

AT A MEETING  
- of the -  
**RESOURCES AND  
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY  
AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**  
held at the Council House,  
Walsall on **13 April 2006** at  
6.00pm

**PRESENT**

Councillor Sanders (Chair)  
Councillor Sarohi (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Griffiths  
Councillor Micklewright  
Councillor Rochelle  
Councillor D Shires  
Councillor Turner

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Andy Burns (Assistant Director of Finance)  
Rob Flinter (Head of Performance Management)  
Clive Wright (Director Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership)

**SCRUTINY SUPPORT**

Nikki Ehlen (Scrutiny Officer)

**51. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Young.

**52. SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for this meeting.

**53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

**54. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2006, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

(Annexed)

## 55. PANEL WORK UPDATE

Councillor Sanders informed the panel of a change to the agenda, this was to receive item 6 after 5.1 and then to take item 5.2.

## REPORT FROM VALUE FOR MONEY (CPA USE OF RESOURCES) WORK GROUP AND SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Rob Flinter informed the panel that it was recognised that value for money (vfm) was a complex issue and that the value for money work group had done a lot of interesting work; this had included members meeting to consider the issue without officers. He concluded that members may consider this to be a key piece of work for next year.

Councillor Sarohi said that it would allow comparisons to be made with other local authorities and he added that it would be useful if other scrutiny panels continued this work in the following municipal year. Members of the work group thanked the Chair for suggesting that they completed this piece of work because vfm was a subject that they were all interested in. Members described the difficulty in assessing whether a service provided value for money and stated that all panels should be encouraged to conduct a vfm assessment as part of their work programme on a continuous basis. Councillor Chambers stated that he was fully supportive of piloting the framework and he looked forward to its impact.

The work group thanked Helen Dudson for her work throughout the year.

## RESOLVED

The panel agreed the recommendations of the report and adopted the value for money framework.

## LAA AND LSP UPDATE

Clive Wright, Director of the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP) introduced himself to the panel, presented on the progress of the LAA, reported on consultation of the LAA and commented on the role of scrutiny in relation to the LAA.

(Annexed)

Councillor Sanders thanked Clive Wright for his time and stated that it was pleasing to see joined up thinking between the Council and its partners. Clive Wright said that a key challenge was to keep partners accountable. Councillor Rochelle requested clarification that the LSP in Walsall was the WBSP. Clive Wright said that yes the WBSP was the LSP in Walsall.

Councillor Chambers said that he welcomed the exciting future of the LAA, but expressed concern that there was no exit strategy and asked how it would be funded when it ends. Clive Wright explained that a culture change was required within the borough to fund initiatives which had the highest impact. He explained that schemes would be funded this year but following this they would be stopped or mainstreamed. Clive stated that this should mean good projects be mainstreamed and initiatives that are not effective may not be continued. He concluded that this should mean that effective schemes are not stopped because funding was discontinued.

Councillor Sanders asked Clive Wright whether LNPs would have the opportunity to receive direction about what LSPs expect of LNPs. Clive Wright explained that a 'bottom up' local voice was needed and LNPs should be a way of reviewing and making the community plan accountable. LNPs should have an input into how resources are distributed in an area to encourage service deliverers to modify what they do locally.

Councillor Griffiths said that following Clive Wrights presentation he had a greater understanding about the LAA and in scrutinising this, members should be proactive and look forward.

The panel thanked Clive Wright and welcomed him to Walsall.

#### REPORT FROM LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA) WORK GROUP

The panel discussed the future arrangements of the scrutiny of the LAA, and it was concluded that this would be decided at the first panel of the new municipal year.

Nikki Ehlen asked members of the LAA work group to give their feedback and finalise the report to panel.

Councillor Turner said that he was happy with the report and completed work had been made easier because of the high quality of the officers assisting the group. Councillor Rochelle stated that he was also happy with the report.

Members discussed the recommendations of the work group and decided to make amendments to better reflect the conclusions of the working group.

#### RESOLVED

It was agreed that the recommendations would be amended to include; -

- 3.1 Members requested that they receive more information in the future on the role of the member in the LSP and the group should continue to receive information to enable them to remain engaged.
- 3.2 That scrutiny should have a formal role, which was to be determined following ODPM consultation.

### MEMBER FOLDER PILOT

Members agreed that the member folder was fit for purpose. Councillor Micklewright requested that when papers are sent out they are prepared ready for insertion into the folders. Councillor Chambers said that it looked like a useful folder, which may be particularly helpful for new members but that he had not yet received one, Nikki Ehlen said that it would be arranged for Councillor Chambers to be sent a folder. Councillor Sanders said that it was a good reference point with useful contacts for officers and members.

### RESOLVED

The panel recommend that member folders are rolled out to other scrutiny and performance panels in the new municipal year.

### 56. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS

The panel received and noted the Beacon Index – quarter 3 performance which went to Cabinet on 1 March 2006.

Councillor Rochelle asked officers if a back-up of the data system in different premises exists. Andy Burns responded by explaining that a back-up system exists for core financial systems but universal cover for all systems does not, although the Council was looking at putting these systems in place.

Councillor Chambers asked if it was possible for members to be briefed on performance information. Rob Flinter explained that briefing sessions were to be held for officers and it was possible to offer these sessions to members.

Rob Flinter introduced the CPA Improvement Plan for noting, which went to Cabinet on 12 April. He explained that this would be the last CPA improvement plan for the Council because a forward looking action plan would be developed in preparation for the CPA corporate assessment and Joint Area Review (JAR).

### 57. INFORMATION ITEMS

Nikki Ehlen introduced the Scrutiny Performance Review update and explained that the purpose of this report was to inform members of the progress on the completion of the review and the drafting of the improvement plan for scrutiny. Rob Flinter reminded the panel that members had been asked to give their comments on the report by 7 April 2006 but that this had subsequently been extended to 13 April 2006. Councillor Sanders said that the IDeA scrutiny health check report was a good report and he agreed with the recommendations.

Rob Flinter introduced the Beacon Index report 2006/07 which went to Cabinet on 12 April. He explained that this report was for member's information and stated that there were some minor changes to levels 1 and 3 and level 2 had been amended because the Councils pledges change each year.

Rob Flinter invited those members who had received a demonstration of the PIMS system to give their comments to the panel. Councillor Sanders stated that the council was in its early days with PIMS and it will be a good tool; he added that he was disappointed it has taken so long to develop. Rob explained that it was a web based system which allows access to data more quickly, he said that this should reduce the amount of frustration members experience when they receive out of date performance information and once PIMS was up and running members will be able to identify areas of concern much more quickly which would assist in the development of corrective action plans.

## 58. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY ACTIVITIES

Nikki Ehlen invited members to evaluate the panel's work of the municipal year to inform the report to the panel in the new municipal year. Andy Burns posed the questions

- What has gone well?
- What could have gone better?

Members discussed the panels work throughout the year. Councillor Sanders asked the panel for their opinions on what has gone well and what could have gone better for the panel throughout the year.

Members discussed the scrutiny of the budget which had been positive and the panels work around the LAA was also a good piece of work. Councillor Rochelle stated that the Beacon Index was clear and the conclusions were satisfactory. Councillor Turner added that the two working groups have done well and also that he was pleased with the presentation on the LAA. Councillor Sanders said that the work done on the budget was constructive and that officer contribution had improved.

Councillor Turner said that he was disappointed that the panel was only able to have 2 working groups, and he stated that he thought the operation of working groups could be improved by using it as a 'short sharp' tool. Councillors Griffiths and Micklewright said that they were disappointed that the scrutiny panel had experienced reduced input into the budget. Andy Burns explained that changes to the Government grant timetable and various other events which had caused knock on effects for scrutiny.

Councillor Sanders said that he has been pleased with the excellent presentations, good member attendance and exceptional officer support. He thanked Councillor Rochelle for suggesting the creation of member folders and thanked those members who had visited other councils. Councillor Sanders explained that it would be difficult to support any more than 2 working groups. He added that for the first time members had worked without officer support which was positive.

Councillor Rochelle asked whether it would be possible to form a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) working group. Andy Burns said that this may be outside the remit

of the panel but that members could look at the performance monitoring arrangements under their remit. Councillor Chambers stated that as far as he was aware the Community Organisation Leisure and Culture Scrutiny and Performance Panel had plans to scrutinise the CAB.

Councillor Sanders thanked members and officers for their contributions throughout the year.

#### 59. FORWARD PLAN

##### CABINET FORWARD PLAN

No issues regarding the cabinet forward plan were raised.

##### DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting will be agreed in May at annual Council.

##### TERMINATION OF MEETING

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.45pm.

Chair.....

Date.....