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19 November 2008

S U M M O N S

MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE: 27 November 2008
TIME: 6.00 p.m.
PLACE: Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Gosport
Democratic Services contact: Chris Wrein

LINDA EDWARDS
BOROUGH SOLICITOR

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Forder (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Salter (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Allen	Councillor Dickson
Councillor Beavis	Councillor Edwards
Councillor Carr	Councillor Mrs Forder
Councillor Champion	Councillor Salter
Councillor Cully	Councillor Miss West

FIRE PRECAUTIONS

(To be read from the Chair if members of the public are present)

In the event of the fire alarm (single continuous sound) being activated, please leave the room immediately.

Proceed downstairs by way of the main stairs or as directed by GBC staff, follow any of the emergency exit signs. People with disability or mobility issues please identify yourself to GBC staff who will assist in your evacuation of the building.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

- If you are in a wheelchair or have difficulty in walking and require access to the Committee Room on the First Floor of the Town Hall for this meeting, assistance can be provided by Town Hall staff on request

If you require any of the services detailed above please ring the Direct Line for the Democratic Services Officer listed on the Summons (first page).

NOTE:

Please note that mobile phones should be switched off for the duration of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies, if any, for inability to attend the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members present are reminded to declare, at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter, any personal (including financial) or prejudicial interest in any item(s) being considered at this meeting.

3. MINUTES

To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 September 2008 (attached)

4. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A) REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

To consider any requests for scrutiny received by the Borough Solicitor. A copy of the Scrutiny Work Plan Prioritisation Aid is attached.

(i) a request has been received from Councillors Carter, Edgar and Hook for the Review of the Stokes Bay Festival to be scrutinised.

B) WORK PROGRAMME

To consider the work programme (attached) for the Committee and any suggestions from Members for issues to be scrutinised.

C) OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

5. REPORTS TO BE RECEIVED

(i) CYCLE LANES WORKING GROUP

To update the Committee on the progress made by the Cycle Lanes Working Group (verbal update).

(ii) NOISE MONITORING WORKING GROUP

To update the Committee on the progress made by the Noise Monitoring Working Group (verbal update).

(iii) SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WORKING GROUP

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
27 November 2008

A meeting of the Working Group has been arranged for 2 December 2008.

(iv) **CALLS FOR ACTION AND LOCAL PETITIONS**

To provide Members with information on Calls for Action and Local Petitions (briefing note attached)

(v) **SCRUTINY OF BUDGET AGAINST OUTTURN – SCOPE AND SUGGESTED TIMETABLE**

To consider what arrangements might be put in place to facilitate a comparison of Final Accounts Outturn figures with Budgets (briefing note attached)

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Councillors Allen (P), Beavis (P), Carr (P), Champion, Cully (P), Dickson (P), Edwards (P), Mrs Forder (P), Forder (Chairman) (P), Mrs Salter, Salter (P) and Miss West (P).

18. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Champion and Mrs Salter.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 July 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

21. REPORTS TO BE RECEIVED

(i) CYCLE LANES WORKING GROUP

The Chairman reported that there had been no real progress with regard to requests to meet with representatives of Hampshire County Council. He referred Members to his correspondence with the County Director of Environment.

Members felt there was a need to continue efforts to engage with Hampshire County Council but, given the response received from the County Director of Environment, Members would have to be clear about what was needed in the Borough regarding cycle lanes. It was agreed that the Cycle Lanes Working Group should meet again to clarify this and to decide on a strategy to obtain answers from the County Council.

RESOLVED: That a further meeting of the Cycle Lanes Working Group be arranged to:

- a) identify the Borough's cycle lane priorities; and
- b) decide upon a strategy to engage with the County Council.

(ii) NOISE MONITORING WORKING GROUP

The Chairman reported that an officer from Hart District Council had been invited to the next meeting (22 October 2008) which was to be brought forward from 4.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

(iii) SCRUTINY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

The Chairman reported that a successful first training session, provided by the Chief Executive and the Borough Solicitor, had taken place on 16 September 2008.

It was agreed that an external trainer from the University of Birmingham be engaged to carry out training on questioning techniques. The preferred date and time was 17 December 2008 at 5.00 p.m.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) an external trainer from the University of Birmingham be engaged to carry out training on questioning techniques; and
- b) the training take place on 17 December 2008 at 5.00 p.m.

(vi) SELECTION AND PRIORITISATION OF TOPICS FOR SCRUTINY

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Borough Solicitor which contained a checklist which could be used to assist in selecting topics for scrutiny. If approved, the document, including the checklist (Scrutiny Work Plan Prioritisation Aid), could be included on the Council's website where it may generate interest from the public. The criteria could also be used in the future to assist Members when referring "Calls for Action" to the Committee.

