

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

5 JUNE 2017 - 2:30PM



PRESENT: Councillor F H Yeulett (Chairman), Councillors Mrs A Hay (Vice-Chairman), M Buckton, S Count, Mrs M Davis and Mrs K F Mayor

APOLOGIES: Councillors G G R Booth, Mrs D Laws, D Mason and A Pugh

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Geoff Kent (Head of Customer Service), Charlotte Boast (Policy and Communications)

OSC4/17 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of 3 April 2017 were confirmed and signed.

OSC5/17 DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Yeulett introduced the report as a summary of work that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel had been doing. He said that the report stresses that a fair amount of time has been put on Overview going forward and talks about the call-in procedure that was then taken to Full Council.

Councillor Yeulett asked if Members thought there was the right balance between overview and scrutiny. There were no comments made.

Councillor Yeulett advised that further training was being considered for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. He questioned what sort of training was felt was required and that a list had been given to Anna Goodall, (Head of Legal and Governance) who has taken the action forward. Councillor Yeulett thought the Overview and Scrutiny Panel would perhaps like to meet up with some Scrutiny Colleagues from other Local Authorities and exchange ideas and experiences that would broaden understanding. He asked if the Panel had any other ideas of areas that should be looked at.

Councillor Count said that he imagined that there would be a Municipal Journal award for Best Scrutiny in the Country and somewhere that there maybe some recognition of a body that excels at scrutiny. Councillor Mrs Davis agreed and said that if we are going to meet somebody then it should be the best. Councillor Count said that he didn't know where these Colleagues would be found but that it would be a good idea and Councillor Yeulett agreed.

Councillor Yeulett then asked if there were any other partners the Council works with, either directly or indirectly, that the panel thought should come to a Committee meeting. He referenced that the LEP was brought in last time and then asked if there were any other areas that should be considered. There were no suggestions made. Councillor Yeulett then said that if anybody had ideas at a later date then an effort could be made to accommodate this in the future programme.

Councillor Count said that the Mayor could be asked to attend, although the Panel may not be the most appropriate route to take. He suggested that Councillor Clark should see if the Mayor could be invited to attend a Fenland Council meeting to address members. He continued to say that in terms of the Combined Authority, one of the key pieces of work that Overview and Scrutiny may want to look at is the plans for public sector reform, which co-incidentally is in the Mayor's portfolio. He said that an early sight of that would help Overview and Scrutiny to get fully involved. Councillor

Yeulett agreed and said that he had a note for any recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny to be taken forward to the Combined Authority.

Councillor Yeulett then continued to say that another point worth thinking about was whether there was the right balance between overview and scrutiny. Councillors Mrs Davis and Mrs Hay said they thought there was the right balance. Councillor Mrs Hay said she thought it was promising that officers were more inclined to want to come to Overview and Scrutiny and present their report.

Councillor Yeulett said it is important that the right balance was struck going forward and that Councillor Buckton had a suggestion about the markets which would be covered later on in the meeting. He then asked if the committee thought they gave quality recommendations and whether the result process is properly in place. He said that the Committee are making recommendations, but questioned whether they are being carried through and adding value to the District Council.

Councillor Mrs Davis said that in her opinion not all of the recommendations were necessarily being picked up, and that some were being picked up albeit slowly, which is why it was asked for an action list to be produced. She said that it was something that the Committee need to be following through. Councillor Mrs Hay said that the Committee needed to be asking questions where there does seem to be little movement on the recommendation and should be asking for a timescale. Councillor Yeulett agreed.

Councillor Mrs Mayor then suggested that a recommendation could be made on the timescale. Councillor Mrs Davis said that this would be initially quite hard to do as the Committee are not the Officers, so do not know what time is available to progress the recommendations. Councillor Mrs Mayor responded to say a time could be given for review, which could be challenged if it was considered insufficient. Councillor Mrs Davis said that she understood Councillor Mrs Mayor and suggested that perhaps it could be worded as 'can you come back within the next three months and if you can't, can you let us know'. Councillor Buckton suggested a third option which was to provide a timescale for an update to Overview and Scrutiny. Councillor Yeulett then asked if it was thought that an update should be an agenda item. Councillor Buckton said that he thought it should be both. Councillor Yeulett summarised that it should be a confirmation on the status of recommendations that have been made and progress that appears formally on the agenda. Councillor Count said that if a recommendation is made then it should be said as part of that, when an update for Overview and Scrutiny should be given. That then puts the onus on the person picking up the recommendation Councillor Count said this means that this ensures that relevant updates are provided on the agenda items. Councillor Yeulett agreed and said the Committee should see how this works.

