



Commercial Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Report of: Councillor M J Shellie
Date: 17th May 2006
OPEN

Commercial Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel - Annual Report 2005 - 2006

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides a comprehensive update on work undertaken by the Commercial Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel during the 2005/2006 municipal year.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Panel has met 5 times during the 2005/2006 municipal year.
- 2.2 The Panel agreed its Work Programme and topics for future scrutiny with regard to the Council's Community Strategy, Corporate Plan and Key Commitments at its first meeting on 15th June 2005.

3. Scrutiny Review Topics And Work Areas

- 3.1 The Panel's formal work programme included the following Scrutiny exercises.

3.1.1 Kidderminster Outdoor Market

At the Panel's first meeting on 15th June 2005, Members considered the Council's outdoor market provision. The key issue in this particular exercise was to consider the market with a view to examining the benefits of externalising the service to a private specialist markets operator.

A Task and Finish Group was appointed and held seven meetings over a two-month period, which enabled Members to meet with the relevant stakeholders to ensure a thorough scrutiny exercise was undertaken.

The Panel agreed the Group's recommendations at its meeting on 17th August 2005 that the operation of the market be externalised, and the Cabinet, at its meeting on 29th September 2005, fully supported the Panel's recommendations. It was decided that the Kidderminster outdoor market service should be put out to tender and that relevant officers be instructed to prepare a specification and tender evaluation model, to be reported back to a future meeting of the Miscellaneous Functions Committee.

At the Miscellaneous Functions Committee on 24th April 2006, Members were asked to note the outcome of the tender evaluation exercise and award a contract for the operation of the market service, subject to the approval of a supplementary estimate by the Cabinet.

3.1.2 Building Services (Market Testing of Cleaning of Offices and Public Conveniences)

Also at the Panel's first meeting on 15th June 2005, the Panel considered a Briefing Note with regard to the Council's Building Services (Market Testing of Cleaning of Offices and Public Conveniences).

The service was being market tested to compare the type, price and quality of service available from commercial operators, in comparison with the service being provided in-house. A shortlist of cleaning companies had already been agreed following a report to the Miscellaneous Functions Committee on 30th May 2005, and the successful companies had been requested to return their tenders by 13th July 2005.

The Task and Finish Group Members met four times within the tight deadline. Their primary role was to review and familiarise themselves with the specification and to consider the tenders received, before reporting back to the Panel on 17th August 2005.

In the event, only one Tender was received from an external contractor and the recommendation to the Miscellaneous Functions Committee at its meeting on 22nd August 2005 was for the Council's Building Cleaning services be retained in-house for the foreseeable future.

The Miscellaneous Functions Committee was pleased to note that the in-house team would provide a better service at a lower price than the tender and that officers would continue to monitor and improve the service. Members therefore supported the retention of the service in-house.

3.1.3 Education on Litter and Litter Enforcement (Fixed Penalty Notices)

At the Panel's meeting on 17th August 2005, the Panel appointed a Task and Finish Group to examine the processes, outcomes and future plans for the delivery of the education and enforcement functions within the District Council in relation to litter.

The Task and Finish Group reported back to the Panel on 19th October 2005 and a number of comprehensive recommendations were considered and noted by the Cabinet at its meeting on 24th November 2005.

3.1.4 Review of the Provision of Public Conveniences

At the Panel's meeting on 19th October 2005, Members appointed two Task and Finish Groups to carry out a complete review of the Council's public conveniences including the current provision and issues relating to cleanliness.

A number of comprehensive recommendations were agreed by the Panel at its meeting before being considered and noted by the Cabinet at its meeting on 27th April 2006, for further consideration in the next municipal year, as and when finance can be made available to fund any of the options.

3.1.5 Safety Issues relating to Gravestones

Also at the Panel's 2005 October meeting the Panel considered a Scrutiny Proposal Form from the Joint Chairmen of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee asking the Panel to consider undertaking a scrutiny review on safety issues relating to memorial stones and affected members of the public.

A number of comprehensive recommendations were agreed by the Panel at its meeting on 5th April 2006 before being considered and noted by the Cabinet at its meeting on 27th April 2006.

4. Other Topics Covered by the Panel's Work Programme

- 4.1 The Panel also received updates from past Scrutiny Reviews including Recycling and the district's proposed new Cemetery.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Successful outcomes

The Members of this Panel have worked very well together over the past year. Everyone has taken an active part, making sensible and sometimes innovative suggestions to each of the Task and Finish Groups, to arrive at practical and logical recommendations to the Cabinet, most of which reached fruition.

I am pleased to report that the Panel identified realistic topics for consideration in its Work Programme.

5.2 Areas Identified for Improvement

Building on last year's advances, the Panel needs to:

- a) Continue to examine each subject with an open mind;
- b) Listen to the public who are in effect the customers;
- c) Encourage members of the public to take part in reviews;
- d) Continue to recommend practical and achievable targets to the Cabinet.

5.3 Finally, I would like to pass on my grateful thanks to all Members of the Panel for their contributions and assistance in the various Scrutiny exercises, without whose attendance at our meetings and active involvement the Panel would not have been the success it is. I would also like to thank, on behalf of the Panel, the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services for his active support during the year. I would also like to thank those officers who attended the meetings and/or the Task and Finish Groups.

6. **Appendices**

None.

7. **Background Papers**

Commercial Services Policy and Scrutiny Agendas:

15th June 2005
17th August 2005
19th October 2005
21st December 2005
15th February 2006
5th April 2006