

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at Council Chamber, Ryedale House, Malton
on Thursday 19 August 2010

Present

Councillors Andrews, Clark, Raper, Mrs Shields (Chairman) and Windress

In Attendance

Audrey Adnitt, Paul Cresswell, Phil Long, Louise Sandall and Clare Slater

Minutes

22 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Cottam, Cussons, Maud and Mrs Wilford.

23 Minutes of the meeting of 8 July 2010

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 8 July 2010 were presented.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 8 July 2010 be accepted as a correct record.

Councillor Mrs Shields made reference to recent attendance at both the police authority training session, and the presentation on Attendance Management from Selby District Council, and Members were reminded to send their apologies if they were not able to attend future meetings.

24 Urgent Business

The Chairman reported that there was one item of urgent business to be dealt with at the meeting as a matter of urgency by virtue of Section 100 (B)(4)(b).

25 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

26 Ombudsman Annual Report

The Council Solicitor submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to provide information about the complaints made against Ryedale District Council which were dealt with by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2009/10. In addition, information was provided on the reflections of the Local

Government Ombudsman (LGO) in her Annual Review of the complaints received.

The Ombudsman received a total of 6 enquires and complaints about the Council during 2009/10. In two cases simple advice was given to the complainant. Four complaints were sent to the Ombudsman for consideration, three of which were to do with planning matters. This was a considerable drop compared to last year and continued the downward trend in complaints forwarded to the Ombudsman.

Of those complaints determined by the Ombudsman, one was closed on the basis that it was not within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. In the other case the Ombudsman found no evidence of maladministration by the Council sufficient to justify her continued involvement.

No public reports were issued against the Council during the year, and the Ombudsman had made no formal enquires of the Council during the year.

The Annual Review was a useful addition to other information held by the Council, and highlighted how people experience and perceive its services.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

27 Service Risk Register - Environment

The Head of Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to present the Service Risk Register for those services under the Head of Environment.

Service Risk Registers (SRR) were originally established from work undertaken by the Audit Partnership in conjunction with Service Unit Managers, however, since the management restructure the number of registers had been reduced and were now the responsibility of Heads of Service and their managers. These registers had not yet been subject to Member review.

Annex A outlined the SRR for the Head of Environment, and was presented to the Committee in order to highlight changes to risks and work undertaken to mitigate those risks.

Councillor Andrews referred to Capital Projects within the risk register, and requested an update regarding the ongoing works at Malton Town Hall. A discussion followed and members were of the opinion that a report outlining the history of the project and progress to date would be useful.

The Committee thanked the Head of Environment for the report.

Resolved

- That the report be received.
- That a report on the Malton Town Hall project be brought to the next meeting.

28 Sickness Absence Review - Concluding report

The Head of Organisational Development submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to update Members on the review undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Sickness Absence.

Members were reminded that at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 9 April 2009 it was agreed to review sickness absence within Ryedale District Council as a result of the sickness absence levels remaining substantially higher than the national average and in comparison to local authority neighbours.

The Committee had approached the review by:

- Reviewing the Sickness Absence Policy
- Receiving a presentation from North Yorkshire County Council
- Reviewing the management information statistics
- Inviting Unison to a task group meeting
- Receiving a presentation from Selby District Council

Following this work and in conclusion, a number of new initiatives and improvements in the monitoring of sickness absence within Ryedale District Council had been identified.

The key findings were as follows:

1. That the procedures should be expanded on to ensure they are user friendly and meaningful.
2. The policy & procedures should be adopted consistently across the authority.
3. The trigger points within the policy should remain as they are.
4. Sickness monitoring should always include positive reporting.
5. The formation of a Health & Well Being group.
6. Ryedale should explore ways of celebrating those staff and departments who have no sickness absence in the year.
7. Regular training should be given to staff.
8. Induction programme to be extended to cover the Absence management policy and procedures.
9. A review should take place on flexi time and annual leave.
10. Currently sickness absence should not have a direct link to pay progression.

The reviews success was in part evidenced by the 2009/10 sickness absence figure of 8.89 days per employee. This was the lowest figure that the authority had attained since 2005/06.

Following the presentation from Selby District Council a comparison document had been produced (% of Number of Days Absence per department in Selby & Ryedale District Councils) and this was distributed at the meeting. Councillor Clark referred to the figure for Streetscene Services, and requested that a revised comparison be produced that including staffing numbers, in order to make the figures more meaningful.

In addition Councillor Clark referred to the number 3, of the key findings "Trigger Points". These were to remain the same, but Councillor Clark's recollection from the task group meeting with Unison, was that Unison had requested these be amended, and so he sought further clarification on this point.

The Committee wished to thank Unison, North Yorkshire County Council, and Selby District Council for their participation in the review.

Resolved

- a. That the report be received, subject to confirmation from Unison of their acceptance that the 'Trigger Points' are to remain unchanged.
- b. That the % of Number of Days Absence Ryedale & Selby District Council 2009/10, comparison be amended to included the numbers of staff in each department.

29 Future Reviews Scoping Report

The Head of Transformation submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to present Members of the committee with a set of terms of reference for each of the two scrutiny review topics agreed by the Committee.

At the previous meeting, it had been agreed to take two topics forward for review by the Committee.

- **Healthy Weight** – Issues relating to achieving a healthy weight presented a key challenge in Ryedale in relation to health inequality. It was intended that the scrutiny review would feed into the development of the Healthy Weight Strategy being developed by the Ryedale Strategic Partnership. There was also the potential for the review to influence the work of the Active & Environment Joint Commissioning Group on sport & leisure. The review will address all age obesity.

- Impact of Post Office Closures – This review on the impact of post office closures on communities of Ryedale would feed into any future consultations on changes to post office services or potential closures. It would also link to the work the Council undertakes in improving financial inclusion, supporting local community facilities and improving access to services and efficiency of delivery, thereby potentially mitigating the risk of loss of services through future post office closures.

The table at annex A presented the draft terms of reference for each review and covered the following areas:

- Aim of the review
- Why has this review been selected?
- Who will undertake the review?
- How will the review be undertaken?
- What are the expected outputs?
- Timescale

Council Andrews referred to the current issue regarding the future of Malton Hospital, which was causing much concern locally, and suggested that it may be appropriate for the committee to consider carrying out a scrutiny review on the topic. A detailed discussion and vote followed, and Members were of the opinion that it would be more appropriate to bring a motion to Council regarding the concerns about the hospital.

Resolved

- a. That the terms of reference for each of the reviews were agreed.
- b. That Councillors Raper and Mrs Shields become members of the task group for the Healthy Weight Review. That Councillors Mrs Shields, Andrews and Windress become members of the task group for the Post Office Closures review. Councillor Clark advised that he would become a member of either of the review task groups. It was agreed that Mrs Slater would contact the remaining Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and see which review task group they would like to join.

30 Customer Complaints Monitoring

The Customer Services and Benefits Manager submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to inform Members of the number and type of complaints received under the Council's complaint procedure for the period April – June 2010.

The report included complaints monitored under individual service complaints systems and a summary of customer feedback to Community Leisure Ltd

(CLL) for the period April – June 2010 together with action taken where appropriate.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

31 **Treasury Management Annual Report 2009/10**

The Corporate Director (s151) submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to report on treasury management activities for the financial year 2009/10 in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the code).

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2009 had been adopted by the Council on the 22 February 2010, and the Council fully complied with its requirements.

The report gave an update and further details on the following areas of treasury management

- Treasury Position as at 31 March 2010
- Strategy for 2009/10
- The Economy and Interest Rates in 2009/10
- Compliance with Treasury Limits
- Investment Rates in 2009/10
- Investment Outturn for 2009/10

Resolved

1. That the report be received
2. The performance of the in-house and externally managed funds in 2009/10 be noted.

32 **Any other business that the Chairman decides is urgent.**

The Chair provided an update following the recent police authority training and the next steps for the committee, in relation to the new scrutiny of crime and disorder duties.

The Head of Transformation had produced a "Next Steps" document following the training which was circulated. During the training it was suggested that the committee discuss the requirement to co-opt a member of the Police Authority onto the Ryedale Crime and Disorder Committee, and the guidance suggested that appointing a non voting expert advisor to attend the committee only when Police or Crime and Disorder matter were being discussed, would be the most

appropriate course of action. Although if the Council's constitution were amended it may be possible to give that expert voting rights.

Members thanked the Head of Transformation for the feedback, and a discussion followed.

Resolved

That a detailed report on the scrutiny of Crime and Disorder duties and new responsibilities of the committee be brought to the next meeting, in order to make a decision.