

SOCIAL ISSUES SCRUTINY PANEL

30 January 2007

Attendance:

Councillors:

Hammerton (Chairman) (P)

Chapman (P)
de Peyer (P)
Higgins (P)
Howell
Izard (P)
Love

Quar
Nunn (P)
Stephens
Tait (P)
Weston (P)

TACT Representatives:

Mr Rickman

Deputy Members:

Councillor Maynard (Standing Deputy for Councillor Love)
Councillor Worrall (Standing Deputy for Councillor Howell)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Pearson (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Learney

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Love, Howell, Stephens, Quar and Councillor Coates (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities).

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 5 December 2006, be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No comments were received or statements made.

4. **ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY PORTFOLIO – THIRD QUARTER 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**
(Report SO35 refers)

During discussion, the Chief Executive advised that the Council's new Performance Management System would eventually allow all Members to individually analyse performance data in greater detail. The information that was currently presented was generally in 'headline form' (such as particular instances of crime per 1000 of the population) so that useful comparators and evolving trends could be easily observed. The Chief Executive stated that, if requested, individual Members could be provided with further detail on aspects of the data in the meantime.

The Director of Communities confirmed that consultants had been appointed for the CCTV project, as the Council did not have the necessary skills or capacity in-house to prepare a technical brief, and to specify accommodation requirements.

During further discussion, Councillor Pearson advised that he was generally satisfied that CCTV was an effective tool to increase feelings of safety in communities and as a method to reduce levels of crime. Although noting that proposals for its expansion would improve existing limitations of coverage in some areas, the Panel was concerned that the Council's budget provision of £238,580 for CCTV might not present value for money to all residents, as it was not currently a District-wide service.

Councillor Pearson confirmed that the Panel would be kept informed of proposed options and associated capital expenditure for extending the Alcohol Exclusion Zone (and associated Outreach Services) in the Winchester Town area. The Director advised that the Council would apply for grant support from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund for the extended Outreach service.

Councillor Pearson also reported on the rollout of 18 Police Community Support Officers to beat areas around the District.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.
2. That the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety have regard to the following:
 - (i) the desire of the Panel to further review the value for money of the budget for CCTV provision.
 - (ii) that the Panel be kept informed of the progress of the expansion of an Alcohol Outreach Service.

5. **HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO – THIRD QUARTER 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR HOUSING GENERAL FUND AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**
(Report SO37 refers)

Councillor Izard declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in this item, as he worked for a Registered Social Landlord of the Council, and he spoke and voted thereon.

The Director of Communities drew the Panel's attention to the following correction to Note 1 of Appendix 3 on page 12 of the Report:

Replace the word 'underspend' with 'overspend'.

During discussion, the Director of Communities clarified that outreach surgeries for Housing and Benefit issues had recently been established and that the service would continue to be promoted to residents. The Director also advised that Parish Councils were being consulted with regard to scoping the work of the newly appointed Rural Town Development Officer and that future progress would generally be reported to the Local Economy Scrutiny Panel. The Director also reported on the ongoing work for the eventual provision of a suitable transit site for gypsies and travellers.

Further to debate, the Panel noted that it was likely that the Council would achieve its targets for the provision of affordable housing and that it would be impractical to set higher targets in line with the needs identified in the Housing Needs Survey. However, it was agreed that the Council and its Partners should continue to maximise efforts to achieve this Corporate Objective.

The Panel also questioned the methodology used during a previous count of rough sleepers, as the results might not have been representative of the actual number. As a consequence, this issue had not been resourced appropriately. It was therefore requested that more accurate figures be researched in due course.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.
 2. That Cabinet note the following:
 - (i) that the Panel is concerned at the Council's current under-provision of Affordable Housing, with only some 140 new houses due to be provided in 2006/07 against an identified need for some 700 affordable homes each year.
 - (ii) that the Panel requests a more accurate assessment of the actual numbers of rough sleepers, and those without a permanent home, so as to assist with the most appropriate resourcing of this issue.
6. **HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO – THIRD QUARTER 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)**
(Report SO38 refers)

Councillor Izard declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in this item, as he worked for a Registered Social Landlord of the Council, and he spoke and voted thereon.

The Director of Communities drew the Panel's attention to an error on Appendix 1 on page 3 of the Report. The following correction should be made:

The actual expenditure for Repairs Work should be corrected from £1,632,442 to read £2,232,442. As consequence, the total actual expenditure for the Net HRA should be corrected from (£6,277,858) to read (£5,677,858)

The Director responded to detailed questions regarding the performance information contained in the Appendices to the Report, in particular the work related to maintenance contractor performance.

The Director confirmed that following the removal of Serco from this area of work within the contract, the same schedule of rates for void reinstatement works had been assured for the 'back-up' contractors. It was also confirmed that the current Depot Services contract ran until 2011 and that officers would begin exploring the terms of the contract in detail well in advance of this time.

Mr Rickman advised that TACT had recently discussed the Report and had noted its content and that they would continue to be involved in monitoring performance information.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.

7. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**
(Report PS265 refers)

The Director of Communities referred to proceedings at a recent meeting of the Former Tenants Arrears Informal Scrutiny Group. He advised that he would welcome comments from other Members with regard to providing information of eviction notices by electoral Ward.

The Panel supported a suggestion by the Director for an in-depth review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy. This was due to be undertaken by officers and it was considered that Members would have a valuable input. The Chief Executive advised that this suggestion would be discussed at the forthcoming Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Meeting.

It was also agreed that a representative of the Trinity Centre be invited to address a future meeting of the Panel on a recently published report on street drinking and the Alcohol Exclusion Zone in Winchester.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to discussion at the next Scrutiny Chairs Liaison meeting of the matters raised above, the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS265, be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.30pm

Chairman