

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25 April 2013

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Les Marriott (Chair), Councillors Matt Lynch (Vice Chair), Tony Ansell, Elizabeth Gowen, Lee Mason, Beverley Mennell, Brian Sargeant and Danielle Stone.

Witnesses David Kennedy Chief Executive
Julie Seddon Chair of Community Safety Partnership

Officers Tracy Tiff Scrutiny Officer
Joanne Birkin Democratic Services Officer

Members of the Public Mark Unwin

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Mick Ford, Nilesh Parek and Suresh Patel.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January were approved and signed by the Chair.

3. ADDITIONAL MEETING

The Chair advised the Panel that there would be a long gap between the scheduled meetings to be held on 10th June and 9th September 2013 and that this could delay the work of the new scrutiny panels. He suggested that there should be an additional meeting to be held on 25th July 2013. This would allow the scopes of the new panels to be approved and they could then begin their evidence gathering before September.

AGREED: An additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held at 6.00pm on 25 July 2013.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

6. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered a report on the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), Julie Seddon, Chair of the Community Safety Partnership presented the report.

The main points of discussion were as follows:-

Following a number of years of consistent performance improvement by the partnership there had been some reductions in performance and it had not achieved all of the 2011/12 targets. Financial pressures and reduced resources for partner organisations and the public have made crime reduction increasingly difficult all over the country.

The rolling 12 month total for overall crime reduced by 2.5%. The strongest performances were tackling violence and low level theft.

There had been a significant spike in burglary of dwellings during September. Vehicle crime, although still significantly lower than 2009/10, had shown considerable increases in theft from vehicles.

There had been good reductions in recorded anti-social behaviour issues, but perception of problems was increasing.

Domestic Abuse continued to be a key focus and an increase in first time victim reporting had been achieved.

Although there had been improvements in performance for both violent crime and anti-social behaviour incidents they would remain as priorities for 2013/14. The main area of concern would be Serious Acquisitive Crime and partnership work will be concentrated on addressing this.

The Police and Crime Commissioner had indicated that he wished to focus on young people and reduction in drugs and anti-social behaviour. It was strongly emphasised that CSP would be part of that work.

The CSP had been a participant in the Scrutiny Panel on Serious Acquisitive Crime, Violent Crime and Community Safety and already introduced some changes as a result of the Panels draft recommendations.

AGREED: - That a further update report on the performance of the CSP received in six months' time.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the Performance Monitoring highlight report for December 2012 to March 2013.

The report was the provisional outturn report.

The Committee were reminded that several items had already identified for consideration at future meetings these were:-

- Rent Collections
- Rent Arrears
- Cleanliness of Open Spaces
- Car Crime
- Absence Management Data

AGREED: That the final outturn report be considered at the July meeting of the Committee.

8. O&S WORK PROGRAMME 2013/2014

The Committee considered a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/14. As a result of the Work Programme four topics had been identified. The Committee were asked to prioritise these and also indicate whether they wished to serve on the Panels. The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that other non Executive Members would then be asked if they wished to serve on any of the Panels.

AGREED :-

That the priority of suggested reviews be as follows

Scrutiny Panel 1 – Improving the Town’s Parks

Membership of the Panel would comprise:

Chair Councillor Elizabeth Gowen
Members Cllr Jamie Lane, Matt Lynch

Scrutiny Panel 2 Management and Regulation of Private Sector Housing (including HIMOs)

Membership of the Panel would comprise:

Chair Councillor Danielle Stone
Members Cllr Lee Mason, Beverley Mennell, Mick Ford

Scrutiny Panel 3 West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC)

Membership of the Panel would comprise:

Chair Councillor Jamie Lane
Members Cllrs Brian Sargeant, Suresh Patel, Mick Ford

Welfare Reform Act (after the Parks one completed)

Membership of the Panel would comprise

Chair Councillor Lee Mason

Members Cllr Beverley Mennell, Danielle Stone, Brian Sargeant, Elizabeth Gowen

9. SELF-EVALUATION OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2012

The Committee considered a report on the self-evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny function.

The main points of the discussion were as follows:-

The evaluation exercise had proved very positive.

The main recommendations were that there should be more regular updating on Cabinet priorities which could then be used to strengthen opportunities for pre decision scrutiny.

Also, although there were regular reports to Committee monitoring the progress of recommendations of completed reviews there should be more detailed Action Plans to assist in the monitoring.

The Committee were advised that Action Plans would be introduced for the new set of Scrutiny Panels and that the Leader would be invited to the Committee on a six monthly basis to advise on Cabinet priorities.

AGREED: The report be approved.

10. SCRUTINY PANELS

(A) SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - SERIOUS ACQUISITIVE CRIME, VIOLENT CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Committee received the final report of the Serious Acquisitive Crime, Violent Crime and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

The main points of the discussion were as follows: -

The scope had not included domestic violence as this was potentially a separate review topic.

