

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23rd July 2008



Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
M Dunn	No	Mrs R O'Shea	Yes
Dr R L Evans	Yes	R Ramage	Yes
Ms L B Flint	Apologies	Mrs C Sandbrook	Yes
M Gage (Chairman)	Yes	A F Shelton	Yes
J E B Gyford	Yes	Mrs. J. Smith	Yes
A M Meyer	Yes	F. Swallow	Yes

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

25. MINUTES

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th June 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26. QUESTION TIME

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

27. MEMBERSHIP OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Following the changes to Committee Membership that the Leader of the Council had advised at full Council on Monday night, the Chairman welcomed Cllr. Mrs. J. Smith who had been appointed to the Committee in place of Cllr. Rose.

28. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09 – HOW THE COUNCIL MANAGES SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS

The Chairman welcomed and introduced Leigh Woodside from Alexander Consultants who had been invited to attend the Committee to provide a briefing session on the essential elements of project management processes for local government, to assist members in carrying out their study.

In making his presentation, Leigh Woodside explained that the objectives of the session were to:-

- * Build a common understanding and base level of knowledge for members;
- * Provide a balance of underpinning theory and a practical approach for project management;
- * Introduce a common language for project management;
- * Generate open and honest dialogue around project management within a local government environment;
- * Share previous project management experience and lessons learnt;
- * Introduce some useful checklists and guidance for project management;
- * Explore some misconceptions and myths around project management.

A copy of the presentation slides were given to members together with a Project Management Check List and a List of Useful Questions, and a Cobb's Paradox questionnaire and associated notes.

(From the discussion that took place at the briefing, Leigh Woodside has prepared a note of some of the current perceptions raised about project management at the Council which were raised by participants – a copy is appended to these minutes).

At the conclusion of the session, the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Leigh Woodside for his extremely informative and interesting presentation.

The Committee then went on to discuss taking the study forward and possible methods/styles for undertaking this particular scrutiny exercise.

The first and main element of the study was to scrutinise a “live” project as it progressed through the project management cycle.

Members were advised that the Council has developed a Project Management Toolkit to give Managers a resource to use for any project within the Council. This had been compiled by Cherie Root, Customer and ICT Manager and Lesley Day, Audit, Insurance and Risk Manager.

The second element of the study was to examine a project undertaken by one of the Council's external contractors to gain an insight as to how they undertake project management when working with the Council.

DECISION:

Following discussion, it was agreed as follows:-

1. A copy of the Project Management Toolkit to be sent to each Member of the Committee;
2. Cherie Root and Lesley Day to be invited to talk to Members about the Toolkit;
3. A list setting out the Council's 2008/09 projects, including capital programme items, to be sent to Members to enable each Member to identify from the list their top 6 preferences

for study. A shortlist will then be drawn up to aid members in choosing the project to be scrutinised;

4. Further consideration be given as to the precise methods/styles to be adopted for undertaking the scrutiny exercise in relation to the first element of the study once members have had a copy of the Toolkit, a talk from Cherie Root and Lesley Day, and the shortlist of projects has been compiled;

5. The Scrutiny Manager to make tentative arrangements in liaison with the Chairman and Vice Chairman concerning the second element of the study in relation to inviting one of the Council's external contractors to talk to the Committee on how it undertakes project management when working with the Council.

Action Point: *that the Scrutiny Manager takes the necessary action in respect of 1 to 5 above.*

29. FEEDBACK AND MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S/TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Committee considered the progress sheets setting out the situation to date in relation to the Cabinet's implementation of recommendations in respect of the following studies:-

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Module 3 – Licensing Enforcement

Allotments – Task and Finish Group

Democratic Renewal – Task and Finish Group

Refuse Recycling – Task and Finish Group

There were a number of issues/comments/points raised by the Committee which are set out in the end column of the tables below which are to be drawn to the attention of the respective Cabinet Portfolio Holder/Lead Officer.

The Committee felt that generally there needed to be more specific timetabling in relation to the implementation of recommendations and this is reflected in the further comments made.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Module 3 – Licensing Enforcement

O and S Committee Recommendations	Progress and Outcomes	Further issues/comments /points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
6. In the interests of public safety, the Licensing Section should undertake a	The Braintree and Witham Times ran an article at Christmas about the safe	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to see articles published in

O and S Committee Recommendations	Progress and Outcomes	Further issues/comments /points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
campaign promoting the safe use of Taxis and PHVs.	use of taxis. A similar article will be prepared at the same time each year.	newspapers that cover other parts of the District and not just the Braintree and Witham Times. In addition, the Committee would like to see an article put in the Council's Contact magazine and on the Council's website.
8. The way in which licensing enforcement and planning enforcement integrates should be formally reviewed.	The integration of the enforcement role is now being looked at across a broader spectrum of services, including planning and licensing enforcement.	What is the timescale for completing this review?

Allotments – Task and Finish Group

Cabinet decision 7/7/08 – minute 34		Further issues/comments/points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
The Cabinet has decided that an approach of self-management of allotment sites by town/parish councils and allotment associations be adopted.		What is the timetable for this proposal?
T and F Group Recommendations	Progress and Outcomes	Further issues/comments/points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
1.5 Steps should be taken to encourage schools and youth groups to take up allotment tenancies.	Appropriate action to be taken.	What is the timescale for actioning this recommendation.

