

**A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WAS HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2008**

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

24. APOLOGIES

An apology for inability to attend the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Cully.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 September 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

27. DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME

A) REQUESTS FOR SCRUTINY

It was reported that a request had been received from Councillors Carter, Edgar and Hook for the Review of the Stokes Bay Festival to be scrutinised. Subsequently, a resolution had been made at Council on 26 November 2008 that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to carry out a comprehensive review on the Stokes Bay Festival held from 31 July to 3 August 2008, inviting all outside bodies such as the Friends of Stokes Bay, the Police, Fire and Rescue, traders, the events organiser and others to put forward their observations for a safer festival for the future.

Members considered that, as the subject had been debated so recently at Council, it would be appropriate to allow a longer period of time between the debate and making a decision on whether or not to scrutinise this matter. It was therefore decided that such a decision should be deferred until the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 January 2009.

The Chairman advised the Committee of a forthcoming request for the operation of the Council's Nursery to be scrutinised. It was explained that there were issues surrounding the current grounds maintenance contract, which had recently been extended for a further two years. The operation of any new contract would need issues at the Nursery to be resolved as the new contractor may be required to use it as part of the contract.

There would be a need to look at business and capital investment cases for the Nursery and there were also associated pressures relating to the redevelopment of Rowner.

It was felt that it would not be possible for a thorough scrutiny to be carried out before the end of the current Municipal Year but certain elements could be looked into. Options could then be considered in the new Municipal Year. The critical date would be October 2009 when any new investment plans would be built into the 2009/10 budget.

Areas for scrutiny could also include the sale of produce to other organisations. Investigations could be carried out into what should and should not be grown at the Nursery and what produce could be bought in to achieve better value.

It was agreed that a report on these issues should be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on 29 January 2009.

B) WORK PROGRAMME

The updated Work Programme was noted.

C) OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY

There were no other suggestions for scrutiny.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) a decision on whether or not to scrutinise the Stokes Bay Festival be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee on 29 January 2009; and
- b) a report on the Nursery be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on 29 January 2009.

28. REPORTS RECEIVED

(i) CYCLE LANES WORKING GROUP

The Chairman reported that the Working Group had encountered difficulties engaging with Hampshire County Council in trying to ascertain what funding may be available for improvements to the cycle lane network in Gosport. It was felt that Gosport cycle lanes should feature on the County Council agenda, possibly through the Hampshire Action Team, but the engagement problems had made it difficult for the Working Group to progress any further.

A position statement for the Working Group (Councillors Beavis, Dickson, Mrs Forder and Mrs Salter) was circulated which highlighted the tasks of the Working Group and advised of progress made and dates for completion. The work areas included improvements, maintenance and promotion of the cycle lane network in Gosport together with a report to be presented to the Committee in January 2009.

Councillor Beavis made reference to a briefing note from Executive Director of Groundwork Solent whose work covered areas identified by the Working Group. It was felt that Groundwork Solent may be able to support the Borough Council when approaching Hampshire County Council.

It was also felt that a clear cycle lane strategy for Gosport was needed and it was agreed that the next step would be for Councillors Beavis and Mrs Forder to meet with the Borough Solicitor to draft a report which, subject to the approval of the Working Group, would be presented to this Committee.

The Working Group's thanks were expressed to David Duckett, Head of Traffic Management, for the work he had produced and the help he had given to Members.

RESOLVED: That Councillors Beavis and Mrs Forder meet with the Borough Solicitor to draft a report on behalf of the Cycle Lanes Working Group for submission to the Committee.

(ii) NOISE MONITORING WORKING GROUP

The draft report of the Working Group, compiled by Councillor Allen, was circulated to Members. Following any amendments, the report would be considered at the meeting of the Committee on 29 January 2009.

Officers were thanked for their contributions towards the work of the Working Group and the report.

(iii) SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WORKING GROUP

Members were advised that the first meeting of the Working Group had been arranged for 2 December 2008. It was hoped that Mr Frank Dunn of Age Concern and Councillor Cully would be able to attend to assist the Working Group.

(iv) CALLS FOR ACTION AND LOCAL PETITIONS

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Borough Solicitor which provided Members with information on calls for action and local petitions and recommended that the report be noted and a further report be presented to the Committee as and when the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 were brought into force.

Members were advised that little detail was currently available and that primary or secondary legislation may be required for local petitions. Guidance was awaited on calls for action. It was therefore not clear at the moment what the role of scrutiny would be in these areas.

RESOLVED: That the Borough Solicitor's report be noted and that a further report be presented to the Committee as and when the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 are brought into force.

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

Consideration was given to a briefing note of the Borough Treasurer which provided guidance on comparing the Council's actual financial performance with its budgeted intentions. It had been recommended that the variations from Budget recorded in the Council's Final Accounts outturn report to the Policy & Organisation Board should be referred for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in future, commencing with 2008/9 data in July, 2009.

The Borough Treasurer advised that there had been a gap in accountability and additional information could be produced to assist a process which would be regarded as useful stewardship.

The scrutiny process would be able to concentrate on areas requiring virement approval, supplementary estimates and links to financial regulations to which officers already worked. Initially it would not be advisable to concentrate on fine detail but areas of work could be refined later on.

RESOLVED: That the variations from Budget recorded in the Council's Final Accounts outturn report to Policy & Organisation Board be referred for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in future, commencing with 2008/9 data in July, 2009.

29. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a) The Chairman reminded the Committee of the training session on Questioning Techniques that had been arranged for 17 December 2008 at 5.00 p.m. to which all Members were invited.
- b) The Chairman advised that he and Councillor Mrs Salter had met with Councillor Cartwright of Hampshire County Council to explore collaborative scrutiny between the Borough and the County. The Chairman expressed the view that, as well as any topics which would be of interest to the Borough Council, any shared training opportunities would also be considered.

The meeting ended at 7.05 p.m.

CHAIRMAN