



<u>Committee and date</u>
Council
17 July 2014
10.00am

<u>Item No</u>
9
Public

Councillor Vince Hunt
Environment and Services Scrutiny Committee Chairman

ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14
ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1.0 Summary

1.1 This is an overview of the work of the Environment and Services Scrutiny Committee during 2013-14, the plans for the forthcoming year, and its achievements in providing positive outcomes for local people.

2.0 What have we done?

2.1 The Committee has met formally on four occasions over the last year and also held one informal meeting in June 2013 with appropriate Portfolio Holders and Chief Officers to highlight possible work areas where scrutiny involvement may be appropriate and lead to positive outcomes.

2.2 The Committee welcomed the opportunity to discuss and have an input into the role of the Local Lettings Plan within the context of the Affordable Housing Allocation Policy Scheme in the formulation of a response to the consultation document entitled, 'Providing Social Housing For Local People: Strengthening Statutory Guidance On Social Housing Allocations'. Through its Scrutiny and partnership arrangements, the Council gave detailed consideration to the implementation of the Localism Act 2011 (housing allocations) and to the aforementioned consultation document. The Council has achieved an effective and workable balance between meeting the needs of local people and delivering the strategic duty to give 'reasonable preference' in relation to key areas of housing need.

2.3 The Committee received an update on the Shropshire Community Alcohol Partnership, Shrops-CAP on progress made to date together with development plans for Year 2 [July 2013 to June 2014] from Dr Ghani, Public Health. Members recognised the benefits that could be encouraged locally through the use of monies from Department of Communities and Local Government [DCLG] Alcohol Fund and encouraged all Members to work in their own areas on projects that could realise positive benefits with just a little funding. School based Community Support Officers [CSOs] were considered

to be an excellent initiative in the Oswestry area that, if successful, should be considered to be rolled out to the schools network across the county.

- 2.4 The Committee received a public petition on the part night lighting initiative that had been supported by the Committee the previous year [to switch off street lights in certain areas from 12.30am to 5.30am]. The petitioners were seeking a reinstatement of the street lighting after midnight and suggested the use of LED lighting in order to reduce the carbon footprint and help save the environment. The Committee remained in support of the council's initiative and considered that it provided the best feasible option offering the best value to the local tax payer with minimal impact on the community as a whole. Members recognised that work was being undertaken with the Bronze Level Tasking Group to minimise the impact of crime or anti social behaviour that may occur between midnight and 5.30am and will be seeking feedback on the monitoring of crime/accident figures in the near future.
- 2.5 Ensuring that it was fully appraised of the up to date position, the Committee received information on drought planning in Shropshire from a representative of the Environment agency together with Council staff. The main points noted included the need for inter-agency joined up drought planning, the importance of monitoring the quality and improvements of private water supplies, the recognition of community self help and the compilation through Silver Level Tasking of a plan to deal with the issues surrounding private water supplies during times of drought.
- 2.6 The Committee has been fully supportive of the Rapid Action Groups [RAGs] that were in operation in early 2014 and received feedback from the Chairman of the Waste RAG on the work undertaken by the Group with a view to identifying the best way forward for scrutiny to be involved in the redesign of this area. It was understood that work needed to be focused and structured according to the guidance of Officers working in this redesign.
- 2.7 The Director of Commissioning agreed at that meeting to identify the best way forward for scrutiny to play a valuable role in the redesign of this area. Some members of the Committee are currently involved in this redesign and are working alongside Officers in this service area looking at areas such as recycling rates, passing the recycling message to customers, co-mingling of waste, vehicle routing and the use of the incinerator to generate income. Issues will be reported to the Committee as the work in this area progresses.
- 2.8 At its last meeting held in March 2014 the Committee worked alongside the Director of Commissioning to identify potential future scrutiny work areas using the learning from the recent RAGs, key areas highlighted within the 2014/17 Financial Strategy and within the three year Business Plan.

The following areas were highlighted for consideration:

Regulatory and Business Support model [RaBSS] - the possibility of the existing RAG continuing its work or this work.

Review of Joint Use Leisure Facilities to identify how to best deliver on a local basis - It was noted that the local community was being encouraged to take greater responsibility in the running of joint use facilities.

Sports and Recreational Activities - Redesign will be centred within Community Action, Positive Activities, Outdoor Recreation and Sports Development and consideration would need to be given to the role scrutiny could play in the redesign over the next 12 months.

Redesign of Outdoor Recreation Service - This includes rights of way, parks and open spaces [for example, Severn Valley country park, the Meres at Ellesmere], the creation of Parish Path Partnerships. Building community ownership was understood as key for the future together with the main agenda for the future being to encourage people to become more physically active.

Face to Face services - This element included the redesign of the libraries service including Visitor Information Centres, plus customer service points and registrars.

2.9 The Committee's work has not been limited to the work that becomes apparent from its formal committee meetings but, during the past year members of the committee have been involved in scrutiny of other issues of importance to them and their communities, such as:

- § Investigation in to Drugs/rehabilitation/youth offending – valuable work being undertaken at Willowdene farm and also at Stoke on Tern with the establishment of a social company to undertake office cleaning.
- § Input and involvement in the recent emergency planning operation 'Operation Birdwatch'

2.10 At the last meeting, the Committee considered reports on local flood risk management, the Customer Access Strategy and Shropshire Council's Energy efficiency and renewable energy. It was agreed that progress on the Customer Strategy Action plan would be reviewed by the Committee. A number of useful recommendations on flood risk management were made.

3.0 What are our Future Plans?

3.1 Guided by the Director of Commissioning, the Committee recognises that its future work would be better focussed by involvement in the redesign process of the following areas:

- i. Face to Face redesign in libraries, customer service points and registrars.
- ii. Waste – a) how to encourage more recycling and behaviour change in customers and b) ways to support Veolia in encouraging customers to recycle

- iii. Redesign activities for young people – work in this area has started but is at consultation stage only in helping to shape the new commissioned model from April 2015.

3.2 The Committee's remit is to be changed in the near future to include highways and, once this change had been ratified by Council, the Committee is planning to undertake some detailed scrutiny of the redesign of this area and include scrutiny of the Ringway contract.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Reports to Environment and Services Scrutiny Committee

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights act 1998

Environmental Appraisal

There are no environmental issues relating to this report.

Risk Management Appraisal

There are no risks associated with this report.

Community / Consultations Appraisal

Consultation is a component of Scrutiny work to collect information to support the development of conclusions and recommendations.

Cabinet Members

Councillor Simon Jones, Councillor Malcolm Price, Councillor Gwilym Butler

Local Member/s

All

Appendices

None