

AT A MEETING
- of the
**REGENERATION, HOUSING,
ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**
held at The Council House, Walsall on
Wednesday 6 July 2005 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor I Shires (Chairman)
Councillor Arif (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Johnson
Councillor Robinson
Councillor Rose
Councillor Yasin

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Jamie Morris, Councillor Longhi, Councillor Harrison, Councillor Anson and Councillor Andrews.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Councillor I Shires welcomed new members and officers to the first meeting of Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel for this municipal year 2005/6 and outlined the purpose of the meeting; that being to briefly consider the work of the scrutiny panel and working groups from last year and to consider what this years scrutiny panel would like to take a closer look at. He emphasised the need for the working group members to be committed to the task in hand.

RECEIPT OF DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

The members of the political groups represented on the panel indicated that there were no whipping arrangements for any of the political parties in respect of the items on the agenda. There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings held on 5 April and 12 May 2005, copies having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

SCOPING THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2005/6

The report of the Executive Director was submitted: -

(see annexed).

Councillor Shires gave an overview of the outcomes of the end of year event and emphasised the following: -

- The importance of staying focussed on issues and keeping meetings focussed;
- The role of scrutiny has the potential to be utilised more and its profile should be raised;
- A closer working relationship with portfolio holders would be beneficial;
- The importance of linking common themes and conducting more joint panel working.

Councillor Shires thanked the members and officers for their work at working groups in 2004/5. He emphasised the excellent report of Telecommunication Masts Working Group which would be considered later in this agenda, the presentation to cabinet relating to the scrutiny of the Strategic Rail Authority – Rail Utilisation Strategy, and the call in of Neighbourhood Resource Centres when the scrutiny panel successfully challenged the cabinet and recommended they reconsider their decision.

Members considered the report in particular the appendices 1a, 1b and 2 which highlighted the key directorate targets for 2005/6.

Members highlighted the following issues: -

- Walsall Market;
- Bereavement Services;
- Crime and Disorder – Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Support of Local Neighbourhood Partnerships;
- Routes into Walsall Accessibility;
- Travellers Strategy;
- Black Country Study Consultation Process;
- Recycling;
- Darlaston URC Framework;
- Local Transport Plan;
- Car Parking Strategy;
- Shop Mobility;
- Waterfront Development;
- District Centres Consultants Report DDP.

7.10 p.m. the meeting adjourned for ten minutes to enable officers to consider the current position with each of the matters highlighted.

The Executive Director advised the panel indicating that a number of the issues identified for scrutiny were already being addressed in a different forum. Markets and Bereavement Services were the subject of reviews and a report and improvement plan would be brought forward to the panel during this municipal year. Crime and Disorder Strategy was the subject of a review last year and would be brought forward as part of the monitoring of the improvement plan.

He advised that the several issues raised were subject of work ongoing and that the reports could be brought to panel to highlight the main issues and inform members of the current position. If members required giving opportunity to focus on a particular aspect which may be picked up for scrutiny later in the work programme. Possible key information reports: -

- Local Transportation Plan;
- Shop Mobility;
- Travellers Strategy;
- Black Country Study;
- Waterfront Development;
- Darlaston Strategic;
- District Centres;
- Routes into Walsall.

Members were advised that the support of Local Neighbourhood Partnerships is within the remit of the Community Organisation Scrutiny Panel and agreed to include it in the rolling programme of scrutiny for 2005/6 as a possible issue to pursue as a joint piece of work with that panel.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Telecommunication Masts Working Group be re-established for municipal year 2005/6. The membership of the working group be as follows: -

- Councillor A. Johnson (Lead Member)
- Councillor I. Shires
- Councillor Harrison

The remit of the working group to consult the public and establish their views of the recommendations in the draft report and to conclude the Telecommunication Masts Review;

- 2) That the Recycling Working Group be established for municipal year 2005/6. The membership of the group as follows: -

- Councillor A. Johnson (Lead Member)
- Councillor C. Rose
- Councillor M. Arif

- Councillor D. Anson

The remit of the group to explore the inequalities of distribution recycling facilities across the Walsall borough and to investigate expansion of recycling facilities in particular relating to plastic bottles and tyres;

- 3) That the Car Parking Strategy Working Group be established for municipal year 2005/6. Membership of the working group as follows: -

- Councillor Robinson (Lead Member)
- Councillor Yasin
- Councillor Rose
- Councillor Ian Shires
- Councillor Anson
- Councillor Aslam

The remit of the Car Parking Strategy group to investigate the following issues: -

- Park and Ride;
- Car Parks and Congestion Charges;
- Public Transportation;
- Disabled Parking;
- Other issues: -
 - Accessibility;
 - Shop Mobility;
 - Decriminalisation of Parking;
 - Car Park Wardens.

- 4) That the work programme include the following: -

- Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report;
- Quarterly Monitoring of Improvement Plans;
- Information Reports/Presentation on the following issues: -
 - Shop Mobility
 - Waterfront Development;
 - Local Transportation Plan;
 - District Centres;
 - Darlaston Strategic;
 - Black Country Study;
 - Travellers Strategy;
 - Routes into Walsall,
 - Crime and Disorder;
- On completion of reviews a report and presentation on Bereavement Services and Walsall Market.

- Joint work group Local Neighbourhood Partnership.

TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS WORKING GROUP DRAFT REPORT

The report of the Telecommunication Masts Working Group was submitted: -
(see annexed).

The chairman advised that this was an opportunity for members to make comments and observations on the report. David Elsworthy, Lead Officer for the working group outlined the main findings and recommendations of the working group.

Councillor Robinson recommended that officers and members of the working group should be congratulated on an excellent piece of work. Councillor Johnson concurred with his comments and reiterated that the work and commitment of officers and members has contributed to a really interesting piece of scrutiny.

Councillor Shires suggested that the report did not evidence public consultation and recommended the working group be re-established to carry out consultation with the public and to sharpen up the recommendations.

The panel agreed that the work carried out was a good piece of work and that the recommendations and conclusion of the report should not be rushed into.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the draft report be noted.
- 2) That the Telecommunications working group carry out consultation with public and conclude the review report to be presented to council later in the municipal year 2005/6.

PLANNING BEST VALUE REVIEW IMPROVEMENT PLAN MONITORING

The report of the Executive Director was submitted: -

(see annexed).

Members were advised by Mr David Elsworthy that the appendices to the report had not been circulated. The chairman felt that without the appendices the report could not be fully explored by the scrutiny panel and recommended that a special meeting be set up to give member's full opportunity to read and digest the information on the improvement plan appendices.

RESOLVED

That a special meeting of the Regeneration, Environment, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel be arranged to take place

at the earliest opportunity to consider in full the Planning Best Value Review Improvement Plan Monitoring Report.

SCRUTINY CHAMPIONS NETWORK

The Scrutiny Champions Network document was circulated for information. Member's welcomed the distribution of further information relating to scrutiny.

The scrutiny officer advised members that regular meetings of officers and members from around the West Midlands area took place and that the next meeting would be taking place at Stoke Council on 15 October 2005. Councillor Johnson emphasised the need for members to attend the working groups and to carry out independent research through the use of the Centre for Public Scrutiny Website. The chairman, Councillor Shires further emphasised the need for members to put the effort into the work group and individual research to get the most out of scrutiny.

FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the items on the Forward Plan.

Councillor Shires advised members of the new working arrangements relating to the forward plan. He stated that the forward plan would be made available at the earliest opportunity to all group rooms and that they should contact the chairman/vice chairman or the scrutiny office to request an item be included on future agendas.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 8.05 p.m.