

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS ON
TUESDAY, 15 JULY 2008 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J O Ranger (Chairman).
Councillors D Andrews, R Beeching,
R N Copping, R Gilbert, G Lawrence, J Mayes,
J Warren, M Wood.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M G Carver, D Clark.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Mike Collier	- Interim Section 151 Officer
Chris Cooper	- Information Officer
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Policy Co-ordinator
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Neil Sloper	- Head of Customer Services

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 May 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report on the draft Local Code of Corporate Governance.

ACTION

It was reported that the Council operated through a governance framework which brought together an underlying set of legislation, government principles and management processes. The Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework defined the principles that should underpin the governance of the Council. The Council had tested its structures against the principles in the framework and drawn up a code of corporate governance based on six core principles.

A draft Code was submitted for comment. Once approved, the appropriate Officers would complete remaining assessments to finalise the document.

The Committee noted that this was an evidence based document and decided to recommend the Executive approve this draft form of the code.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be recommended to approve the Local Code of Corporate Governance in the draft form, as in the report now submitted.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on the proposed Annual Governance Statement which replaced the Statement of Internal Control and was intended for a wider audience than its predecessor. This was needed to meet the requirements of the Accounts and Audits Regulations.

The Council was responsible for ensuring that its business was conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money was safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Corporate Code of Governance would help to ensure proper arrangements were in place to meet this responsibility. The Council's governance arrangements should be reviewed at least annually by

ACTION

means of the Annual Governance Statement. These reviews would be presented to the Council, Audit Committee and externally with the published accounts.

The Committee noted that the Governance Statement covered all significant corporate systems, processes and controls, spanning the whole range of Council activities and decided to receive the report.

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

2007/08 CORPORATE ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Strategic Direction (Shared) and Communications Manager submitted a report on the Corporate Annual Report 2007/08.

The Corporate Annual Report included details of the end of year performance for Best Value and Local Performance Indicators, financial information, information on actions achieved for each priority and the Statement of Contracts.

The Committee commented on a number of the Performance Indicators in the report. In particular, it was concerned about building site inspections which it thought were vital to maintaining building standards in the District and Personal Development Reviews, which contributed to providing a suitably qualified workforce to serve the District. It decided to comment on these points to the Executive.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Committee, having reviewed the draft Corporate Annual report, has the following comments:

- (A) it draws attention to the situation in relation to building control site inspections which is of considerable concern if standards are to be maintained in the District; and

ACTION

- (B) it is very concerned about progress on implementing the personal development review scheme throughout the Council and asks that this be closely monitored by the Executive.

PRODUCING HIGH QUALITY REPORTS AND USING PLAIN ENGLISH - SCOPING THE ENQUIRY

The Chairman referred to a scoping document he had prepared for a Task and Finish Group on producing high quality reports and using plain English.

He suggested the enquiry should include the following:

Purpose

The purpose of the enquiry would be to ensure reports are written clearly and concisely and documents available to the public are easily understood.

Judging Success

Success would be measured partly by whether key documents for public use could achieve the Crystal Mark.

Stages of Enquiry

These would include information gathering from the IDeA, Plain English Campaign and Officers and having a report brought to the Committee on 6 October 2008.

They would include involving partners and gathering evidence. Witnesses would include Local Strategic Partners (LSP) who would be asked whether they had reviewed this topic. Other Councils would be asked if they had scrutinised this and Democratic Services and Communications would be asked for ideas.

ACTION

The Chairman said a report could be submitted to the Executive and appropriate training could be included in the Council's training programme as a result of the enquiry.

The Committee agreed with the Chairman's suggestion for a scoping document and Task and Finish Group on this topic.

RESOLVED - that (A) the scoping document as discussed be agreed; and

(B) a Task and Finish Group on producing high quality reports and using plain English be set up.

DATA PROTECTION UPDATE

The Director of Customer and Community Services reported that a review of the Council's position in relation to Data Protection compliance had been undertaken in response to recent losses of personal data by government agencies, interest expressed by the Committee following the adoption of the Council's Data Sharing Protocol and a request from the Chief Executive to review these policies.

The review had taken place over six months. All existing policies and procedures had been found to be fully compliant with the requirements of the Data Protection Act and best practice. Further policies were being adopted to enhance existing policies. In addition, a number of other policies/ documents had been found to have a direct link to data protection and work on these would be completed by September 2008. The need for a Data Protection Policy for external customers had been identified and was attached as an Appendix to the report before the Committee. The review had also identified systems/databases holding personal information and the need for more staff training on data protection.

ACTION

The Committee noted the work which had been undertaken to review data protection and congratulated Officers upon it.

RESOLVED - that the report be received and Officers be thanked for their work on this topic.

DATA SHARING AGREEMENT PROCEDURE

The Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on amendments to the Data Sharing Protocol including a Data Sharing Agreement Form and guidance notes and making the protocol applicable to all types of data sharing.

The Committee decided to recommend the amendments for approval by the Executive.

RESOLVED - that (A) the following documents be recommended to the Executive for approval:

- (1) the draft Data Sharing Agreement as in Appendix B10 and the accompanying Notes and Guidance as in Appendix C10 of the report now submitted; and
 - (2) the amended Data Sharing Protocol as in Appendix D10 of the report now submitted including the Data Sharing Agreement; and
- (B) the Executive be asked to make these documents applicable to all data.

WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

The Chief Executive submitted a report inviting the Committee to review its work programme.

ACTION

The Chairman reported that an item on enhancements to Jackson Square Car Park (capital investment) would be considered at the next meeting. He also suggested Members might wish to scope a Task and Finish Group to look at the topic of shared services with other authorities and the Committee agreed with this.

RESOLVED - that the work programme for 2008/09 as attached in Appendix A11 to the report before the Committee be approved, subject to the addition of the following items to the August meeting:

Jackson Square Car Park enhancements;
Scoping of Task and Finish Group on Shared Services.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.