

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting - 16 June 2014

Present: Dr. Pope (Chairman)
Mr Anthony, Mr Griffin and Mrs Plant

Also Present: Mrs Sullivan

Apologies for absence: Mr Harding, Mr Chhokar and The Earl of Stockton

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 March 2014 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

2. MODERN COUNCILLOR AND SUPPORTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

The Chairman, in providing feedback on the work carried out by the Task and Finish Group set up to consider ways of supporting the modern councillor and the democratic process, said that significant progress had been made at the meeting on 8 May in agreeing an Induction Programme with an indicative timetable for events immediately following the District elections including a Market Day and briefing sessions on a variety of issues. A proposal to provide members with a Survival/Resource Pack to include key telephone contact numbers and details of Officers roles and responsibilities (with photographs) had also been agreed.

A number of issues still needed to be explored further including joint working, interactive question and answer sessions, the on-going training needs of members and the (additional) support that members will require to enable them to carry out their roles, particularly bearing in mind the decision to reduce the size of the Council. These issues would be discussed at a meeting of the Task and Finish Group to be arranged in early September and to inform this discussion the Chairman explained the intention to ask members to complete a questionnaire to be circulated at the Council meeting on 29 July.

3. CONNECTING COUNCILLORS AND COMMUNITIES

Following the request made at the last meeting the Committee received a report identifying the opportunities that are available to councillors to help them engage and communicate with their communities, through a greater use of technology.

The report, after setting out the purpose of communication, listed the approaches that ward councillors could use to communicate including:

- E-mail
- Weblogs
- Websites
- Social media

The report went on to discuss the technology currently available and the benefits and risks of social media.

By way of an example of the use of that councillors could make of technology the Committee received a presentation of the use made by councillors at CDC of tablets to receive information and access the internet and social media... The presentation particularly concentrated on the i-annotate application and the ability for members and officers to access agenda papers and reports thus reducing the need to produce hard copies.

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After noting that the Council currently had no plans to go paperless the Committee agreed that although there were risks, technology offered a number of exciting opportunities for communicating with the electorate and felt that the issue should be re-visited after the District Elections to see how these opportunities could best be exploited.

4. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND RIPA ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2014

The Committee received a report providing an update on the public engagement with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the Data Protection Act 1998, the Transparency Code of Practice, the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe (INSPIRE) Regulations, RIPA, Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The report, after explaining the legislative background including the implications of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 and INSPIRE, went on to provide details of

- the number of subject access requests received (4)
- the number of FOI requests received in each of the years since 2010/2011
- the categories into which the FOI requests fell
- the arrangements made to implement the VUELIO management tracking system; and
- the arrangement for publishing information on the website

The Committee noted 608 FOI requests had been received in 2013/2014 which represented a 37% increase on the requests received in 2012/13. The Committee also noted that each FOI request cost on average £250 to process.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

5. POLICE COMMISSIONERS UPDATE

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel held on 21 March 2014.

6. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SELECT COMMITTEE

Copies of the draft minutes of the meeting of the Select Committee held on 20 May 2014 were circulated at the meeting and the Chairman drew the Committee's particular attention to minute 8 relating to Wexham Park Hospital.

The Committee noted the minutes of the meetings of the Select Committee held on 18 March, 15 April and 20 May 2014.

7. MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

None received.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

After noting the Cabinet's Forward Plan and the Work Programmes of Bucks County Council and Wycombe Council, the Committee agreed that the following be added to its Work Programme for the meeting in October:

- Update from the Task and Finish Group on Modern Councillor and Supporting the Democratic Process
- Update on HS2

The meeting terminated at 7.15 pm