

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 June 2003

CABINET

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN 2003/04

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COUNCILLOR
ALLGOOD

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RECENT REFERENCES:

PS74 – Review of Council Decision Making Structures – 1 April 2003

PS81 – Work Programme 2003/04 – 3 June 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting on 16 April 2003, Council agreed that the overview and scrutiny process should continue to develop by regular liaison meetings with the Chairmen of the Performance Improvement Committees.

One of these meetings took place on 10 June 2003. In addition to the Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee and the Chairmen of the five Performance Improvement Committees (PICs), the Portfolio Holder for Performance Management and the Leader were present.

A number of suggestions regarding the overview and scrutiny work plan for 2003/03 and clarification of the committees performance management role were set out at this meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee:

1. That consideration be given to the items of scrutiny policy review for inclusion in the work programme of the Performance Improvement Committees for 2003/04 as set out at paragraph 9 of the report.
2. That the officers report on the out turn of the individual Best Value Improvement Plans in their entirety to the relevant Performance Improvement Committee at least annually as part of the Committees normal work on monitoring overall performance.

To Cabinet:

1. That each Performance Improvement Committee be allowed to establish up to two Informal Groups to assist on particular reviews if they so wish and that they be requested to fully take account of the resource implications in the way in which the work of such groups is organised.

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Report of the Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Allgood

DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 16 April 2003, Council agreed to the following recommended minute:

'That the informal arrangements developed so far for consultation on work planning between the Principal Scrutiny Committee and the Performance Improvement Committees be developed, in consultation where appropriate with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Performance Management, to establish a co-ordinated programme of work of overview and scrutiny for at least each year ahead'.

- 1.2 One of these meetings took place on 10 June 2003. In addition to the Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee and the Chairs of the Performance Improvement Committees (PICs), the Portfolio Holder for Performance Management and the Leader were also present. A number of suggestions regarding the overview and scrutiny work plan for 2003/03 and clarification of the Committees performance monitoring role were set out.
- 1.3 Part of the role of the Performance Improvement Committee (in addition to the role of performance monitoring) is to carry out *pre* scrutiny work on the formulation of new policy before its consideration by Cabinet. The Committees also consider *post* scrutiny work on the implementation of decisions by Cabinet, other council bodies, and officers. However, before the PICs can consider such items the Constitution requires approval to be given by Principal Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or Council.
- 1.4 The Committees also have an input into the budget process each year.

2 The Work Plan of the Principal Scrutiny Committee

- 2.1 At its meeting on 3 June 2003, the Principal Scrutiny Committee discussed its Work Plan for the 2003/04 municipal year (Report PS81 refers). In addition to the matters as set out, the Committee agreed to establish an Informal Group from within its membership regarding infrastructure in Whiteley and to carry out an investigation regarding a building control/planning issue relating to the monitoring of the implementation of conditions. The Committee also agreed to the reappointment of those Informal Groups initially set up as part of the Work Plan for 2002/03. These Groups will be studying Capital Project Management, Business Planning and Public Consultation.
- 2.2 Other items where Principal Scrutiny Committee have asked for reports are:

- (a) Former Red Cross premises at Durngate, Implementation of new Licensing Act (towards the end of 2003/04), Local Democracy Week, Local Strategic Partnership and the process of grant allocations.
- (b) The Principal Scrutiny Committee has also indicated that it will consider whether to look further at the way in which the Council implements PPG 3, after the forthcoming Member Training Session on the issue.

3 Suggestions from Chairmen of Performance Improvement Committees, the Portfolio Holder for Performance Management and the Leader of the Council regarding the Work Plan 2003/04

- 3.1 Arising from the meeting that took place on 10 June 2003, a number of *policy* topics were highlighted for possible consideration by the relevant Performance Improvement Committees, or by Informal Groups to be set up from within their membership. Cross cutting broader themes should continue to be considered by Principal Scrutiny Committee or its own Informal Groups. Such reviews would help Cabinet to develop future policy.
- 3.2 The use of informal groups can be an alternative approach to undertaking the scrutiny function rather than simply receiving reports from officers in the traditional way. It is particularly useful when investigation of processes or taking views of a number of interested persons is required. It is an approach that was recommended for appropriate cases in the recent Member training undertaken by South East Employers. However, the trainer also indicated that this approach was resource/time intensive and should only be adopted by each PIC in one or two cases each year if a positive outcome was to be achieved.
- 3.3 The use of informal groups or sub-committees by PICs is subject to Cabinet approval for this reason. The report recommends that approval be given by Cabinet to each PIC to appoint up to 2 Informal Groups in the year.
- 3.4 In looking at the detail of their work programme each PIC will have to consider which tasks would benefit most from this approach in view of the limited resources. Ideally if two groups are appointed they should run consecutively rather than at the same time.

