



Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

Report of: Councillor M M G Oborski and
Councillor K J Stokes
Date: 17th May 2006
OPEN

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee - Annual Report 2005 - 2006

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides a comprehensive update on work undertaken by the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee during the 2005/2006 municipal year.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Committee has met 8 times during the 2005/2006 municipal year.
- 2.2 The Committee 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 22nd June 2005.

3. Scrutiny Review Topics And Work Areas

- 3.1 The Committee's formal work programme included the following Scrutiny exercises and work areas.

3.1.1 Wyre Forest Highways Partnership Unit

At the Panel's first meeting on 22nd June 2005, Members appointed a Task and Finish Group to undertake a scrutiny review of the Wyre Forest Highways Partnership Unit. It was felt that a review might provide an insight as to how to improve the Council's relationship with the Highways Partnership Unit and to better understand the operation of the Highways Partnership Forum.

Following proposals that were put forward for the restructuring of the Highway Partnership Units within the District, the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee presented an interim report analysing the proposals to the Cabinet's meeting on 29th September 2005.

The Group met six times during the previous municipal year. This review was postponed until the new municipal year when more information would be available.

3.1.2 Single Site - Preferred Option

This issue was submitted to Cabinet on 28th July 2005 with a subsequent request from the Leader of the Council that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee consider the Cabinet's recommendations prior to referral of the matter to Council on 21st September 2005. The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee accordingly reviewed and accepted the Cabinet's recommendations at its meeting on 18th August 2005.

3.1.4 Telecommunication Masts (Planning Control) Bill

As part of the Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel's review into Mobile Phone Masts, the Panel also considered an open letter from the Campaign for Planning Sanity dated 7th January 2006, requesting support for the Telecommunications Masts (Planning Control) Bill, which was due to be presented for its second reading on 24th Feb 2006.

The Bill called for a more robust planning regime that would protect more sensitive locations from future development. It also called for greater capability for local planning authorities to control telecom development within their own borders as well as providing greater support for the removal of existing installations that were considered to be sited insensitively.

A request was made from the Environment and Economic Policy and Scrutiny Panel to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18th January 2006 to consider a number of recommendations to the Cabinet. These were duly considered and agreed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 26th January 2006. As a result, the Cabinet sent a letter of support expressing the Council's support for the Bill.

3.1.5 Review of Council Motion: 23 and 24 Bridge Street and the Bridge Street Partnership Project, Stourport on Severn

The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20th October 2005 considered a Motion which had been submitted by the Labour Group at Council on 21st September 2005. The Motion related to Policy ST4 of the District Local Plan concerning Bridge Street in Stourport-On-Severn and was referred by the Committee to the Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel to consider at its meeting on 23rd November 2005.

After considering all of the facts the Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel referred its recommendations to the Cabinet at its meeting on 16th February 2006, which were noted.

3.1.6 Police Restructuring

At its meeting on 9th November 2005, the Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive on the West Mercia Police Consultation Survey in respect of police force restructuring.

Members were asked to agree a response to go to full Council on 16th November 2005. The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee had been asked to take the Police Restructuring Consultation as an urgent agenda item, as a response had been requested by 27th November 2005.

The Committee made its recommendations on a proposed response to the consultation to be considered by Council at its meeting on 16th November 2005.

The Administration had subsequently compiled further recommended responses and a combined set of recommendations were circulated at the Council meeting with the agreement of the relevant Cabinet Scrutiny Committee Joint Chairman, who presented them.

The Council fully endorsed the recommendations of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee, and subsequently the West Mercia Police Authority thanked the Council for its response to the consultation survey regarding police force restructuring. Worcestershire County Council had endorsed the response from Wyre Forest.

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

4.1 During the Municipal Year 2005/2006 the Panel also considered the following:

- Newswyre Summer 2005 Article on Scrutiny (relating to the Housing, Health and Rural Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel)
- Cabinet Member Response Form: implementation of Recommendations referred to Cabinet - to formalise and clarify what had been said at the Cabinet meeting and would ensure that Members would know the outcome of recommendations made to Cabinet to ensure a clear audit trail
- Protocol for Client Officers attending Scrutiny Panels
- Scrutiny Proposal Form for completion when Members propose a matter to be scrutinised
- Terrorism motion
- Involvement of Parish Councils in Scrutiny
- Improvement Plan - Progress Monitoring

- Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2006 - Consultation by the Audit Commission
- Divisional Services Business Plans - Progress Report
- Verbal Update from Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel on his relevant areas of the Council's key commitments for 2005/2006
- Verbal Update from Cabinet Member for Commercial Services on his relevant areas of the Council's key commitments for 2005/2006
- Presentation on Worcestershire Acute NHS Hospitals Trust Clinical Services and Financial Review Consultation
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment : Progress report on Improvement Plan
- Best Value Performance Indicators Progress Report
- Responding 5to Government and other public bodies' consultation papers

4.2 The Committee also received regular updates from Policy and Scrutiny Chairmen on work within their relevant Panels.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Successful outcomes

The Members of this Committee have worked very well together over the past year and have always taken active participation in group discussions.

As Chairmen of the Committee, we are very pleased with the high level of participation and commitment and excellent records of attendance.

5.2 Areas Identified for Improvement

Building on from the previous year, the Committee Members need to continue to work together and ensure they examine each subject with an open mind.

5.3 Finally, we would like to pass on our grateful thanks to all Members of the Committee for their contributions and assistance in the various Scrutiny exercises, without whose attendance at our meetings and active involvement the Committee would not have been the success it is. We would also like to thank those officers who attended the meetings and/or the Task and Finish Group.

6. Appendices

None.

7. **Background Papers**

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee Agendas:

22nd June 2005
18th August 2005
14th September 2005
20th October 2005
9th November 2005
15th December 2005
18th January 2006
8th March 2006