The checklist included the following questions to be considered before embarking on a scrutiny:

- Does this issue have a potential impact for one or more section(s) of the population of Gosport?
- Is the issue strategic and significant?
- Will the scrutiny activity add value to the Council's, and/or its partners', overall performance?
- Is it likely to lead to effective outcomes?
- Will the scrutiny involvement be duplicating some other work?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners and stakeholders?
- Is it an issue of Community concern?
- Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?
- Is the Scrutiny activity timely?

RESOLVED: That the Criteria for choosing topics for scrutiny and Scrutiny Work Plan Prioritisation Aid be approved.

(v) SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Borough Solicitor which advised that the Act had come into force on 23 August 2007. The principle aim of the Act was to promote sustainability of local communities. For Local Authorities this meant encouraging the improvement of the economic, social (including participation in civic and political activity), or environmental wellbeing of the Authority's area or part of its area.

The regulations and the Selector were still to be confirmed and the first invitation had to be issued at the end of October this year. In these circumstances, it was suggested that the Committee note the contents of this report and that the Borough Solicitor provide an update report next year with details of proposals that had been made and approved or rejected by the Secretary of State.

Members were advised that in developing a Community Strategy, discussions needed to be held with the Council's partners on the Local Strategic Partnership.

The Borough Solicitor undertook to add the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 to the Committee Work Programme and brief the Committee again in six months time.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) the Borough Solicitor's briefing note be noted; and
- b) a further briefing take place in six months time.

(vi) GOSPORT'S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Chief Executive which provided Members with a progress update on Gosport's Sustainable Community Strategy and its Local Strategic Partnership.

Members were advised that the Strategy concentrated mainly on transport and local employment.

Gosport's Big Day Out had been a particular success. It had been funded by the Local Strategic Partnership who had agreed to provide support next year.

Members raised the issue of travel behaviour and the possible high cost of solutions and were advised that, rather than providing funding, the Local Strategic Partnership looked at alternative suggestions and provided encouragement to create interest in transport problems and solutions. The Council was looking at encouraging its own staff to participate in car sharing. The internet was also useful in helping travellers decide what mode of transport to use for particular journeys, for example bus and train timetables.

It was noted that Bay House School was not represented on the Local Strategic Partnership Board although it provided a large number of 'A' Level entries. It was suggested that the Chief Executive, as Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership Board, may consider raising this issue.

RESOLVED: That the six-monthly scrutiny of Gosport's Sustainable Community Strategy be concluded.

22. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A. REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

No requests for scrutiny had been received.

B. WORK PROGRAMME

The updated Work Programme was noted

C. OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

Two suggestions were made by Members:

- Provision of services for the elderly
- Review of the outturn budget

Provision of Services for the Elderly

It was felt that this subject would be important and high profile in the near future and that the Council would have a role to play. Currently, information was dispersed and many people did not take up benefits or services to which they were entitled.

The outcome of the scrutiny could be the publication of a booklet signposting elderly people to benefits and services and facilitating easier access. It was felt that this could add value to the lives of the elderly in Gosport and fitted in with the Council's priorities.

It was agreed that a working group be set up and the following Members were nominated to sit on it:

25 September 2008

- Councillor Dickson - Conservative
- Councillor Mrs Forder – Liberal Democrat
- Councillor Forder – Liberal Democrat
- Councillor Miss West - Conservative

Review of the Outturn Budget

It was agreed that this subject should be scrutinised by the whole Committee at a future meeting. In the meantime the Borough Solicitor undertook to request the Borough Treasurer to make a presentation at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That:

