

MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Thursday, 19th October 2006 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor D Long (C), Councillor Detre, Councillor Fox, Councillor Anwar (alternate for Councillor Leaman), Councillor Baker (alternate for Councillor Mendoza), Councillor Sneddon, Councillor John (alternate for Councillor Thomas)

Also present was Councillor Dunwell.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Clues (VC)

1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

There were none.

2. Deputations

There were none.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting – 11th September 2006

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th, September 2006 be received and approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

There were none.

5. Phil Newby (Director for Policy and Regeneration) introduces the role of Overview and Scrutiny.

Phil Newby (Director for Policy and Regeneration) explained the general principles of the new Overview and Scrutiny structure, which was agreed by Council on the 11th September 2006; the new model would build on elements of the previous structure, allowing more focus on work programmes, support from officers and more public engagement. He reminded Members that the role of Overview and Scrutiny was to look into how the operation of the Council and the services it provided could be improved for the benefit of local residents.

Phil Newby then went onto clarify the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the senior committee within the structure, ensuring the most effective use of resources to support the function. He stated that the committee could contribute to or investigate any matter within the Council's policy framework except services under Children's and Families, which would be covered by a separate committee.

Phil Newby concluded that a measure of the success of Overview and Scrutiny was how much notice the Executive took of it and how much change it led to.

Additionally, the Chair drew Member's attention to the general principles of Overview and Scrutiny set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 4.2 of the report and emphasised that Members should use the committee in a productive non political manner.

Members discussed how items got onto the general agenda for the committee and how the work programme would be managed.

6. Suggested Work Programme 2006/07 and Possible Task Group Topics

The Committee had before them a report from the Director of Policy and Regeneration outlining the general principles of Overview and Scrutiny, the local approach adopted in Brent and forthcoming training for Members.

Cathy Tyson (Assistant Director for Policy and Regeneration) introduced the committee work programme, explaining the nature of the work programme and the various ways the Committee would be able to investigate elements of the Council's policy framework; for example through Member led task groups, engagement with the public, and call in of decisions that have caused widespread concern.

Members were advised that the work programme developed required to be balanced so that it would be achieved over a twelve month period. They were also informed that they would need to consider whether the subject area was discrete and manageable, and what impact it had on residents, users and stakeholders. It was important that the Committee chose items that were open to investigation and influence.

Members expressed concern that as the corporate strategy was not available it would be difficult to set the full committee work programme. This was acknowledged but it was suggested that there remained items of significance to the Council that could be anticipated to be part of any future corporate strategy.

Members then discussed which of the suggested topics should be chosen for the first two task groups to be established. A briefing note on the suggested topic of looking at a tourism strategy for Brent was tabled. Cathy Tyson advised Members that if there were any initial doubts about the priority of a topic then an officer report could first be requested before deciding whether it was necessary to establish a task group on that topic.

In arriving at two topics for investigation, it was agreed that the topic of the relationship between the voluntary sector and the Council was intrinsically linked with the other suggested topic on the voluntary sector concerning funding.

RESOLVED: -

- (i) that the suggestions for a work programme for 2006/07 be noted;
- (ii) that the following task groups be established:
 - (a) the relationship between the voluntary sector and the council and voluntary sector funding, and
 - (b) the tourism strategy for Brent;
- (iii) that, subject to consideration of the next corporate strategy, the topic of the Council's role in community cohesion be considered by a future task group;
- (iv) that a briefing paper on the role of town centre wardens and the linkages to other warden services be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

7. Budget Panel – Summary Report.

The Committee had before them a report from the Director of Policy and Regeneration outlining the membership and remit of the newly constituted Budget Panel, a sub committee within the overview and scrutiny structure.

The Chair asked Members to note the Budget Panel Summary Report, which the committee did.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to take place on Thursday 14th December 2006

9. Any Other Urgent Business

There were none.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm

D Long
Chair