



Report to Council

Subject: Scrutiny Chairs Annual Reports

Date: 14th December 2005

Authors: Chairs of Scrutiny Committees

1. Purpose of the Report

To inform Members that the Chairs from all three Scrutiny Committees-Community and Quality of Life, Resources and Management and Services have written their annual reports and these have been considered by their respective Committees and approved for referral to Council.

2. Background

The Constitution requires that the Scrutiny Committees submit an annual report to full Council on their workings and with any recommendations that they may wish to make to Council. These reports are attached.

4. Recommendations

Members are recommended to consider the reports

Community and Quality of Life Committee – Chairman’s Report 2004/05

Following the Council’s Annual General Meeting in May I took over as the Chair of the Community and Quality of Life Scrutiny Committee., which meant that all the working groups and reviews were up and running. The Committee has set itself quite a task, with working groups looking at the following:

- a) **Disabilities;** to gather information on disabilities and access within the Borough.
- b) **Twitchels and Alleyways;** to look at the problems associated with alleyways and anti-social behaviour.
- c) **Joint Scrutiny Budget;** to interview all Heads of Department to scrutinise this year’s budget and to look at the base budget for 05-06.
- d) **Leisure Services;** Leisure services requested the committee to look at the Leisure and Community Facilities Strategy.

The **Disabilities** working group interviewed Building Control and Housing Officers to investigate grants and adaptations in the home. At the end of the year efforts were made to liaise with the Local strategic Partnership (L.S.P.) and other agencies. L.S.P. representative Pam Wisher was co-opted onto the group to assist with its work. In January the group considered the usefulness of meeting people with disabilities and it was agreed that a face-to-face questionnaire would be drawn up. In April a representative from the Primary Care Trust (P.C.T.) attended the group outline services for the disabled. In June it was noted we had 18 surveys undertaken with disabled members of the public, with the aim of achieving 100. We also agreed to “map” organisations of the disabled, so members of the group could visit, and continue the survey work.

The **Twitchels and Alleyways** working group were very active and in November 04 visited four footpaths to see at first hand what the problems were. A number of residents were talked to during this walkabout. In January David Jayne (Community Partnerships Manager), was taken on board, and the thinking of a strategy to reflect a range of measures started to take place. A County Council Youth Officer attended to discuss outreach provision and services for young people. In the summer, a ‘reporting protocol’ for use by members and the public was drawn up for use, for when problems are identified on footpaths.

The **Joint Scrutiny Budget** working group in November formulated some common questions for the Heads of Service interviews. A draft scope / terms of reference was formulated. Central to our work was to look at the three local priorities, along with the three national ones. (Local- Young Persons; Enhance the Environment; and Improve Community Safety. National- Decent Homes; Waste Management and Recycling; and Council Tax and E Govt). A report was made late summer with the intention of influencing next year’s budget. The period between January and July saw all Heads of Service interviewed, with a full picture of expenditure and budgets. Priorities were extensively questioned with all Heads of Departments. In September reports were drawn up with the intention of reporting to each respective scrutiny committee of our work and proposals.

Youth Review this reported in June 2004 and a number of recommendations were made. A very successful conference was held in September 2005 comprised of partner agencies and young people. A mini review of Youth Services will be undertaken by this committee in March 2006 with the aim of reviewing the progress made on the former Youth review's wide ranging recommendations.

Leisure and Community facilities Strategy- a small working group has reviewed this strategy and felt that the provision for youth had not been prioritised. It was welcomed that a new report had been presented to Cabinet (4th August) with youth provision having been incorporated.

Conclusion.

Though I have only been the Chair of the Community and Quality of Life scrutiny Committee for six months (May-Oct) I felt able to get a 'handle' on the wide-ranging work that was being undertaken.

The budget work was the most detailed and at times, I felt we were seeing an elaborate overview rather than a focussed piece of work, However it has been most useful in establishing a background and the working group is to continue into the New Year with a tighter remit. The proposals included increased and informative detail for members on scrutiny committees, which will empower members and strengthen the Council. Attempts at viewing the medium and long term expenditure and priorities will be interesting and useful, as will a focus on one department's budget.

The work on disabilities has been interesting and hopefully useful when we come to making reports. Our aim is to reach 100 surveys so we can claim to know what the position is the community for the disabled in both the public and private sectors. The physical that can be seen, underlies the difficulty of the mental health disabled that can be more difficult to reach.

The final report has been received for the work on Twitchels and Alleyways. This has produced an excellent protocol for use by Councillors and the public and will hopefully reduce anti-social behaviour, and where it does occur, the public will be strengthened and empowered to contact the appropriate agency. A finding of the working group was that some young people feel just as unsafe on the footpaths as do the elderly.

Apart from the working groups, the work of the committee continues. We have invited a number of Cabinet Members to address the Committee and answer questions e.g. Councillor Vivien McCrossen Cabinet Member (Housing) and Youth Champion. Also other speakers such as Rachel wood Arts Development Officer, Michael Burton Planning Officer (Green Swathes/Cycle Paths) and The policy of the committee to move meetings around the borough has continued which has included Calverton, Newstead, Arnold, Gedling and Netherfield.

Councillor Christopher Preston
Chair Community and Quality of life Scrutiny Committee
8th October 2005

Services Scrutiny Committee – Chairman’s Report 2004/5

During the year the Committee had presentations from officers responsible for lesser known council services (and services where there seemed to have been a fall off in performance):

The Committee questioned the following portfolio holders about their activities:

Councillor V. McCrossen (Portfolio Holder for Housing) 7th June 2005

Councillor R. Nicholson (Portfolio Holder for Direct services and Property) 25th January 2005

Other presentations made to this Committee included:

Officer S. Yallop (Benefits Manager) Performance Indicators and Performance Standards 26th July 2005

Officer C. McKenzie (Administration and Customer service Manager) Abandoned Cars 22nd March 2005

Officer A. Bradley (Senior Solicitor) Freedom of Information and Data Protection 22nd November 2004

Officer C. Groves (Head of Engineering and Property) Adoption of Revised Energy Policy and Plan 12th October 2004

The Committee received reports from the licensing section on their progress in dealing with applications under the new legislation. Progress was very good.

