

MINUTES OF THE JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE
COUNCIL OFFICES, MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL, NEEDHAM MARKET
ON WEDNESDAY 17 JUNE 2015 AT 5.30 PM

PRESENT:

BABERGH

MID SUFFOLK

Peter Burgoyne
Barry Gasper
Kathryn Grandon
Margaret Maybury
Mark Newman
John Nunn
Fenella Swan

David Card
James Caston
Rachel Eburne (Chairman)
Elizabeth Gibson-Harries
John Levantis
Wendy Marchant
Suzie Morley
Jill Wilshaw

1 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillors Elizabeth Gibson-Harries and Margaret Maybury were substituting for Councillors Dave Muller and Harriet Steer respectively. An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bryn Hurren.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4 PETITIONS

None received.

5 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

6 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

7 THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Head of Corporate Organisation outlined the scrutiny function as:

- Holding investigations in public into matters of local concern
- Adding value to what the Council does
- Critical friend approach to challenge

and outlined that the Joint Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure were detailed in the Constitution and included:

- Scrutiny of the work of external stakeholders and service providers
- Holding Executive and Strategy Committees to account
- Call in – Members had the opportunity to challenge decisions within five working days of their publication. Call in should only be used in exceptional circumstances but if a decision was challenged it would be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee and a recommendation made to the decision making Committee
- Councillor Call for Action – this enabled any Member to refer to the Scrutiny Committee any local government matter affecting their Ward.

Individual Mid Suffolk and Babergh Scrutiny Committees operated in tandem with the Joint Committee and looked at the budget setting process for each Council, and any other issues relating only to the specific Council.

The Committee had close links with the Joint Audit and Standards Committee, Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Shared Revenues Partnership Joint Committee and the Programme Steering Boards.

It was important that Scrutiny Committee members remained non-partisan and objective when considering issues.

8 FOLLOW-UP OF JOINT SCRUTINY ITEMS

The Head of Corporate Organisation presented report [JSC/09/15](#) which informed the Committee of action or progress made on previous recommendations and resolutions.

Following consideration of the report Members raised the following questions and comments:

- Fuel Poverty: as there were seven recommendations from the Task and Finish Group should this be marked as 'ongoing' rather than 'completed'? – It was noted that the recommendations had been passed on to the appropriate Programme Steering Boards but this should be checked and the progress marked as 'ongoing'.
- Impact of Welfare Reform on Rent Collection and Voids: it had been agreed that a further report would be presented to the September meeting and progress should be marked as 'ongoing'.
- Was the introduction of Universal Credit likely to have an impact on rent/council tax collection? – the Revenues and Benefits team were looking into this issue and a strategy put in place to help manage the introduction.
- Review of Partnership Accountability: A report was due to be presented to Council in July but the Committee had hoped to see a comprehensive review before that – Consultation had taken place with all Councillors appointed to outside bodies and the individual bodies themselves. The work of the outside bodies was also being considered against the Councils' Strategic Priorities to see if it was relevant or whether there were any gaps.

- Review of Districts' Contribution to Health and Wellbeing: It was vital that all Members were aware of the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board – this was included in the Councillor Support Programme and would be covered in the training to be carried out before the end of August.
- Impact of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 on the Districts: Would the Healthwatch cards mentioned be useful for new Members? – These were simple postcards that could be handed out to residents' signposting them to services. An initial supply of cards would be provided to new Members with additional copies being obtainable from Healthwatch.

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the progress made.

9 JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN FOR 2015/16

The Committee was asked to review the Annual Work Plan, Report [JSC/10/15](#) which was submitted to Members for approval and consider other topics which they would like to be scrutinised.

Members were advised of the criteria to consider in choosing a topic including:

- The potential impact Scrutiny could have
- Public interest
- Relationship to the Strategic priorities
- Timeliness
- Duplication – was anyone else already looking at the issue

A list of current proposed topics, the Executive and Strategy Committee Forward Plans and previous decisions of those Committees was provided to Members for consideration.

Topics put forward for consideration included:

- The Gateway to Homechoice system
- Section 106 Agreements
- SERCO Waste Contract
- All major contracts
- Opening hours of the Household Waste Recycling Centres
- The Councils' Business and Finance model
- Business Rates Pooling
- Planning Appeals
- Take up for PV Panel Scheme
- Homelessness – particularly in relation to ex-service personnel
- Procurement

Members were asked to prioritise the topics they wished to consider and it was agreed the following would be brought to the 19 August meeting:

- Update on ICT as per the scoping document
- Update report on rent collection
- Scoping of Review of SERCO Waste Contract

Regular meetings would be held between Joint Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs with counterparts for the Joint Audit and Standards Committee, Executive and Strategy Committees to discuss Forward Work Plans.

RESOLVED

That the Joint Scrutiny Work Plan be amended to include the items prioritised above.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7:00pm

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Chairman