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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held at Members' Lounge, Ryedale House, Malton
on Thursday 8 July 2010

Present

Councillors Andrews, Clark, Cottam, Cussons (Vice-Chair), Raper, Mrs Shields (Chairman) and Windress

In Attendance

Audrey Adnitt, Paul Cresswell, Jos Holmes, James Ingham, Alison Newham, Kim Robertshaw, Julian Rudd and Clare Slater
Mr Ritchie (Deloittes)

Minutes

8 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Maud and Mrs Wilford.

9 Minutes of the Meeting of 21 June 2010

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 21 June 2010 were presented.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 21 June 2010 be accepted as a correct record.

10 Urgent Business

The Chairman reported that there were no items of urgent business to be dealt with at the meeting as a matter of urgency by virtue of Section 100(B)(4)(b).

11 Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Member's code of conduct the following declarations of interest were received.

Councillor Andrews declared a personal interest in matters relating to Wentworth Street Car Park, as he regularly met with members of the local business community.

Councillor Cottam declared a personal interest in matters relating to Yorkshire Housing as he was Chairman of the Board of Yorkshire Housing.

Councillor Mrs Shields declared a personal interest in matters relating to Yorkshire Housing as she was a Member of the Board of Yorkshire Housing.

12 **Police Authority Training Arrangements**

The Corporate Director (s151) provided an update on an invitation which had been received from the Police Authority, for Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to attend a training session regarding the committee's new function to "Scrutinise Law and Order". This training opportunity had also been extended to neighbouring local authorities over the past few months.

Following a discussion, Members were of the opinion that Thursday 12 August 2010, would be the most convenient date.

Resolved

That a training session be held, for Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at 2pm on Thursday 12 August 2010 at Ryedale House, Malton.

13 **Annual Audit Planning Report**

The Corporate Director (s151) presented the annual audit planning report (previously circulated) which had been prepared by Deloitte.

The report covered the following areas:

- Scope of work and approach
- Key audit risks
- Consideration of fraud
- Internal control
- Client service team
- Responsibility statement
- Executive summary

The report was discussed in detail and Mr Ritchie from Deloitte, provided further details as required.

Resolved

That the report be received.

14 **Service Risk Register - Housing and Economy**

The Head of Economy and Housing submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to present the service risk register for the services within his team.

Members were reminded that risk identification and management was an integral element of organisational management to secure the achievement of the Council's corporate objectives. Risk Management should also form a key part of any budget making decisions.

Service Risk Registers 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.

The Service Risk Register for the Head of Economy and Housing was appended at annex A. Members were asked to note that in addition to the 96 new affordable homes being provided in the year up to 31 March 2010, Ryedale Council had approved grants during 09/10 of more than £400,000 to help adapt or improve 125 homes in Ryedale to better meet the needs of their occupiers. Grants had also been completed for a further 27 homes to a value of £257,000 to overcome the mobility problems of the residents. In addition £200,000 had been invested in a local mortgage rescue scheme to allow more Ryedale people to get support to stay in their homes, and the Council and its partners had intervened to prevent 194 cases of potential homelessness over the last year. All of these and many other initiatives helped to address to vital issue of housing need.

Resolved

That the report be received.

15 Annual Internal Audit Report 2009/10

The Corporate Director (s151) submitted a report previously circulated in order to present the Annual Internal Audit Report 2009/2010 from the North Yorkshire Audit Partnership.

The report detailed in annex A, provided an assurance statement for the financial systems of the Council, based on the work undertaken to date, and past experience. It also included an assessment of the application of risk management, and management of identified risks within its programme of audits.

The report was discussed in detail, and Mr Ingham from the North Yorkshire Audit Partnership provided further information, in relation to a recent audit and the asset management system, and problems which had been encountered.

Councillor Andrews made reference to a special investigation he had requested the internal auditor undertake, in relation to Wentworth Street Car Park Fees, and he put forward the following motion.

“That Overview & Scrutiny Committee requests the appropriate Officer to instruct the internal audit partnership to investigate any discrepancies between Overview and Scrutiny on the Wentworth Street Fees Trial and the officer reports and the impact of not following officer recommendations on Malton Car Parking charges this year”.

This motion was seconded by Councillor Clark, and upon being put to the vote the motion was LOST.

Councillor Clark asked that his abstention be recorded on the basis that the investigation and subsequent report would not be completed before the car park charges for the next year were to be set.

16 **Attendance at Policy Committees**

Members considered a report that provided them with a shadowing rota for observing at the policy committee meetings for 2010/11.

Members were reminded that one of the four legislative roles of the Committee was holding the Executive to account. In Ryedale’s case this meant examining the policy committee minutes, and forward plans in detail and using call in or other mechanisms to comment or intervene in the decision making process. In order to be effective in this it had been previously agreed that Members of the Committee would take it in turns to attend both Policy & Resources and the Community Services & Licensing Committee/Commissioning Board for the purposes of observation. Subsequently Full Council agreed that this be an approved duty for Members of this Committee.

Councillor Clark requested that when members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee receive copies of policy committee agenda’s for meetings that they are observing, the agenda clearly states that they are “Observing the meeting”.

Resolved

That the draft rota for attendance and the accompanying checklist be agreed and incorporated within the Council’s Scrutiny Handbook.

17 **Customer Complaints Monitoring**

The Customer Services & Benefits Manager submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to update Members on the number and type of complaints received under the Council’s complaint procedure for the period January to March 2010.

The report included complaints monitored under individual service complaint systems (annex A) and a summary of customer feedback from Community

Leisure Ltd (CLL) for the period January to March 2010 together with the action taken where appropriate (annex B).

Resolved

That the report be noted.

18 Sickiness Absence Statistics

The Head of Organisational Development submitted a report (previously circulated) in order to update the Committee in relation to sickness absence monitoring against the BVPI 12.

Members were advised that the Council continued to use the former best value performance indicator (BVPI) 12 criteria for calculating the sickness absence rate as this provided a consistent record of analysis. BV12 was the calculation of average number of days per full time equivalent (FTE) employee.

The statistics indicated that for the 12 month period from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 the average full time equivalent number of days sickness absence, per employee at Ryedale District Council was 8.89 days. This was a significant decrease from the previous figure reported of 10.68 days for the period 01 April 2008 to 31 March 2009. 8.89 days was the lowest rate since 2005/6

The report provided a table of data, comparing Ryedale District Councils sickness absence figures with those of neighbouring authorities for the past five years.

Resolved

That the report be received.

19 Future Scrutiny Review discussion

Members were reminded that the current scrutiny review would soon be concluded, and suggestions were sought for possible future reviews. Councillor Mrs Shields suggested that following recent scrutiny courses and seminars she had attended it was important for the Committee to be more outward looking in its perspective with recent reviews having been more internally focussed.

The Head of Transformation advised that she had met with the Chair recently and gave details of the following suggested topics:

1. CO2/Carbon Footprint – there was a great deal of work which could be done to identify/address/ improve the Council's Carbon footprint.

2. Healthy Weight – The Ryedale Strategic Partnership had done some work on this, and it was considered to be an important concern for local families, a lot of useful work could be undertaken in this area.
3. Post Office Closures/Impact – The recent closures had impacted greatly on village life in Ryedale, and it was envisaged that some work around campaigning would be useful.

In addition to these topics, it was suggested that a review of the Magistrates Court may prove useful to residents, as two members of the committee had previously experienced difficulties with the system. Councillor Clark suggested that the Council's preparation for the forthcoming cuts to government funding could be scrutinised, as he was of the opinion that it had not been sufficiently debated at the Policy & Resources Committee.

A detailed discussion followed, and Members felt that it may be possible to taken two reviews, especially if they were not constrained by a time limit. The Post Office Closures, and Healthy Weight topics were chosen for further consideration, and Members felt that the Magistrates Court should be considered again as a potential review in the future.

Resolved

That the Head of Transformation prepare scoping reports for a potential review of following subjects:

- a) Post Office Closures
- b) Healthy Weight

The scoping reports to be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 19 August 2010.

20 Decisions from other Committees

List of decisions from the following Committees were submitted:

- Commissioning Board held on 3 June 2010
- Policy & Resources held on 24 June 2010

Councillor Clark referred to the minutes of the Commissioning Board held on the 3 June 2010 (minute no. 8 Board Structure Options), and advised that Councillor Mrs Cowan had wished to join both the Joint Commissioning Group for Economy and Housing, and the Joint Commissioning Group for Active and the Environment, but the minutes only recorded her on the Economy and Housing Group. The Corporate Director (s151) advised that he would investigate the matter further, and report back.

In addition, Councillor Clark referred to the minutes of the Commissioning Board held on the 3 June 2010 (minute no. 10 Moors and Coast Partnership), and expressed concern in relation to the funding cuts to the Moors and Coast partnership, and their impact in addition to cuts by Yorkshire Forward to Welcome to Yorkshire. A discussion followed on the merits of a “call in “ for this decision, and the Corporate Director (s151), clarified that as the item was a part A item, Members had the option to Call in the decision and that the timescale for the call in had not yet passed. Alternatively any Member of the Committee could write to the Chief Executive in accordance with the constitution, and ask for the item to be put on the agenda of the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Members were of the opinion that they preferred to have the minutes of the last meetings of Policy & Resources and the Commissioning Board on the agenda of Overview and Scrutiny, rather than the decision lists which had been the previous practice.

Resolved

- a) That the list of decisions of the Commissioning Board held on 3 June 2010 and Policy & Resources held on 24 June 2010 be received.
- b) That future Overview & Scrutiny Committee agenda's have the full minutes of the last meeting of the Commissioning Board and Policy & Resources Committee as appendices, rather than decision lists.

21 Any other business that the Chairman decides is urgent.

There were no other items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

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