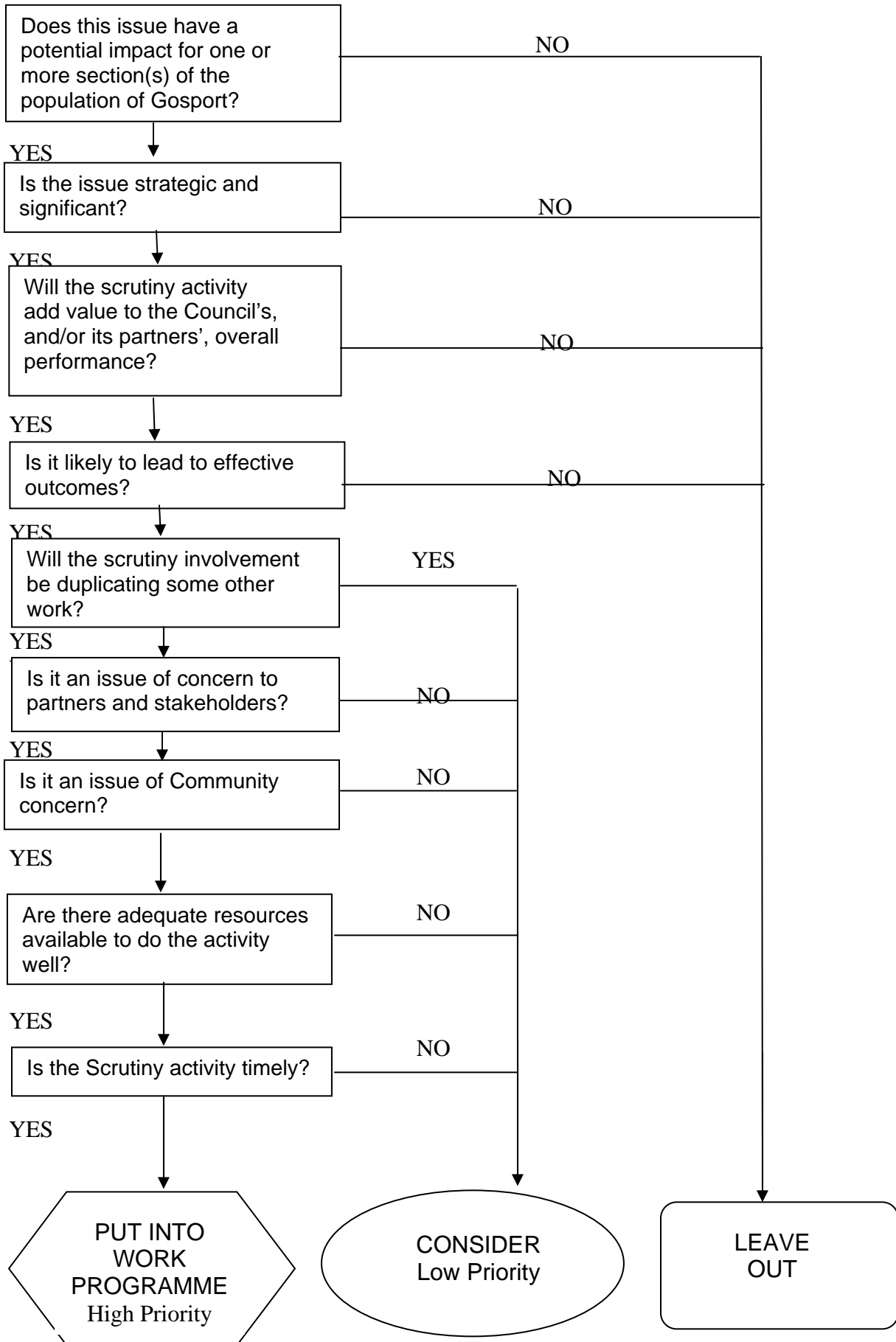
- a) a Working Group be established to scrutinise the provision of services for the elderly in Gosport;
- b) Councillors Dickson, Mrs Forder, Forder and Miss West be nominated to sit on the Working Group; and
- c) the outturn budget be scrutinised by the whole Committee at a future meeting.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to discuss.

The meeting ended at 7.15 p.m.

CHAIRMAN



AGENDA NO. 4B

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: WORK PROGRAMME

Work Area	Lead Officer	Date to be reported to Committee
Performance Information: <i>Consideration of performance information relating to actions agreed by CMT</i>	Mike Jeffery	At 6-monthly intervals. Next report: 29 January 2009
Community Strategy Action Plan: <i>Policy Framework Document</i>	Julie Petty	At 6-monthly intervals: Next report 26 March 2009
Disability Equality Scheme: <i>Receive progress report on an annual basis</i>	Julie Petty	Annually: Next report June 2009
Scrutiny Training:	Linda Edwards	Training on “Questioning” 17.12.08
Travel Tokens Working Group: <i>Progress report to decide whether the Committee wishes this scrutiny to continue and, if appropriate, to nominate membership.</i>	Julian Bowcher	Watching brief – no action at present
Noise Monitoring Working Group	David Palmer	Update 27 November 2008. Final report January 2009.
Services for the Elderly Working Group		Update 27 November 2008
Review of Outturn Budget (Whole Committee Scrutiny)	Peter Wilson	27 November 2008

Cycle Lanes Working Group	David Duckett	Update 27 November 2008. Final report January 2009.
New Member Induction and Training		Report to Standards and Governance Committee on 30 October 2008.
Sustainable Communities Act 2007	Linda Edwards	26 March 2009
Calls for Action	Linda Edwards	27 November 2008
Work areas: <i>Review at each meeting</i>		

BRIEFING NOTE

To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date:	27 November 2008
Title:	Calls for Action and Local Petitions
Author:	Borough Solicitor
Purpose:	For decision

1.0 Background

At the recent training session Members asked for information on calls for action.