4 Environment and Access Performance Improvement Committee.

(i) Concessionary Travel

A review of the current scheme was identified as a task in the recent Best Value review. Originally the task was identified last year as a project for an Informal Member Officer Working Group as established by Cabinet. However, it is now proposed that the task would be undertaken by the PIC instead.

(ii) Parking Review

This area of study would consider the monitoring of expenditure and 'spending' of revenue from parking schemes. It was considered that this review might be better placed to commence when the Bar End Park and Ride extension was complete. The potential impact of the Broadway/Friarsgate proposals would also have to be considered.

(iii) Planning Appeal Decisions

It was noted that this issue had been previously raised by the Principal Scrutiny Committee as a topic for the Environment PIC to consider. The PIC agreed at its meeting on 12 March 2003 that the outcome of Planning Appeal Decisions (and to distinguish between appeals on delegated decisions) should be regularly reported to the Planning Development Control Committee.

(iv) Public Speaking and Site Visits

Improvements to the existing policies regarding the above should be discussed by the whole Committee.

5. Community, Arts and Social Performance Improvement Committee(i) Bapsy Bequest

This was forwarded to the PIC following debate by Cabinet on 11 June.

(ii) Meadowside, Whiteley

Principal Scrutiny Committee had earlier requested an update on the progress of the revised management structure of the leisure centre. (the Whiteley Informal Group set up by Principal Scrutiny Committee is to discuss broader, cross agency considerations of the settlement and will not overlap with this work).

(iii) Underspend of Open Space Funding

A study later in the year to investigate the progress made since the adoption of the strategy to ensure that Open Space funding is being spent wisely, and at a reasonable rate. This subject could be further linked to a review of Recreation Needs and Provision arising out of PPG17 and, as it is likely that this will be raised at the Local Plan Inquiry, reported to the PIC and the Winchester District Local Plan Committee once the implications of the findings are known.

6. Housing Performance Improvement Committee(i) Allocations and Lettings

This study would include discussion of the 'choice-based' lettings. It is likely that the whole Committee can consider this subject as opposed to an Informal Group from within its membership.

(ii) Provision of Supported Housing

Following the recent community planning process in Stanmore and Highcliffe, consideration of future requirements for supported housing may need to be addressed.

(iii) Tenant's Compact

The Tenant's Compact was initially established following a Government initiative to raise national tenant participation in the issues related to their housing. The Compact is reviewed via the Tenant Participation Compact Monitoring Working Group (on which there is Councillor representation). The Director of Health and Housing was

currently considering whether the Working Group should be 'formalised' and possible changes to the consultation process regarding the Compact.

(iv) Housing Options Appraisal

To examine, in accordance with Government Guidance, the options for the future management of the Council's Housing Stock. Cabinet is likely to ask the PIC to undertake some aspects of this task at a later stage in the year, after Cabinet has considered an initial report on the issues involved.

(v) Rent Restructuring

To examine, after the event, whether the current policies have been successfully implemented. This may be better undertaken next year. It is likely that the whole Committee can consider this subject as opposed to an Informal Group from within its membership.

6.1 It was noted that the Enablement Informal Member Officer Working Group (established by Cabinet) was currently studying the implications of the abolition of the social housing grant, affordable housing provision and/or off-site developer contributions, exception sites and associated development control considerations.

7. Central Services Performance Improvement Committee

The Chairman of the PIC has pointed out that the work of this Committee already covers several Departments and some cross cutting issues across the Council as a whole. It had a reasonable workload in 2002/03. This workload had arisen from items raised by Members on performance monitoring issues. The Chairman envisaged that a similar approach would apply this year. If items arose that came outside the performance monitoring role then specific authority for the work involved could be requested at that stage.

8. Health Performance Improvement Committee

(i) Drugs Awareness and Associated Issues

The Council's Community Safety Officer, Environmental Health Officers (regarding the problem of discarded needles within communities) and the Police would ideally have input to the study.

The Director of Health and Housing has concerns that this is an inappropriate topic for the PIC to consider in isolation as the City Council's involvement in the issue is only through the local Drug Action Team and Drug Reference Group which has overall responsibility for delivering work on drugs issues. The possibility of the PIC considering the issue was debated in a similar way last year when the idea was not pursued. However, it could be considered in a more crosscutting manner as part of the proposed review of Community Safety where the anti-social behaviour, environmental, nuisance and crime aspects can be incorporated within any review. This would be more appropriate in 2004/05 when the preliminary work on the review is scheduled to take place. The scope of the work would also have to be carefully defined.

(ii) Recycling

It was envisaged that Cabinet would take the initial policy decision on a pilot project. Cabinet would then ask the PIC to undertake a review after implementation to assess

how the pilot had worked in practice and upon the implications for extending the new arrangements across the District. Discussions regarding this topic might be appropriate for an Informal Group from within the membership of the Committee.

