



Buckinghamshire County Council

Minutes

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2005 IN MEZZANINE ROOM 2, COUNTY HALL, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.07 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.59 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr R C Pushman (Chairman), Mr H Cadd, Mrs A Davies, Mr M Edmonds, Mr D A B Green, Mr A Hill, Mr C Jones, Mr Z Mohammed, Mr M Tett, Julia Wassell, Mr R K Woollard,

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr W J Y Chapple
Mr H G W Wilson

OTHERS PRESENT

Ms S Ashmead Lead Officer, Partnerships & Research
Mr R Edwards Lead Officer, Overview & Scrutiny
Mr G Emmerson Head of Transportation
Mr M Grupp Research Officer
Mrs K Jones Democratic Services Officer
Mr D Sweetland Policy Officer
Mr A Shutter Policy Officer
Mrs K Woods Lead Officer, Policy Development & Improvement

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported apologies for absence from Mr Q Ings-Chambers, Mr D Meacock, Mr J Warder (Chiltern District Council) and Mr A Walters (South Bucks District Council).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

1 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Environment of Buckinghamshire on 23 March 2005, copies of which had been circulated, were agreed and signed as a correct record.

2 MATTERS ARISING

Speed Limit Review. The Policy Officer reported that a letter had been sent to the Cabinet Member for Transportation outlining the views of the Committee and asking him to provide an update to the Committee in September 2006.

Joint Working and 3-Tier Local Government Draft Cabinet Working Group – The previous Chairman, presented a report to Cabinet on 4 April 2005. Some of the recommendations were accepted but not those recommending clear leads on local and national initiatives nor on the joint review of property assets & future needs.

On 17 May 2005, a report was presented to Aylesbury Vale District Council that looked at the principles for joint working. A response was received commenting on joined-up working arrangements. This was circulated to Members.

Future Work Programme – On 22 June 2005 three Cabinet members will be invited to the Committee to set out their priorities.

3 INTRODUCTION TO OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

The Lead Officer, Overview & Scrutiny gave a presentation to the meeting on the functions of Overview & Scrutiny in Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC). He explained the revised Constitution and the role and contribution that non-executive members and co-opted Members on Overview and Scrutiny Committees undertake.

A member asked if a concern were raised at an Overview & Scrutiny committee meeting would it be possible to add this to the agenda for a future meeting. The Lead Officer Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) replied that this was not the case and that agendas were set at the discretion of the committee.

The Vice-Chairman asked for guidance on how to deal with tensions that may exist between community leadership and the whole of Buckinghamshire. The Chairman replied that the guidance must be what is best for the residents of Buckinghamshire

A member explained that in his opinion, protecting the public was an important issue and he asked if BCC would be working in partnership to provide better protection for the public. He also asked if the scrutiny committees would be in a position to influence this. The Policy Officer replied that Crime and Disorder was on the Work Programme and that one approach would be to look at this as an update on progress of the Best Value Review of Fear of Crime of Older People.

Another member explained that in his opinion, waste, recycling and renewing energy were important issues and that the surrounding infrastructure was an important planning issue. This was noted.

In response to a question regarding responsibility for deciding what is scrutinised members were advised that the Work Programme was taken to Council but the Cabinet did not set Overview & Scrutiny agendas. The Chairman said that he preferred a proactive approach to working with Cabinet. The Chairman thanked the Lead Officer O&S for his presentation.

4 CORPORATE PLAN

The Deputy Leader explained that the corporate plan was the major planning document for the County Council. In order to meet the statutory deadline for publication, the Corporate Plan will need to be available from 30 June and a special full council meeting is being held on 16 June to consider the plan.

Members were advised that the Corporate Plan would replace four Performance Plans. The aim is to streamline the Local Performance Plan (LPP), the four-year council plan and the Medium Term Plan into one corporate plan. BCC wants to be an excellent council that delivers high quality services.

The Deputy Leader asked members to send any comments on the Corporate Plan to the Policy Officer by 1 June 2005. The Policy Officer explained that general comments would be agreed with the Chairman and a letter then sent to the Deputy Leader.

A member explained that other authorities have included key achievements for previous years in their Corporate Plan as a means of providing context and he recommended that the format is clear and easy to read. In his opinion, there were too many targets in the draft Corporate Plan. He suggested that Scrutiny could be included in the targets for the Council and noted that there were no targets for reducing out of county placements and home to school transport.

Another member identified the following audiences for the Corporate Plan:

- Central Government
- Cabinet and COMT
- Residents of Buckinghamshire

He noted that they were three very different audiences and that there was a need to be very clear in what is communicated to them in order to avoid not meeting any of the objectives. The audience for Scrutiny is the general public and the Executive.

Other specific comments made by members included a recommendation to include technical training in education, to identify how goals will be met and when.

11.39 a.m. Avril Davies joined the meeting.

The Deputy Leader explained that the Corporate Plan would be rolled forward each year and that there would be a quarterly performance report to Cabinet.

5 LOCAL AREA WORKING – GETTING CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES

The Head of Transportation gave a presentation to the meeting in which he explained that Local Area Working (LAW) began between 4 /5 years ago and aimed at making work more relevant to customers. LAW is allied to the Customer First Project.

In May 2000 four Local Committees were set up to devolve decision making on local transport issues and matched funding. The Local Committees have been perceived as being successful and budgets are now delegated to them. There is now a need to develop officer support structures. The aim is to build better relationships with the district councils and to build a vision of where we want to be in four years time. Plans will focus on 14 key objectives. Service delivery will be based upon support for local delivery. The intention is that service delivery decisions will be based on what is right for the local communities and that strategic overview will be retained.

The following are examples of work that is closer to local communities:

- Transportation plans based on getting closer to local communities
- Libraries
- The way in which the extended schools project is developed.

A member explained that the parishes had concerns about the proposals because it was felt that decisions were being taken out of their hands or that they were being asked to make decisions for other parishes. She also noted that one of the roles of the local member would be to explain decisions made by BCC that they may not support.

During a discussion a member explained that in her opinion the role of the area coordinator needs to be improved to support and inform the local member and to act as the public/council go between. A member asked about how Children's Centres fitted in with LAW. The Head of Transportation responded that he would get a response on this issue for the Committee.

It was also noted that there were different issues in rural and urban areas. Members agreed that all the areas have a natural focus and that the approach proposed would enable local issues to be addressed by local solutions. The Head of Transportation advised that a Head of Service would be responsible for drawing services together in each LAW area..

12.40pm Hedley Cadd left the meeting.

6 WORK PROGRAMME

The Policy Officer referred to the Work Programme and explained that the previous committee had set some dates to review work.

Members were invited to comment on the proposed areas of work and made suggestions:

- Legislative changes including that it may no longer be necessary to provide sites for gypsies
- Safer Communities and Crime & disorder
- Social inclusion
- Community Plan

It was suggested and agreed that there should be a briefing on the South East Plan for new members. The Policy Officer agreed to notify members if there was a Member Briefing on this issue.

It was agreed that the current Work Programme be adopted until September 2005 at which point it would be reviewed.

Members were also advised that they would be able to decide whether or not to hold meetings on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

It was agreed that the July meeting would be moved to 10.00am on 13 July 2005.

7 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 22 June 2005 at 10am in Mezzanine Room1.

**MR R C PUSHMAN
CHAIRMAN**