2.0 Report

Calls for Action

2.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 make s provision for an individual councillor to refer local government matters to the overview and scrutiny committee this is known as the Councillor Call for Action('CCfA').

2.2 The details of how these provisions will work in practice are to be covered in regulations and guidance which has been the subject of consultation in early 2008. The DCLG published their response to the consultation in July 2008. Both documents may be accessed on the DCLG website and copies have been placed in the Members Room Library.

2.3 The CCfA enables a councillor to refer the local government matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or the crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committee, and it has to be included on the Committee's agenda. However the Committee is still able to decide whether or not to undertake a scrutiny of that matter.

2.4 The Government has stated that it intends to bring this power into force by the end of 2008 and will issue guidance on the principles of the CCfA, how councillors should use this power and advising the Council how to deal with them

before the end of this year. The guidance will cover the timeframe for dealing with CCfA's, repeat or vexatious requests and issues affecting more than ward.

2.5 The Committee has adopted criteria for selecting and prioritising requests for scrutiny and it will be necessary to review the criteria once the guidance has been issued.

Petitions

2.6 As part of the above consultation the government sought views on how arrangements for local petitions could be strengthened. The response document referred to above states that the government intends to place a statutory duty on the Council to respond to all local petitions, including electronic petitions. Details of what constitutes a petition how it should be responded to and rights of appeal for petitioners who feel that the Council has not dealt with their petition are to be set out in guidance. The government are considering how overview and scrutiny may play a part in this area.

2.7 The government have not thus far indicated when then intend to introduce and issue guidance.

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 That this report is noted and that a further report is presented to the Committee as and these provisions are brought into force.

BRIEFING NOTE

To:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date:	27 November 2008
Title:	Scrutiny of Budget Against Outturn – Scope and Suggested Timetable
Author:	Borough Treasurer
Purpose:	To consider what arrangements might be put in place to facilitate a comparison of Final Accounts Outturn figures with Budgets.

1.0 Background

At the last meeting of the Committee Members asked for guidance on comparing the Council's actual financial performance with its budgeted intentions.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Council's annual budget is approved in February each year and sets expenditure and income levels for the financial year commencing 1st April plus a Revised Budget for the partially complete current financial year. During the year the budget is monitored continuously by staff and quarterly monitors are produced for the information of Policy & Organisation Board members. The monitors anticipate significant year end variations and consider known risk areas.
- 2.2 If any of the anticipated variations can be accurately quantified they may need specific Board approval during the year as required by Financial Regulations governing Virements and Supplementary Estimates.
- 2.3 The Council's Draft Final Accounts (Statement of Accounts) for the year are considered by Policy & Organisation Board before the end of June following the end of the financial year to which they relate, prior to the statutory public inspection and external audit processes taking place. Policy & Organisation Board receive an accompanying report which highlights specific issues including significant variations from Revised Budgets.

- 2.4 There is currently no opportunity for members to consider budget variations in depth and a specific role for Overview & Scrutiny could fill this gap.
- 2.5 Most of the necessary work to facilitate this is already done by officers and could be placed before the Committee during July, following the report to Policy & Organisation Board. (The report could also usefully be considered against the following year's 1st quarter's budget monitor for "knock-on" implications, if the meeting were scheduled for late in July).
- 2.6 As it is now late in the year to consider last financial year's data, it is suggested that this process could commence next summer. The report produced for Policy & Organisation Board next June will be amended slightly to facilitate it being referred to this Committee without further changes or a separate report being required.
- 2.7 The new format for analysing variations should relate to the Original Budget for the year with due regard to variations already identified in budget monitors and Revised Budget so that a clear picture of how outturn variations have arisen and whether they have been picked up at an appropriate time can be considered. It is suggested that the level of variations shown in the report and examined by scrutiny should be those contained within Financial Regulations i.e. those that would require member approval as virements or supplementary estimates.
- 2.8 Valuable potential outcomes from this proposed process include better understanding of the budget process and improved accountability and it is possible that this could lead to more accurate budgeting and a better assessment of budget risk in the future. The process should be considered to be a pilot for something that could be embedded in future programmes, not a one-off.
- 2.9 The initial exercise in July 2009 should consider General Fund, Housing and Capital variations and Reserve levels, with a view to deciding whether future year's examinations could be focussed differently. Known high risk budget areas would be included even where significant variations have not arisen.

3.0 Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee require that the variations from Budget recorded in the Council's Final Accounts outturn report to Policy & Organisation Board be referred for consideration by Overview & Scrutiny Committee in future, commencing with 2008/9 data in July, 2009.