

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

28th September, 2005

- Members Present:- Councillor Clifford (Substitute for Councillor Mutton)
Councillor Mrs. Dixon
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Field
Councillor Patton
Councillor Ridge
Councillor Sawdon
Councillor Williams
- Other Scrutiny Board
Member Present:- Councillor Mrs. Stone
- Cabinet Member
Present:- Councillor O'Neill (Cabinet Member (Finance and Equalities))
- Employees Present:- L. Knight (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)
S. Manzie (Chief Executive)
J. Nicholls (Chief Executive's Directorate)
C. Steele (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)
A. Townsend (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)
- Apologies:- Councillor Mutton

77. Neighbourhood Management

Further to Minute 60/05, the Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which had previously been considered by the Cabinet (their Minute 84/05 refers), and which had been called in by Councillors Clifford, Duggins and Harrison. The report sought Cabinet's endorsement of progress on the changes to implement the Neighbourhood Management proposals.

The Cabinet Member briefly explained how West Midlands Police had made changes to their OCU boundaries so that 14 of the 18 wards in the City were now coterminous with the City Council Ward boundaries, the remaining four Wards having 'best fit'. He tabled a letter received from Chief Superintendent Max Sahota on this issue which indicated that West Midlands Police viewed this level of coterminosity to be an excellent achievement and were confident that these changes, together with the new Neighbourhood Management areas would provide an excellent opportunity to develop partnership working further.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and Officers on aspects of the report, in particular performance indicators, the involvement of the Cabinet Member Advisory Panel in the development of Neighbourhood Management, how the Wards had been distributed between Neighbourhood Management areas in particular whether those areas with more wards would receive proportionally more resources, developments in

partnership working and the possibilities of sharing the resources of the services involved in neighbourhood working.

RESOLVED that the Committee concur with the decisions of the Cabinet.

78. Call-In Stage 1

The Committee noted that no call-ins had yet been received this week. The deadline for call-ins for Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 19th September, 2005, was 9.00 a.m. Friday 30th September, 2005. Any call-ins received after this meeting and before the deadline would be considered for validity by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (paragraph 5.4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

79. Report on the Work of Scrutiny Boards

The Chair of each Scrutiny Board gave a brief update on the work of their Board during the municipal year to date:-

Scrutiny Board (1)

Councillor Williams, the Chair of Scrutiny Board (1), reported that the Board had recently received training to help them in their role as the City Council's Audit Committee. With regard to this element of the Board's work it was noted that audit reports were being prepared in a new style which included more text to supplement the statistics. The work of the Debt Recovery Group, which had initially been established in the previous Municipal Year, was still ongoing, some difficulties had been experienced with Officer support to this group. Overall, the Chair felt that the Board's Work Programme was on course.

Scrutiny Board (2)

Councillor Field, the Chair of Scrutiny Board (2), reported that the Board's work programme was on course. They were concentrating on looking at issues of concern to residents of the City, to date this had included anti-social behaviour and children's wellbeing in schools. In the future it was hoped to be able to look at youth services and to take the Scrutiny Board out of the Council House perhaps by holding a meeting in a school. A review group had been established to look at the issue of the proposed Academies which had met twice so far.

Scrutiny Board (3)

Councillor Ridge, the Chair of Scrutiny Board (3), indicated that the remit covered by the Board was wide and that he had concerns that items were appearing on agendas of which he had no prior notice. It was highlighted that a Scrutiny Board Chair was always able to say no to an item and that this could be happening as a result of officers trying to ensure that issues were considered by Scrutiny prior to their consideration by Cabinet or Cabinet Member.

Scrutiny Board (4)

Councillor Clifford, the Chair of Scrutiny Board (4), updated the Committee on the Board's work which had to date been mainly taken up with drawing up responses to consultation papers. This had reduced the time available for review work and the Board had decided to complete the existing reviews before any new ones are started. Councillor Clifford confirmed that he felt that the consultation issues were relevant to the Board and that it was important for them to respond.

The Committee went on to consider the form these reports should take in the future and their frequency.

RESOLVED that the reports on the work of the Scrutiny Boards be scheduled quarterly and that each Chair be requested to provide a short written report in the future.

80. Outstanding Issues

The Committee considered and noted a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested in order that Members could monitor progress.

81. Work Programme 2005/2006

The Committee considered and noted the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for the Year 2005/2006. With regard to the issue headed "West Midlands Fire Authority – Reduction in Night Time Fire Appliances", it was noted that the meeting scheduled for 26th October, 2005 had been identified for this issue and would be a single item agenda.

82. Key Decisions

The Chair reported that Cabinet were due to take three key decisions shortly which had not been published in the Forward Plan and so would require the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee to attend for the consideration of these matters and to confirm that the taking of these decisions cannot be reasonably deferred.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee express their concern at this situation.**
- (2) that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee request that the relevant reports be submitted to their meeting on 12th October, 2005, prior to their consideration by the Cabinet, in order that the Committee may understand why the making of the key decisions may not be deferred; and, that the Chief Executive and Director of City Development be requested to attend that meeting.**

83. **Conference – West Midlands Overview and Scrutiny Network Event – The Relationship Between Scrutiny and the Executive**

The above event was due to be held on 14th October, 2005 at Stoke-on-Trent City Council and was open to Scrutiny Members and officers. Two places were available to the City Council should they wish to take them up.

It was proposed that that the places should be allocated to one Officer and one Member with the Officer position being filled from within the Scrutiny Co-ordination Group. Officers were requested to write to all five political groups asking for nominations to the Member position.

RESOLVED that the proposal outlined above be agreed.