

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

30th January, 2008

Scrutiny Co-ordination
Committee Members

Present:-

Councillor Charley (Substitute for Councillor Arrowsmith)
Councillor Clifford (Substitute for Councillor Mutton)
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Mrs. Griffin (Substitute for Councillor Lee)
Councillor Mrs. Harper (Substitute for Councillor Ridge)
Councillor Ms. Hunter
Councillor Maton
Councillor Williams (Chair)

Cabinet Member

Present:-

Councillor Taylor (Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance))

Employees Present:-

A. Clemons (Chief Executive's Directorate)
C. Dear (Chief Executive's Directorate)
C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)
A. Townsend (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
J. Venn (Chief Executive's Directorate)
A. West (Chief Executive's Directorate)

Apologies:-

Councillor Arrowsmith
Councillor Lee
Councillor Mutton
Councillor Ridge

109. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

110. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 19th December, 2007 and 9th January, 2008, were signed as a true record.

111. Consideration of Call-Ins Stage 1

The officer reported on the following call-in that had been received:-

Policy Development

The report had been called in by Councillors Lakha, Mutton and Clifford.

The reason for the call-in was "to understand the implications of the revised policy as no revised policy document was attached".

The Committee noted that the deadline for call-ins for Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 21st January, 2008, was 9.00 a.m. on Friday 1st February, 2008. Any further call-ins received after this meeting and before that deadline would be considered for validity by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee in consultation with the Director of Customer and Workforce Services (Paragraph 4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

RESOLVED that the call-in detailed above be considered in detail by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee at their meeting on 13th February, 2008, and that the relevant Cabinet Member be requested to attend.

112. Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance) Strategic Plan – Half Year Review

With reference to Minute 33/07, the Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive that set out the background to the Half Year Review of the progress made on the Cabinet Member Strategic Plans for 2007/08 – 2009/10 and went on to consider in detail the Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance) Strategic Plan 2007/08 – 2009/10 Half Year Review. The Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance) gave a brief presentation on the key aspects of the Strategic Plan and responded to 11 questions that had been previously identified by the Committee, as detailed below together with supplementary questions asked at the meeting.

Performance Indicators

The Cabinet Member explained that full guidance on the new national indicator set of 198 indicators was still awaited but indicated that these were likely to focus on outcomes for local people and would be used for the Comprehensive Area Assessment and Local Area Agreement. It was noted that some service areas would retain some best value performance indicators and the Council would still be required to go through the annual Use of Resources Assessment.

The Committee noted that a Members' seminar on the Local Area Agreement was planned at which targets and plans would be discussed. The Local Area Agreement would contain 35 priorities covering a broad area, for example the commitment to reducing the number of people on out of work benefits, and the City Council would need to work with a range of organisations to deliver the priorities. The Cabinet Member indicated that due to the presence of the Local Strategic Partnership Coventry meant that was seen to be in the lead in this area.

Compliments, Comments and Complaints

The Director of Customer and Workforce Services was now responsible for ensuring complaints standards and monitoring were upheld consistently across the organisation. In addition, the operation of the Council's Customer Services Working Group was proposed to be reviewed and a programme of customer service training was in place for staff. It was suggested that responses to Councillors' queries should also be monitored as there was a perception that performance in this area was declining. The Cabinet Member indicated that he was keen to know of problems such as this but emphasised that Councillors should not expect to get a better service than the public, he emphasised that all compliments, comments and complaints should receive the same level of service. The officer indicated the City Council was ranked as the second best performer in the country in this area.

Scrutiny Process

In terms of improving the scrutiny process, a meeting had been held on 18th October, 2007 between Scrutiny Chairs and the Cabinet Member to discuss the development of Scrutiny, a meeting had also been held with officers to discuss the same. The Cabinet Member indicated that the role of Scrutiny needed to evolve and develop and that he believed this should involve more pre-decision scrutiny with Cabinet Members considering how Scrutiny might be involved at an early stage in policy development. The Cabinet Member emphasised that the Executive needed to work more closely with Scrutiny and cited the IKEA project as an example where close working had positive outcomes.

The officers indicated that it was necessary to ensure that Scrutiny developed along side the Local Area Agreement and that Scrutiny would need to be realigned to address a wider group of issues. There would be opportunities for Members to look at a broader range of outcomes for Coventry people.