T and F Group Recommendations	Progress and Outcomes	Further issues/comments/points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
1.7 A leaflet showing the key findings and outcomes of the Group to be made available to the public.	Action to be taken to produce an appropriate leaflet.	What is the timescale for actioning this recommendation.
2.5 There is an urgent need to ensure the continuity of allotments usage of newly transferred GCH allotment plots.	Appropriate liaison to be undertaken with Greenfields CH.	Please be more specific about precisely what the 'liaison' with Greenfields CH will entail, and the timescale.

Democratic Renewal – Task and Finish Group

T and F Group Recommendations	Progress and Outcomes	Further issues/comments/points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<hr/> <p>(1) A review should be undertaken of those areas that are included in the Council's 2007/08 Electoral Registration Indicators Data Submission to the Electoral Commission (see Appendix 4), but answered either as 'No' or 'In part', to ensure that our electoral registration practices reflect best practice.</p> <hr/> <p>(2) In respect of the annual electoral registration canvass, further efforts should be made to appoint Electoral Registration Canvassers for those rural/semi-rural polling districts which currently rely</p>	<hr/> <p>The 2007/08 Indicator exercise was a one off snap shot of where the industry was. The data gathered was used to develop an ongoing self assessment performance monitoring system.</p> <p>Many of the "No" or "In Part" responses have however been addressed and improved on.</p> <hr/> <p>This year the Annual Canvass will be conducted via the Post Office for both the initial and reminder stages.</p> <p>A new system is to be used whereby "no</p>	<hr/> <p>Which of the "No" or "In Part" responses have been addressed and how have they been improved upon?</p> <hr/> <p>Please provide further information concerning the reasons for conducting the initial delivery of the Form A via the Post Office as opposed to the use of Electoral Registration Canvassers.</p>

T and F Group Recommendations	Progress and Outcomes	Further issues/comments/points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<p>on a postal canvass, with a view to ensuring that all <u>non-responding</u> households in the District receive personal visits from Canvassers. The payment of Canvassers for canvassing these areas should be reviewed and, if necessary, enhanced, to provide the necessary financial incentives to attract applicants.</p>	<p>change” data can be registered via either telephone or internet.</p> <p>Non responders will then be targeted initially via telephone canvass (where telephone numbers are available using Council Tax records). Where no telephone contact can be made personal visits will be made.</p>	<p>Would you also clarify what arrangements exist for dealing with households whose first language is not English, and/or where occupants have difficulty in completing forms.</p>
<p>(5) We should maintain contact with the elderly/disabled/ethnic organisations identified in paragraph 2 (9) in order to encourage and facilitate the members of those organisations participating in the democratic process.</p>	<p>Regular contact is being maintained with a number of the District’s Care establishments.</p>	<p>Please clarify what contact is being maintained with disabled/ethnic organisations.</p>
<p>(10) The ERO/RO should set up an election forum with the local Party Agents (and any independents) to meet at least annually to discuss current issues/new developments/topics on the subject of elections and electoral registration. There are a number of technical issues raised by the Party Agents as part of their contributions to this study – e.g. timing of delivery of poll cards, publication of Absent Voters Lists – that would benefit from discussion from discussion at the forum.</p>	<p>An annual discussion Forum will be set up.</p>	<p>In a year where there are scheduled elections we would like to see a Forum held at the beginning of the year prior to the run up to the election, and a second ‘post election’ Forum held to act as a debriefing session to capture any learning points etc.</p>

include reference to any in-depth reports that members need to

refer to.

DECISION: that the further issues/comments/points raised be drawn to the attention of the respective Cabinet Portfolio Holder/Lead Officer and the responses received be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

Action Point: *the Scrutiny Manager to action accordingly.*

30. FORWARD PLAN – 1ST JULY TO 31ST OCTOBER 2008

Members received the four month Forward Plan for the above period.

DECISION: that the contents of the Forward Plan be received and noted.

31. ESSEX SCRUTINY CONFERENCE – 8TH OCTOBER 2008 – HYLANDS HOUSE, CHELMSFORD

As the Chairman was unable to attend this conference, it was agreed that Cllr. O'Shea would attend instead.

The Council's delegates would therefore consist of the following:-

Cllrs. Mrs. R. O'Shea, Mrs. C. Sandbrook, R. Ramage, A. Shelton, Dr. R. Evans.
Officer: Mr. S. Bore, Scrutiny Manager

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

M. Gage
Chairman

APPENDIX

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Project Management Awareness Brief – Current Perceptions

The following are the facilitator's account of some of the current perceptions raised at the project management awareness brief about project management at the Council today;

Some Current Perceptions Shared

- There is often lack of clarity in description between a policy and a project
- Projects get delivered but sometimes it takes longer than expected
- We do have a project management toolkit that we should encourage others to use
- We do project management today
- Project management is the new flavour of the month – we need to tailor how we use it for different size projects
- We have had some major successful projects
- Project management is about sticking to budget
- Project management communications are not as good as they could be
- Projects need to be more visible – dashboards would be useful
- Project management is all about having a good team

Hope the above is a fair account of our discussion.

Please note that e-copies of the pack are available from Steve Bore on request.

Clarity of the acronym of OCG

OCG – Office of Government Commerce

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