to introduce measures such as the Community Right to Challenge and Community Right to Buy etc, it was important to take into consideration that many existing regulations such as those relating to procurement and tendering would remain. In addition, whilst the Bill was before parliament it had yet to become law and the Council had not come to a policy position on the Bill's provisions.

Members of the Committee discussed the possibility of Town and Parish Councils being potentially being more inclined to take on the provision of some services to their residents from the Borough Council as a result of the provisions of the Localism Bill. It was felt that previous offers to Town and Parish Councils to take on services from the Borough Council had not been sufficiently clear or attractive to the Parishes.

RESOLVED: That the review of the Council's Consultation Process be progressed from the 1 September 2011 as per the Terms of Reference set out on Agenda pages 8 to 9.

11. PANEL FORWARD PROGRAMME AND ADDITIONAL REVIEW SUGGESTIONS

The Panel considered its work programme set on Agenda pages 15 to 16 and discussed possible additions to the work programme.

Kevin Jacob referred the Panel to page 16 of the Agenda and the list of work programmes currently on hold. He informed the Panel that a review of the Council's policy and response towards major licensed live music and public entertainment events had been allocated to the Panel by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in 2010, but not been progressed.

In discussion it was noted that the Government intended to make amendments to the Licensing Act 2003, which in large part governed the Council's response to licensing matters. Kevin Jacob suggested that as a first step to a possible review, the relevant Council Officers could be asked to provide the Panel with a briefing on the Council's

approach to live music events and other licensing issues. This was supported by Members.

Jenny Lissaman suggested examining how the pay levels of senior management were set and decided upon. In discussion it was felt that pay and conditions of such staff were within the remit of the Personnel Board, but that the issue raised by Councillor Lissaman might be more appropriately pursued by way of a formal Member question.

The Chairman suggested that it would be helpful if a list of Council services which came under the responsibility of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel could be produced in order to establish its full remit.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Programme be noted.

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

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