Councillor Buckton added that he thought that some items discussed with Portfolio Holders and Officers, can have less information than required sometimes, which leads for a request for more information when it is available. He gave the example of a previous Planning meeting where the assertion was there had been a fall in performance because of a significant increase in the number of planning applications. He said at that time it was not borne out by the figures, and it was ultimately shown that there was not an increase in the number of planning applications up to that point. Councillor Buckton said that he didn't know what the end of year figure is, so he would like the issue to be revisited to see if there was an increase in planning applications as that was the reason they were given. Councillor Mrs Davis said that they should probably be invited back again. Councillor Buckton said if increased planning applications wasn't the reason, then the Committee should be asking questions again. He said the Committee are told things sometimes that cannot be verified at that point, and there are other examples of this such as the markets action plan. He said that the Committee had been told it was getting better, when it actually wasn't and that has never been borne out. Councillor Yeulett then said that Officers should be instructed to bring appropriate figures to the Committee at a later time to formalise the process. Councillor Buckton said that as a recommendation it is a request for future information that will verify what the Committee have been told in a meeting. He said that he would have to go back to find further

examples but that the Environment briefing had real queries that weren't able to be resolved because it wasn't all the way through the year. He questioned what the increase in Landfill Tax has been following the brown bin implementation and whether it was offset against the savings. He said that questions were asked about the take-up which was met with platitudes, and that Councillor Mrs Davis had asked whether there had been an increase in fly tipping or any issue in relation to Cambridgeshire County Council sites. Councillor Yeulett said that there will be an examination in the performance of the brown bin and we can ask some of these questions when the scheme has been running for a little while.

Geoff Kent summarised two key points. The first was whether recommendations should include officers to do X, but come back at Y date with an update. The second was whether the work programme should come back to items such as the garden waste scheme for a progress report later in the year. Councillor Buckton agreed that this progress report should also address unanswered questions.

Councillor Count said that instead of recommendations, they may fall into the 'action required'. He said if the minutes are finished and there are still questions to be answered then you would put 'action required' for the attention of an Officer. He continued to say that agenda reports could have a running sheet of actions which will have a completion date eg, post end of year which sits in front of the Committee until it is dealt with.

Councillor Yeulett summarised the discussion to say that a running sheet of actions should be included within the agenda pack which can be looked at during the pre-meeting. He said that this will enable the Committee to tick off the actions that have been completed and go through the actions that need attention in the meeting.

Councillor Yeulett asked if Members were happy with the Annual Report. There were no comments.

OSC6/17 PAPERLESS REVIEW

Councillor Yeulett said that there has been some very good work done on the paperless review, which has resulted in savings being made.

Councillor Mrs Hay gave an update on the project:

- In the year before the Council became paperless, it was identified that the Council had spent £12,935 per annum in respect of committee reports. It has now been shown that a saving has been made of £11,816 over the year.
- The project aims to deliver further savings going forward. Currently we provide 6 paper copies of every meeting, Officers advise most of the time these copies are unused. We have recommended that members of the public are directed to an area on the website where they can download or print a copy of the information themselves. Alternatively, if they give correct notice, then the Council can print a paper copy - this would stop the automatic process of paper copies being provided. By doing this, we hope we can deliver even more savings.
- As previously suggested, the project would like to see Officers (at least in Committee meetings) to show they are part paperless. In the long term, Officers should be asked to provide an action plan that will outline the timescale and required processes for the entire organisation to go paperless, as well as any cost implications.

Councillor Mrs Hay signposted the meeting to look at the number of recommendations that were made in the report. She said that Councillor Buckton had made some suggestions about delegating to Officers.

Councillor Buckton said that his suggestion related to the terminology of the recommendation. He said that instead of saying 'Members delegate to Officer's' it should be more active, reading something like ' a secure, confidential electronic mechanism for shredding confidential items should be researched and identified'. He said that the action then becomes about doing something, rather than just delegating. Councillor Mrs Hay agreed. Councillor Yeulett asked for comments.

Councillor Count said he was happy with the recommendation but said that the public need to know that measures are being taken to reduce the financial burden. He said that an action should be to publicise the project and ask the Communications Team to do a press release. Councillor Yeulett said Officers can take that task with them when they return to the office. He said that the project was a movable, dynamic thing that was improving over time.

Councillor Mrs Hay said that when she was talking on a one-to-one basis with all Members, she was pleasantly surprised by the acceptance of the project. She said initially there had been some resistance, whereas now many Members had accepted and embraced it.

OSC7/17 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Yeulett referenced an earlier discussion about markets and said that the topic should be included in the future work programme. He said that there had been a Committee date suggested in September.

Councillor Yeulett asked if there were any further comments on the future programme. Councillor Count suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel should undertake a benchmarking exercise for the organisation and see where that could lead. He said that was something that should be considered for a forward plan. Councillor Yeulett and the other Members were happy with this. He said that this links with the current training and learning agenda and is a good opportunity to exchange ideas.

Councillor Yeulett made a comment about the last extraordinary meeting with the LEP. He said that he would like the minutes from that as soon as possible so they can see what recommendations were made and to meet with the Officers.

3.36pm

Chairman