(iii) Noise Pollution and Anti Social Behaviour

This study would include noise issues related to all forms of noise pollution including that generated by anti social behaviour. The issue of road noise from the M3 and A34 was also identified.

The impact of the Licensing Act 2003 and potential effects on public order issues should be outside the study. This will be the subject of consideration by the Licensing and Regulation Committee in the autumn and the Principal Scrutiny Committee has already asked to look at the outcome of its work.

The Council's Community Safety Officer should assist and relevance to the Council's Crime and Disorder Strategy Review will affect the possible timing. The next review is not scheduled until 2005 with the preliminary work being undertaken in 2004/5. This task would be better undertaken in that year.

The issue of Road Traffic Noise is probably best dealt with by way of an officer report to the PIC setting out the current position and options available to the City Council to address the issues of concern. This could be done this year.

(iv) Food Premises Inspections

It is likely that the whole Committee can consider this subject as opposed to an Informal Group from within its membership. The review can consider the relative merits of existing approaches to inspections when compared with an increasing emphasis on preventative work as part of the health improvement agenda.

(v) The Impact on Health of the Condition of the Council's Housing Stock

It is noted that the Council House Stock Condition Survey is to monitor performance against the Government's 'Decent Home Standard' to ensure that the City Council's Housing Stock meets the standard by 2010. The survey will, in addition, inform the long term planning of the Council's Housing service.

Therefore this subject would not be appropriate for consideration by the Health PIC.

9. Summary of Policy Studies

9.1 The following are suggested as being most suitable for studies by an Informal Group set up from the membership of the appropriate Performance Improvement Committee:

- (i) Concessionary Travel (Environment and Access PIC)
- (ii) Parking Review (Environment and Access PIC). This should start when the Bar End Park and Ride Extension is completed.
- (iii) Bapsy Bequest. This has been referred to the Community, Arts and Social PIC by Cabinet and could be conducted by way of an Informal Group.
- (iv) Supported Housing (Housing PIC)

- (v) Recycling (Health PIC). This study should commence later in the year after implementation of the pilot project.
- 9.2 The following matters could be the subject of reports by officers to the appropriate PIC.
- (i) Public Speaking and Site Visits (Environment and Access). This is a subject that would benefit from a committee discussion.
 - (ii) Meadowside (Community, Arts and Social). This has been asked to look into the progress of the revised management structure.
 - (iii) Open Space Funding (Community, Arts and Social). This could be examined by the Committee as a whole to focus on progress made since the last major report that went to Cabinet earlier this year.
 - (iv) Allocations and Lettings (Housing PIC).
 - (v) Tenant's Compact (Housing PIC). An update on this could be discussed by the Committee as a whole.
 - (vi) Road traffic Noise (Health PIC)
 - (vii) Food Premises Inspections (Health PIC).
- 9.3 The actual decision as to whether to use an informal group or to use traditional officer reports would be a matter for each PIC to determine at its first meeting. This would be subject to approval by Cabinet.
- 9.4 In addition to this report being considered by each PIC (if approved by Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee) officers will write scoping reports for consideration by the PICs for those subjects where informal groups are suggested and report on a lead officer for the study.
10. Performance Management
- 10.1 The existing role of the Performance Improvement Committees regarding Performance Management in relation to budgets, business plan targets and the regular performance monitoring of out turn is still an essential task. It will still be a substantial element of a PIC's work and it is essential to securing continuous improvement in the way that the Council operates.
11. Best Value
- 11.1 The Best Value Improvement plans to date should be monitored by the relevant Performance Improvement Committee regarding their implementation against target date. Although many Best Value Performance Indicators are contained within various Business Plan out turn reports, the Performance Improvement Committees should have regard to the Improvement plans in their entirety, at least once a year at out turn. This will ensure that items in the original Improvement Plans are not overlooked. Departmental Business Plans should be checked for their consistency with the Improvement Plan recommendations and implementation target dates.

12. CPA

- 12.1 A future role for the Principal Scrutiny Committee was to consider, along with Cabinet, the CPA Improvement Plan.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

13 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 13.1 Relevant to the aim of being more open and democratic in the way the Council works.

14 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 14.1 Scrutiny is undertaken at its current level within the existing staffing resources of the Council but any increase in activity would need to have appropriate resources identified. The use of informal working methods, referred to above, could have a significant staffing resource implication. In order to undertake work within existing resources it will be necessary to limit the number of informal groups to one or two per PIC. If more than one informal group is established then, if possible, they should not undertake work at the same time. They should also consider meeting at the beginning or end of the normal working day rather than in the evenings. This is because the capacity of the Committee Section will be fully stretched.

- 14.2 Principal Scrutiny Committee also has a budget of £10,000 to engage external help if appropriate. Cabinet has indicated that it will consider a request for additional funding if a justified case can be made.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

None