Promotion of the City Best Value Review

The Committee noted that an Image Working Group, made up of senior professionals from major organisations in the city, were co-ordinating work to promote the city. This had included research into current perceptions of the city, workshops to consider the findings and agree a way forward and a working group to look at overall image, visitor attractions, culture and operational issues. A long-term plan, to 2012, was being developed.

A 'Freshers Pilot' had taken place with Coventry University with the aim of increasing the number of students who applied for Council Tax exemptions and raising the awareness of the Council's role in the city and of its services. The pilot had worked well with an increased number of applications for Council Tax exemptions although there was still room for improvement. The Cabinet Member emphasised the need to retain students in the city after the completion of their studies.

Stand at Party Conferences

The Cabinet Member explained that the City Council had taken stands at the Conservative and Labour party conferences for the last three years, this had both promoted the City and given direct access to senior politicians although it was difficult to measure the value of such interest. It had been decided not to pursue stands at the conferences this year and instead take the associated savings. Overall it was felt that in terms of interest generation, press coverage and commercial opportunities the presence of the stand had been positive.

The Committee enquired as to the City Council's presence at the MIPIM Conference. It was noted that the City Council had been represented for the last 14 or 15 years and it was noted that both the Friarsgate and Butts College developments were stimulated from MIPIM. It was accepted that attendance at the event was expensive but that key people and developers attended who it was important to develop relationships with.

City Region and Regional Working

The Cabinet Member explained that a company limited by guarantee had been chosen as the appropriate legal structure for the City Region. A report on the

proposals for this was scheduled to go to Cabinet in March, 2008.

The Cabinet Member emphasised that whilst the City was part of the City Region it still needed to be part of the Coventry and Warwickshire Sub-Region and that much activity related to the sub-national review.

Local Area Agreement

The Cabinet Member gave a brief overview of the highlights from the six month review of the Local Area Agreement and explained that whilst employment rates across the city had increased and continued to improve, which was positive, there was a need to have a certain level of unemployment in the city to enable it to be an attractive proposition for relocating organisations.

Local PSA Shortfall

The Cabinet Member indicated that from the outset it was not expected that all PSA targets would be achieved. It was noted that the total potential reward grant was £9m however only just under £4m of these related to City Council targets, the rest were being delivered by partners. The Council's current financial plans were based on the prudent assumption of receiving 50% of the potential total which was in the order of £1.9m.

Ward Forums

In the first half of this Municipal Year attendance levels at Ward Forums had increased, it was generally felt that Ward Forums were working better than Area Forums had. The Committee commented that whilst the rise in the number of members of the public attending Ward Forums was positive overall the levels were poor when considered against the overall population of the city. It was noted that many small groups were already established and Ward Forums needed to tap into these and encourage their attendance/opportunities for linking up.

Website Consultations

The Cabinet Member gave a brief update on the recent consultations. Figures were generally improving although the response rate on the Climate Change Strategy had been disappointing.

Promotion and Publicity Value for Money Review

The Cabinet Member explained that the promotion and publicity value for money review had been completed in the autumn of 2007, the final report was currently with the Corporate Value for Money Team. Key recommendations of the review concerned producing fewer leaflets and booklets by co-ordinating publicity material and the development of other ways of communication and promotional initiatives. The Cabinet Member pointed out that some of the literature produced by the City Council was required to be produced by the Government and this could not be reduced.

113. Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment

The Committee received and noted a presentation on the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment 2007/08 which drew together a review of crime and disorder, substance misuse and other relevant issues and would be published in April, 2008. The review covered a range of cross cutting Government aims and objectives. The officer briefly outlined the background to the review and the work that was underway. The

Committee noted the impact of new and emerging issues such as the increase in car crime due to the growth in the use of satellite navigation systems.

The Committee commented that when the review was taken forward it would be useful to include a glossary of terms as this would assist those who were not regularly involved in the area to become easily engaged with the review. It was noted that for Elected Members, the results of the assessment rather than the process itself were more important.

114. Outstanding Issues

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

115. Work Programme 2007/08

The Committee considered and noted the Work programme for the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

116. Other Business

There were no other items of public or private business.