There had been a great many participants in the review and a wide range of co-optees and witnesses had participated.

Some of the key points had centred on the importance of partnership working. There were many factors involved in influencing crime and the perception of crime and the Panel felt that it was clear that more needed to be done to establish linkages and tackle potential problems quickly. One positive outcome had been that there had already been some changes made as a result of the review and it was felt that this demonstrated that scrutiny could be used to make positive changes quickly.

Councillors had also felt that they needed to be made aware of issues within their wards as soon as possible so that they could fulfil a community information role and liaise with the public on issues to prevent them from escalating.

Neil Bartholomey, a co-optee on the Panel, felt that it had been a very positive experience and stated that he felt that things were already changing for the better because of the work done by the Panel.

It was commented that whilst projects such as CASPAR had made a huge difference in the past their strength had been based on involving residents. It was felt that if residents were fully engaged then there would be a better chance of the improvements being maintained.

The Chair emphasised that the quality of the witness evidence had been very good and wished to thank all of the witnesses and officers for their participation.

AGREED

The report be endorsed and submitted to Cabinet in July 2013.

(B) SCRUTINY PANEL 2- RETAIL EXPERIENCE.

The Committee noted the report on the progress of the Retail Experience Scrutiny Panel.

It was noted that the final meeting would be on 9th May 2013 and the report considered by Committee on 10th June.

(C) SCRUTINY PANEL 3- INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS AND SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

The Committee noted the report on the progress of the Infrastructure Requirements and Section 106 Agreements Scrutiny Panel.

It was noted that the final meeting would be on 16th May 2013 and the report considered by Committee on 10th June.

(D) LGSS SCRUTINY INQUIRY

The Committee considered a report on the Local Government Shared Services (LGSS) Scrutiny Inquiry. The Chair explained that the report would be an appendix to the full Council report on implementation of LGSS, which had been deferred until 13th May 2013.

The Chair commented that one outcome of the Inquiry had been a more in depth consideration of how services provided by LGSS would be available to Members. He considered that the Inquiry had been very intensive and had covered a lot of information in a very short time frame. He considered that it had been very beneficial to gain a proper understanding of the future delivery of services.

The Chief Executive provided an update on the progress of the LGSS arrangements. He advised the Committee that work was almost complete on the

Partnership delegation agreement which had been revised several times. He emphasised that the delay had been necessary in order to ensure that the Borough reached the best possible agreement. He stated that the arrangements now had very clear guidance on the level of support members could expect.

The Chief Executive said that he did not consider that there would be any noticeable difference to members of the public. In effect the changes were about the back office delivery systems which the customer did not need to know the detail of. It was intended that staff would transfer over under TUPE on 1ST June 2013 but there would be few immediate changes of location.

The Chair explained that one of the aspects of the Inquiry had been to examine the Risk Register and he felt that it would have been helpful if that had been made available sooner. However he did appreciate that a lot of work had been undertaken to minimise the risks during the negotiating period.

Councillor Stone commented that she had felt reassured that the level of service provided to customers would be at the same standard or higher, she felt that she now had a better understanding of LGSS and the reasons for its implementation.

The Chair thanked all the staff, who had attended or provided information to the Scrutiny Inquiry. He also thanked Councillor Bottwood for his regular attendance at meetings.

AGREED:

1. That the report of the LGSS Scrutiny Inquiry be noted.
2. A progress report be brought to Committee after 6 months of operation.

11. CARE AND QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) AND CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY(CFPS)DISTRICT WORKING PROJECT

The Committee considered a briefing note on the Care and Quality Commission (CQC) and Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) district working project.

Councillor Stone felt that this project had provided her with an important insight into the work of the CQC which she considered was timely in light of the health change responsibilities at the Country Council.

The Committee were advised that there would be a Councillor Development session to provide a brief on the work of the Care and Quality Commission.

AGREED: That the briefing note on the CQC and CfPS district working project be noted.

12. REPORT BACK FROM NBC'S REPRESENTATIVE TO NCC'S HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Danielle Stone attended the meeting of the NCC's County Health and Social Care Committee held in February 2013.

Councillor Stone reported that Northamptonshire LINK would be replaced by Health watch Northants. She commented that there were many organisations in the Health and Social Care fields which were undergoing major changes and suffering due reduced resources. Councillor Stone had suggested that mental health issues needed to be included on the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

AGREED: that the update be noted.

13. POTENTIAL FUTURE PRE DECISION SCRUTINY.

No items were identified.

14. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that there were three matters which had been entered for the Centre for Public Scrutiny Awards. These were the Independent Living Review, the Community Centres Review and the Paperless Committees trial. Shortlisting would take place in May.

As it was his last meeting the Chair expressed his thanks to all of the officers and members that had been involved in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He thanked members for their positive contribution to meetings.

The meeting concluded at 7:20 pm