



## Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee

### Briefing Paper

Report of: Chairman of No Surprises Review Panel

Date: Thursday, 5th March 2009

Open

## No Surprises Review Panel

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 This briefing paper details the recommendations of the 'No Surprises' Review Panel, following its scrutiny of continuing to strengthen the communication between Officers and Members by reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's 'No Surprises' Protocol.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Following a Member request, the review panel was established on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

- 2.2 A review panel consisting the following Members was formed:

Councillor N J Thomas (Chairman)

Councillor M Ahmed

Councillor G W Ballinger

Councillor Mrs H E Dyke

Councillor J Phillips

- 2.3 The terms of reference for the review were:

- a. To continue to strengthen Officer communication with Members by reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's 'No Surprises' Protocol.
- b. To identify how the implementation and the effectiveness of the protocol could be improved so Members are continually kept informed about forthcoming decisions or developments concerning their wards.

- 2.4 The panel met three times between 16<sup>th</sup> September 2008 and 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

## **Agenda Item No. 6**

- 2.5 Ongoing continuous improvement was key to the whole communication process. In July 2007, The 'No Surprises Protocol' had been agreed by Cabinet and it was felt that a review should take place to get Members' views on whether it was working.
- 2.6 A 'No Surprises' questionnaire was sent to all Members for completion. At the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009 meeting, the Committee/Scrutiny Officer informed the group that 28 replies had been received. An analysis of the responses is shown at Appendix 1 to this report.

### **3. Key Issues**

- 3.1 Members felt that the current 'No Surprises' Protocol should be amended.
- 3.2 A "Think Local Member" scheme be introduced which would include flyers and leaflets for Officers to have on their office walls.
- 3.3 The Intranet was currently being updated and a report outlining the work that had been undertaken was presented to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008. The intranet would be relaunched in Summer 2009 and would be a useful tool for Officers and Members.
- 3.4 Conducting an annual tour for Members of all divisional service areas of the Council was perceived to be a good idea.
- 3.4 Key contact details for officers could be included in the Member Induction Pack.
- 3.5 The Committee/Scrutiny Officer reported that she had posted a question on the Centre for Public Scrutiny website asking if any authority had a protocol in place. There had been three responses from other authorities but unfortunately no-one had a protocol in place but they had expressed an interest in hearing the outcome of this Review.
- 3.6 Members thought that there should be a quarterly item in the Members' Bulletin asking for feedback on whether Members felt they were being consulted. The Strategy, Partnerships & Communications Manager should be the central point of contact for this.

#### **4. Recommendations to Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee**

To consider putting the following recommendations forward to Cabinet for approval following the review of the No Surprises Review Panel.

- 4.1 An awareness campaign be arranged for officers and members for “Think Local Member”. This would include posters and possibly a sticker which would remind Officers to inform Members on what was happening in Council wards.**
- 4.2 An abbreviated copy of the Council phonebook be made available to all Members.**
- 4.3 A quarterly item be added to the Members Bulletin asking for feedback to go to the Strategy, Partnerships & Communications Manager.**
- 4.4 The No Surprises Protocol be amended and the updated copy is attached at Appendix 2 to these minutes.**
- 4.5 Officers be requested to include all Council events and activities on the media planner which is on the Council’s intranet.**
- 4.6 A Members lounge be made available at Duke House, Kidderminster.**
- 4.7 The responses to the No Surprises questionnaire be included in the Members Bulletin.**
- 4.8 A standing item on the Members No Surprises Protocol be included in the monthly Core Brief.**

#### **5. Wards affected**

District wide.

#### **6. Appendices**

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – Analysis of the No Surprises Questionnaire completed by 28 Members.**
- 6.2 Appendix 2 - No Surprises Protocol**

**7. Background Papers**

The minutes of the No Surprises Review Panel held on:

16<sup>th</sup> September 2008

24<sup>th</sup> November 2008

27<sup>th</sup> January 2009

**Officer Contact Details:**

Sue Saunders

Committee/Scrutiny Officer

Tel: 01562 732733

Email: [susan.saunders@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:susan.saunders@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)