

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 27 September 2010

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors: - **Phil Stearn (Chairman)**
Glenvil Greenwood-Smith (Vice-Chairman)

David Bateman
Michael Finch
Richard Gell
Barbara Jenney
Gill Mercer

Brian Northall
Sarah Peacock
Ron Pinnock
Pam Whiting
Clive Wood

166. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2010 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

167. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Tony Boto, Marian Hollomon and Duncan Reid sent apologies.

168. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest under Section 50 of the Local Government Act 2000.

169. CONSTITUTION REVIEW GROUP UPDATE

The Committee received a report setting out further proposed changes to the following parts of the Constitution:

- Procedure Rules (Part 4.1 of the Constitution)
- Article 9 relating to the Standards Board (Part 2)
- Code of Practice for Planning Procedures (Part 5.4)

The Monitoring Officer added that the Policy and Resources Committee would also be considering a change to the Call In conditions. Members noted that changes to the standards regime including local assessment of complaints, Standards for England and the Code of Conduct were due to be published as part of the Localism Bill next month and would give rise to further changes to the Constitution.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals set out in the report be endorsed.

170. UPDATE ON REVIEWS

The Committee had appointed Members to participate in two officer project teams reviewing face to face services in Oundle and the future of Nene Valley News. The reviews had now been concluded and reports had been considered on both Nene Valley News and Alternative Service Delivery in Oundle at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 13 September 2010. The decision of the Policy and Resources Committee to continue with fortnightly issues of Nene Valley News for two years with a reduction to 16 pages was noted.

The decision regarding alternative service delivery in Oundle was subject to Call In and was therefore considered at agenda item 9.

RESOLVED:

That progress on the reviews be noted.

171. USE OF CONSULTANTS

At its meeting on 16 June 2010 the Committee had considered a report on the Council's use of consultants during the last financial year and had asked the Chief Finance Officer to provide a further analysis of the expenditure at its next meeting (minute 62 refers). During consideration of the more detailed report, the Committee concluded that it needed a small group of Members to work on a more formal review to see whether or not the Council was achieving value for money from its existing procurement arrangements or outsourcing approach.

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Gill Mercer, Sarah Peacock and Phillip Stearn be nominated to work with the Chief Finance Officer to review the Council's use and engagement of consultants.

172. REVIEW OF PAST REVIEWS

In considering the work programme for the current year it had been suggested by some Members that it might be appropriate to revisit some of the Committee's past reviews to ensure that all the agreed recommendations had been implemented. Some Members were concerned that whilst many of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations had been adopted by the Policy and Resources Committee at the time, subsequent policy decisions had impacted on the original recommendations and furthermore the environment and economy in which the Council delivered services had changed over time. Consequently the Members considered a report which set out a programme for reviewing past reviews and progressing new reviews. As the Section 106 review carried out several years ago was of particular concern, it was proposed to bring forward a more detailed paper at the next meeting of the Committee and invite the Head of Planning Services and Planning Officers to attend the next meeting to reassure Members and report the current arrangements in respect of s106 Agreements.

The proposed agenda planning schedule for the Committee was noted and it was

RESOLVED:

That a full report on s106 agreements be presented at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

173. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because exempt information, as defined under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, may be disclosed.

174. ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN OUNDLE

This item had been added to the agenda by virtue of section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 as the following decision of the Policy and Resources Committee made at its meeting on 13 September 2010 (minute 150 refers) had been Called In by the Scrutiny Committee:

That the future delivery of services at Oundle from 1 December 2010 be via a combination of council services being delivered from Oundle Library on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am to 4pm together with provision of an East Northamptonshire Council staffed tourism service Monday to Saturday from 10am to 4pm in a dedicated space in front of the Talbot Hotel.

During discussion of the decision, the following concerns were raised:

- The greater efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of both staffed council and tourism services from the same venue;
- The importance of a venue with a frontage or clear signage onto the High Street to ensure potential tourism enquiries and other customers;
- Further cost savings could be made through an integrated service on a reduced number of days per week (just peak demand days for each service);
- Problems with the use of the Talbot Hotel including
 - The lack of a frontage onto the High Street (as the room at the front appeared not to be available for use)
 - Accessibility issues (more steps than current venue)
 - The possible negative perception of the public and accommodation providers from the association with a commercial premises
 - Uncertainty over the time-frame for the renovations needed, particularly as it is a Grade 1 listed building
 - Uncertainty as to whether the room would be available immediately.

RESOLVED:

That the Policy and Resources Committee be strongly recommended to resolve that the future delivery of services at Oundle from 1 December 2010 be delivered from the Oundle Festival Office on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10am to 4pm and that officers be asked to negotiate with the Festival for an inclusive facilities management agreement with a target annual cost of £10,000.

Chairman