

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Coordinating Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2014

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Mrs Gooch, Mrs Grigg, Mrs Joy, McLoughlin and Paterson

14. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barned and Councillor Mrs Wilson.

15. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

There were no notifications.

16. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS OR OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures.

17. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2013**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2013 be received and approved and the Chairman be authorised to sign them.

18. **GOVERNANCE REVIEW UPDATE**

Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy and Communications, explained that in 2012/13 the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee had commissioned a small Member working group to undertake a review of the Council's corporate governance model.

In February 2013 full Council considered a report on models of governance and concluded that the Cabinet system should be retained with enhanced scrutiny. The Scrutiny Coordinating Committee were tasked with developing this model and in April 2013 the new model was approved by Council.

The Committee noted that the new system had been in place for ten months and the following issues were discussed:

- The low response rate from Members to the Scrutiny Survey (2014)
 - It was suggested that hard copies of the survey should be made available to all Members at the next full Council meeting
- Findings from the Scrutiny Survey (2014)
- Progress that had been made with the recommendations for improvement

- The use of agenda planning meetings to develop the future work programme
- Developing briefing papers to highlight key lines of enquiry / questions for each agenda item
- The possibility of including a "Members' Question Sheet" as part of the paperwork for each agenda item to help Committee Members prepare for meetings
- Providing feedback forms at each Committee meeting to gather feedback from those in attendance
- The need for a glossary of acronyms and terminology and a Frequently Asked Questions list
- The recent amendment to the Constitution, agreed by Council in December 2013, concerning Visiting Members at Committee Meetings
- Cabinet Member Decision Notices

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed that:

- a) Hard copies of the Scrutiny Survey (2014) should be made available to all Members at the next full Council meeting;
- b) Officers from the Policy and Information Team should work with the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny to develop briefing papers to highlight key lines of enquiry / questions for each agenda item;
- c) A "Members' Question Sheet" should be included in the paperwork for each agenda item to help Members prepare for scrutiny meetings;
- d) Feedback forms should be made available at each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting as a way to gather feedback from those in attendance;
- e) The Head of Policy and Communications be recommended to develop a glossary of acronyms and terminology and a Frequently Asked Questions list be made available to all Members. These documents should be prepared, and circulated, as soon as possible to ensure this information was available for new members following the elections in May 2014;
- f) The Head of Policy and Communications be recommended to discuss "Recommendation O" with Cabinet Members to establish why the views of other Members had not been included in notices for Cabinet Member Decisions.

19. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS (SCRAIPS)

On the 28 November 2013 the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee agreed that a) The Chairman and Vice Chairman from each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should review the Scrutiny Committee Action Implementation Plans (SCRAIPs) for reviews carried out by their Committee since 2008; and that b) Following their investigations an update should be provided, by each Committee Chairman, at the next Scrutiny Coordinating Committee meeting

The following issues were discussed:

- Rules of the constitution including deadlines for responses
- The follow up work that had been carried out by the Chairman and Vice Chairman from each Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to reviews that had been carried out since 2008
- Ways to monitor future Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Action Plans
- Ensuring outstanding actions are followed up and monitored
- Work programme development

Following the research that Members of the Committee had carried out, in relation to monitoring outstanding actions, it was agreed that a blank SCRAIP template should be sent to Members of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee so they could record the progress that had been made against any outstanding actions.

In view of various suggestions that were made by Committee in relation to the monitoring of recommendations it was agreed that the Policy and Information Team should set up individual briefing sessions with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure the follow up work for each review/SCRAIP was appropriate.

It was agreed that the following issues should be discussed by each Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman:

- Agenda planning meetings
- SCRAIPs being a standard item on all Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas
- Covalent – the Council’s performance management and risk management software
- Updating the SCRAIP template (with a RAG status) so that it is clear whether further information, or review via Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is required
- Work programme development

RESOLVED: It was agreed that the Policy and Information Team should set up individual briefing sessions with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure appropriate follow up work for each review/SCRAIP.

20. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Christian Scade, Senior Corporate Policy Officer, explained that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee was required to approve and co-ordinate an annual work programme.

The Committee agreed that each work programme should be realistic, relevant to Members and be able to be adequately resourced. It was also acknowledged that each work programme needed to be flexible to ensure additional issues could be scrutinised urgently.

The following issues were discussed in relation to developing the scrutiny work programme for 2014/15:

- The “marketplace” activities that took part at the start of the 2013/14 municipal year
- The importance of input from Cabinet Members and Officers
- Receiving suggestions from members of the public, community representatives and key stakeholders/partners including input from parish councils, Kent County Council, Ward Members, Community Wardens, Kent Police, statutory consultees, Voluntary Action Maidstone, and Disability Groups, amongst others.
- Ensuring an understanding of major pieces of work, applicable to each Committee’s terms of reference, for the coming year
- Learning and development opportunities to ensure effective work programming and scoping of reviews
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- The use of social media
- Using the findings from the Residents’ Survey and the possibility of setting up a sub-group / panel to help develop the scrutiny work programme
- Options for the June 2014 round of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings – the first round of scrutiny meetings in the 2014/15 Municipal Year

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed that:

- a) Rather than holding “marketplace” activities, the first round of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in 2014/15 should include both a work-shop on effective work programming and input from Cabinet Members and Senior Officers to ensure a better understanding of major pieces of work, applicable to each Committee’s terms of reference, and where scrutiny could add value;
- b) An update on ways to develop an effective 2014/15 work programme, with options for the June 2014 round of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, be considered by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee at their next meeting.

21. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered topics for inclusion in the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee's work programme for the 2013/14 Municipal Year and beyond.

The following issues were discussed:

- The Corporate Peer Challenge carried out by the Local Government Association in October 2013
- Building relationships between Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Development opportunities for newly elected Members
- The "Questioning / Challenging Skills" workshop, facilitated by the Parliamentary Outreach Service in January 2014
- Future development activities, including a session which had been prepared, in draft, by the Centre for Public Scrutiny
- Overview and Scrutiny work programme development and options for the June 2014 round of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings
- Opportunities for stakeholders / partners to influence the scrutiny work programme

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed that:

- c) The next Scrutiny Coordinating Committee meeting should take place in late April with the time and date to be confirmed outside of the meeting by the Senior Corporate Policy Officer;
- d) An update on ways to develop an effective 2014/15 work programme, with options for the June 2014 round of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, be considered by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee at their next meeting;
- e) The development activity, prepared in draft by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, be re-written to have a clear focus on building relationships between Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny. The session should be interactive and tailored to meet the particular needs of Maidstone Borough Council;
- f) An update on learning and development opportunities for Overview and Scrutiny (including for newly elected Members) be considered by the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee at their next meeting;
- g) The findings from the Corporate Peer Challenge, carried out by the Local Government Association in October 2013, be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee by the Head of Policy and Communications.

22. DURATION OF MEETING

9.30am to 11.40am