



<u>Committee and Date</u>
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Public

Councillor Tim Barker, Performance & Strategy Scrutiny Committee Chairman

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PERFORMANCE & STRATEGY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2010-2011

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This is an overview of the work of the Performance & Strategy Scrutiny Committee during 2010-2011, the plans for the forthcoming year, and an insight into new ways of working that we will be piloting over the coming months.
- 1.2 Reporting itself is a useful experience, as it provides a means of evaluating the health of the scrutiny function, of reviewing the preceding year's activities and scrutiny projects from within the Committee's Work Programme, and of assessing the extent to which the Committee's recommendations have begun to make a difference.
- 1.3 This information should provide Members with a sound basis for making such judgements.

2.0 What have we done?

- 2.1 The Committee's Work Programme for the year has been heavily committed to scrutiny of the Council's budget process and, in particular, the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan [MTFP], including the reallocation of resources, priorities for investment in service development, and the review of the standard, scope and delivery of services in future.
- 2.2 Through its involvement with this process, the Committee has highlighted the need for scrutiny to have ample time to enable it to have a robust, meaningful input into the budget shaping process. It is proposed that pre-decision based scrutiny is adopted that will allow the Committee to consider the relevant options through themed meetings and role-specific Task and Finish Groups. The Committee is eager to play in its role in the future budget shaping process, in performance improvement, and the assessment of changes to the Council's service delivery.

- 2.3 The Committee recognises its fundamental role of providing an overview of the transformation process and having an input into service design, as these are integral to budget formulation in future years.
- 2.4 The Work Programme has covered a variety of issues, including:
- The adequacy of the Council's provisions and reserves for the period 2011/14
 - Highlighting the need for review and determination of the strategic framework of priorities for re-shaping the role of the Council and redesign of service delivery [to include a clear definition of the role of Parish and Town Council, the Council's essential relationship with Parish and Town Councils and Local Joint Committees, and the need for capacity building of Members to ensure their ability to take on the role of Community Leader]
 - Looking at ways of 'doing things differently' and examining aspects of the largest spend by the Council, by initiating the establishment of a Task & Finish Group to be involved in service redesign of Adult Social Care
 - Ensuring that the Council's Capital Strategy for the period 2011/12 to 2014/15 is realistic and deliverable, and includes schemes that would result in measurable and demonstrable benefit for our local communities
 - Consideration of the OFSTED report following the inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services and ensuring that the monitoring of the identified actions for improvement is carried out by the Safe and Confident Communities Scrutiny Committee.
 - Receiving information on the new Community Infrastructure Levy [CIL] and use of Section 106 Agreements, and recommending a training seminar to ensure that all Members recognise the importance of their involvement, with their local communities, in these processes
- 2.5 The use of the Call-in procedure has been limited, to date; the Committee has dealt with one Call-in relating to the Battlefield livestock market, Shrewsbury. Although the Committee's recommendations were insufficient to alter the course agreed by Cabinet, having forum to allow a full debate of Members' issues of concern was, in itself, of value and allowed Cabinet to consider additional information before reaching its final decision.
- 2.6 Successfully delivering a Task and Finish Group that was established to consider the Voluntary and Community Sector [VCS], Members focused on "modernising" the Voluntary and Community Sector in Shropshire, and exploring best practice in achieving more sustainable models of VCS delivery, by consideration of successful social enterprises. As a key part of this work, the Group investigated the support required for the VCS in Shropshire to adopt and deliver more sustainable and self-supporting voluntary sector services, through methods of self-funding and sustainability.

2.7 The Group's recommendations were accepted in full by Cabinet, with the indication that the Council was committed to supporting the strategic development of the voluntary and community sector as deliverers of public sector services, with a view to increasing the diversity of providers in the local economy. It was envisaged that a number of local enterprises would act as an essential link between the Council and the voluntary and community sector to ensure the growth of the social enterprise sector and increased capacity in the VCS.

3.0 What are we currently doing?

3.1 There are currently three ongoing Task and Finish Groups that have been established through the Committee, these are:

- Asset Management
- Equalities Impact Needs Assessments [EINAs]; and
- Adult Social Care

3.2 The Asset Management Task and Finish Group is helping to develop the Council's Asset Management Strategy and approach to achieving the financial targets identified in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The aim of the Group is to ensure that the Council has a robust framework in place for all major property decisions, including a set of principles and criteria for rationalising and potentially disposing of assets. The work of this Group is well underway, with its final meeting scheduled to take place on 16 June 2011, with a report to Cabinet when it considers the Strategy in August.

3.3 The EINAs Task and Finish Group was established as a result of the Committee's budget development work and its recognition of the need to manage risk, given the potential for service changes to impact more heavily on certain sectors within the community and the need to militate against these risks.

3.4 Following the completion of its work, the Group will have:

- raised awareness of the need to carry out robust assessments and embed the need for the impacts of change to be carefully assessed
- arranged for the provision of appropriate briefings for Members to support them in their Community Leadership role
- focussed on the outcomes of the assessment process
- developed a fit for purpose system for recognising the need for assessments and for carrying them out and responding to their findings.

3.5 The Adult Social Care group has been set up to focus on one aspect of the services we provide with partners; talking to our staff and partners and service users to identify where we can improve services through a different use of our combined resources.

4.0 What are our future plans?

- 4.1 Focussed group working is a method for Members to get involved in a specific area of development, change or general review, and Task and Finish Groups have been successful in achieving this. Following the change in scrutiny working some twelve months ago, focus has been targeted at such group working, rather than on long and complex Committee work [although it is acknowledged that some subject areas can only be dealt with in a Committee environment].
- 4.2 Where such group work has been able to concentrate on a specific subject area, it has been possible to complete this work in a robust and timely manner, and the results have been very focused. Some group work has, however, been more complex, and although the final results have been very worthwhile, the experience of Members during this process has been variable.
- 4.3 It is without doubt that, where possible and appropriate, Members take more from, and give most back to, such group working when they are able to clearly relate to the subject of the work, as well as to the experience of staff at all levels in our organisation, that of our partners delivering services, and also those Shropshire residents receiving them. In future, we will be carrying out a number of reviews in a way designed to achieve this. This way of working will be based on delivering in shorter timescales with very focused work.
- 4.4 The Committee has an ambitious Work Plan that is under rolling review and management by the Scrutiny Chairs' Group, with future issues for scrutiny including:
- Progress on the delivery of 2010/11 budget savings
 - Sickness and absenteeism performance
 - Progress on the delivery of service transformation and the new operating model of the Council
 - Progress on 'Locality Working'
 - Members' Community Leadership role
 - Shared Services