Along with the other scrutiny committees, Services Scrutiny made suggestions during the budget consultation.

Members of the committee read sections of the leisure strategies and commented upon them. The comments were incorporated into the final strategies.

Members of the committee sat on the Joint Scrutiny Budget Working Group which will report on its first year to the next meeting. Its work will continue next year.

Members of the committee are currently on working groups formed by the Housing Portfolio holder which are dealing with Options Appraisal and Repairs Partnering.

The following Working Groups sat during the year:

- 1: Housing SRG (including tenants) – which oversaw the appointment of the Council’s option appraisal consultant and guided the tenant consultation process
- 2: Homeless Hostel – the group recommended the closure of the present hostel; this will happen as soon as replacement facilities have been provided (process under way)
- 3: Open Spaces – the group made recommendations to the portfolio holder which were accepted and have been included in the newly adopted Leisure Strategy document
- 4: Social Exclusion – this group was intended to pick up a recommendation from the CPA inspection. After one meeting it was decided to wind up the group until an officer group on the same subject reports.
- 5: Waste Management – it was decided to defer the work of this group until the current changes in this service had been completed

6: Burial places and cemeteries – this group will report at the next meeting

7: Section 106 expenditure in Gedling Ward – this group was formed to recommend ways in which Section 106 leisure money should be spent in Gedling Ward. The ward councillors have made suggestions which have been accepted. A minor change was suggested to the consultation procedure which was not accepted.

8: Car parking charges – this group was suggested just before the Cabinet adopted a policy for implementation in January 2007. It was decided to proceed with the group in about July 2007 to examine how the scheme was working.

Energy and Water Conservation in Council Buildings – it has been decided to begin this work with the whole committee, beginning with a presentation from a council officer at the next meeting. This work was initiated following a 45% increase in the price of gas paid by the council.

Councillor Anthony Gillam
Chair of the Services Scrutiny Committee
10th October 2005

RESOURCES & MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2004/5

PORTFOLIO SCRUTINY

The activities of the Portfolio holder for Development & Economic Regeneration were scrutinised when he appeared before the Committee to respond to written questions previously submitted. He also replied to supplementary questions. The Committee did not formulate any recommendations.

MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Three of our Regional MEPs, Chris Heaton-Harris, Roger Helmer and Bill Newton-Dunn, responded to 21 written questions previously sent to them. The meeting was open to all Councillors and the MEPs answered the supplementary questions put to them from the floor. The Committee did not make any recommendations.

PRESENTATIONS

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF

A presentation was given by the Head of Personnel and Organizational Development. The Committee agreed that this did not warrant further scrutiny at this time but asked the Officer to report back if problems occurred, or were foreseen, in the future.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Emergency Planning Officer for Nottinghamshire County Council gave the presentation. The Committee noted that Emergency Planning was undergoing substantial reorganization and agreed to ask the Officer to make another presentation when these reforms had been undertaken and allowed to settle in.

BUDGET

The Budget proposals for 2005/6 were put before the Committee on two occasions. The Committee made recommendations to Cabinet for the inclusion and exclusion of several items, some of which were accepted.

WORKING GROUPS

ACCESS STRATEGY originally ONE-STOP SHOP

It was reported that the One-Stop-Shop, recommended by the Committee, had been well received by the public. Minor changes to staffing and opening hours had been made to reflect the demand that had been experienced. The County Council had a permanent stand and the Police occasionally manned a stand.

The public in Newstead were consulted on the accessibility of Council services; it was thought that perhaps they were disadvantaged because of their rural location. However, the consultants report showed they were generally satisfied.

The group also considered the impact of the One Stop Shop and were pleased to note that this had been successful. A draft Access Strategy was developed in liaison with the portfolio holder, this was considered by the Committee and referred to the Portfolio Holder, who presented it to Cabinet where it was agreed.

CONCESSIONARY FARES

A choice of options was put to the public using the Gedling 500. No recommendations were made after analyzing the results because of a new concessionary fares scheme proposed by Government, which is due to come into force in April 2006.

SCRUTINY RESOURCES

The recommendations to Cabinet resulted in the appointment of a Member Information Officer.

POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS

A final report, with recommendations, is to be submitted for Committee approval. There was public consultation through the Gedling 500. The recommendations, after approval, will be sent to the portfolio holder for action.

BUDGET – JOINT SCRUTINY

The Heads of Service of the eight Departments were interviewed. The main focus was on fact finding and gaining knowledge of the Budget process and its effect on each Department. There was some scrutiny of some aspects of the individual budgets: this led directly to the setting up of the Mayoral Support Working Group. The final report, with recommendations, is expected in November, but it was agreed that the Working Group will continue to meet to scrutinise all aspects of the Budget.

MAYORAL SUPPORT

The final report, with recommendations, is expected in November.

REVIEWS

The Allotment Leisure Strategy was reviewed by Cllrs. M. S. & A. M. Dunkin. Four of their recommendations were accepted by Leisure Services.

The Sport Playing Pitches Strategy was reviewed by Cllr. G. J. Griffiths who verbally reported to the Committee that it met the Council's aims.

MINUTES

The details of the proceedings of the Committee and the Working Groups are recorded in their minutes.

Councillor Gerald Vincent Clarke

Chair of the Resources and Management Scrutiny Committee

19th October 2005