

## Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee: – Statement to Council – 29 April 2010

### 1.0 Achievements in 2009/10

- 1.1 The Committee covers a large scope of services which in turn has generated an extensive Programme of Work for 2009/10. Services within the remit of the Committee extend across Chief Executive's Office, Legal and Democratic Services, and the Resources Directorate.
- 1.2 During the year, the Committee has employed a range of ways of working. These included:
- Surveys
  - Consultation with Focus Groups
  - Observation visits
  - Site visit to another authority
  - Interviews with a selection of partners
  - Desktop review
- 1.3 In the performance of statutory functions, the Committee has agreed and monitored:-
- Service Plans for Chief Executive's - Performance & Partnerships; Legal & Democratic Services; and Resources
  - Performance Reports for the Shropshire Local Area Agreement;
  - Performance reports for the Corporate Plan (with action plans to address underperforming areas – Children's social care assessment process, housing rent collection and planning applications)
  - Financial reports:-Revenue and Capital budgets for 2009/10; and Treasury Management
  - Council Revenue Budget Strategy 2010/11, recommending Cabinet to adopt as a lawful budget
  - Shropshire Council Capital Programme 2010 to 2014/15
  - Fees and Charges 2010/11
  - Complaints, Compliments and Comments – 6 monthly report
  - Sales ledger performance monitoring report;
  - Annual Diversity Monitoring Report 2008/09 (noting future plans for promoting diversity in employment to be published)
  - Annual Report on Health and Safety Performance for 2008/09
  - Shropshire Comprehensive Area Assessment Update.

## 1.4 The Committee has received and noted:-

- Swine Flu Pandemic – the work undertaken by the Council to manage the effects of swine flu
- Local Authority Carbon Management Programme Update
- ICT Services Update (noting the current and forthcoming major projects the service is involved with)
- Highways Insurance Policy Report (noting insurance policies and procedures in place)
- Sickness Absence Management report
- Use of Resources 2009 Outcomes
  
- Broadband in Rural Areas Update
- Performance Report – Recruitment Team (noting achievements during the final 6 months of SCC)
- Service Review – using Lean methodology to identify and deliver efficiencies that focus on needs of customer during the transformation phase of the unitary project.
- Update on the Government Response to Consultation on Reform of Council Housing Finance (*the Committee received an update at a special meeting held on 29 January 2010*)

## 1.5 The Committee has approved:-

- Shropshire Council Procurement Strategy
- Local Food Procurement - arrangements Council has for sourcing food supplies at local level, noting work undertaken has helped improve the quality of food served in schools and colleges, the high standard of school meals service having been recognised nationally with awards including one from the Prince of Wales. The Committee recommended consideration be given to allowing schools to have a delegated budget which would enable them to directly purchase produce locally.
- Strengthening Local Democracy – The Committee agreed a draft response for submission to Cabinet on a consultation paper setting out a range of measures to promote democratic renewal and strengthen the power and responsibility of local government, based around five themes (Local Government at the centre of decision making; Strong local government operating in the local interest; Local authorities tackling climate change; Sub regional working and Clear relationships with local government).

- ‘Councillor Call for Action’ – allowing ward members more powers to bring local matters of significance to Scrutiny and for holding partnership organisations accountable for issues of local concern covered by the Local Area Agreement. Following a referral from Council on 16 July of the process and procedure approved by Cabinet on 29 June, the Committee examined the Gateway approach developed by Birmingham City Council and whether a more transparent procedure might be implemented. The Committee determined the Gateway approach was in the interests of both clarity and transparency and the Committee’s recommendation was approved by Council on 24 September.
- Multi-Agency Protocol to Tackle Hate Crime in Shropshire, approving continued support for work being undertaken with schools, colleges and other partners to tackle hate crime in Shropshire.

## 2. Task and Finish Groups

- 2.1 **Equality and Diversity:** Building upon the work of the Task & Finish Group established by the Corporate Support Services Scrutiny Panel in 2008, to research the needs of Migrant Workers and new emerging communities in Shropshire, the Committee endorsed a new ‘Welcome to Shropshire’ booklet. The booklet, produced by the Shropshire Partnership Equalities Forum, following the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, signposts key services provided by Shropshire Council, its partners and local agencies, and assists people to identify sources of help to enable them to integrate and settle into their local area.
- 2.2 **Review of Partnership Working:** The Group (Tim Barker –Chair, David Lloyd, MBE, Alan Mosley, Peter Phillips, Madge Shingleton, Dr Max Winchester) was established in September 2009 to consider the effectiveness of Shropshire Partnership in delivering outcomes and making a difference to the lives of local people, taking into account national best practice (including the concept of Total Place). The Group also considered the Area Partnership structure and implications arising from this for the operation of Local Joint Committees.
- 2.3 The Group, through a range of evaluation techniques found that current arrangements have a number of areas for further improvement:
- Focus more on achieving local priority outcomes – rather than being driven by national prescribed targets, the partnership should reflect on the issues which are priorities in the community strategy, and from the detailed evidence base that underpins it.
  - Focus more on localism – Discontinue the current structure of three Area Partnerships but continue to support thematic partnership working where effective. The programmed review of local joint committee arrangements provides the opportunity to deliver a single effective approach to engagement and local partnership working.
  - Fully engage all partners and aligned budgets

- 2.4. The Committee endorsed the Group's recommendations which the Chair presented to Cabinet on 17 March 2010. Cabinet commended the work of the group and accepted the recommendations set out in the Group's report.

**3. Work Programme**

- 3.1 The Committee will continue in the short term to receive and monitor reports on the Council's budget and performance, Local Area Agreement targets and Service Plans, noting potential areas for future scrutiny:- Migrant Workers; Cradle to grave services, Catering in leisure service outlets, ICT provision for Members, Overview of environmental actions taken by Shropshire Council.
- 3.2 The work programme will be revisited once the implications of the Scrutiny Review are understood and Council has approved the recommendations of the Review Management Group.

Councillor Tim Barker (Chair)  
Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee