

Scrutiny Report to Full Council – 25 January 2007

Scrutiny Management Committee

Since my last report to Full Council on 30 November the Scrutiny Management Committee met on 18 December 2006 to consider:

- An update on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Floods Scrutiny Ad-hoc Panel;
- A report on the White Paper on Strong & Prosperous Communities summarising the early and potential implications for the scrutiny function and;
- a report setting out current budget expenditure. Given current budgetary restraints and anticipated expenditure against the budget by current financial year end, SMC is recommending the Council retain a scrutiny support budget of £6,000 for 2007/8.

At the time of producing this report, a further meeting of SMC was scheduled for 22 January 2007 to consider:

- a presentation from officers in regard to a possible review on 'Traffic Congestion' and;
- A second report on the White paper specifically aimed at how Scrutiny in York might provide this enhanced scrutiny function, and how it will be managed and its resource implications

Scrutiny Calling-In Function

SMC has also been required to meet once in its new constitutional calling-in capacity. This meeting on 8 January 2007 was held to consider a call-in item on York West Swimming Facilities. SMC agreed that there was no basis for reconsideration and confirmed the decision of the Executive.

Scrutiny Committees

- The Education Scrutiny Committee have agreed their workplan for the remaining meetings of 2006/07. All of which have been allocated for the completion of the review of home-to-school transport contracts, and how pupil safety can be maximised for primary schools.
- The Health Scrutiny Committee recently accepted a proposed financial recovery plan prepared by the new North Yorkshire and York PCT. This was subject to the PCT undertaking to provide adequate consultation arrangements with York NHS Hospital Trust and City of York Council, and a consultation process that included the general public and voluntary organisations.

In regard to dental provision in York, the Committee maintains a watching brief on the issue and expects an update on the position of the database and waiting list, during the next three months. They've also received an update report on the guidelines to GPs on referral criteria and service thresholds.

Ad-hoc Scrutiny Sub-Committees

There are presently two ad-hoc scrutiny sub-committees set up to scrutinise:

- Use of Council-Owned Land in Tang Hall Area
Work is ongoing with this review - The committee is presently organising a consultation meeting for all community groups in the area to consult on the future use of council owned facilities Tang Hall (Tuesday 13 February 2007 at Tang Hall Community Centre, Fifth Avenue between 10am – 12pm).
- Highways Maintenance Procurement Review
Work is ongoing on part A of the remit for this review. This involves considering the potential efficiencies from a PFI arrangement and investigating the cost effectiveness of other identified alternative options, available to the council, should the PFI outcome prove unsuccessful.

Since my last report to Council Scrutiny Services have seen the departure of Ruth Sherratt who has gone on to Kirklees Council to take up the role of Environment Officer. I'm sure members would like to join with me in thanking Ruth for all her work in Scrutiny and wishing her all the best for the future.

As a result of Ruth's departure the Scrutiny team has been supplemented by a seconded Democracy Officer for a three month period up to the end of March 2007, to ensure the continuity of the ongoing reviews.

SMC continues to look at enhancing its work programming processes. For example, work is presently ongoing to enable Members to register scrutiny topics for review on-line via the new Committee Management System. This together with the new working practices recently introduced, will help the scrutiny process and provide the mechanism for responding to the proposals set out in the White Paper.

Councillor M Kirk,
Chair, Scrutiny Management Committee.