

Agenda item 6a) refers
REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF SCRUTINY

Introduction

The Scrutiny Commission has three statutory responsibilities – scrutiny of decisions and actions, policy development, and overview of the Council's corporate progress. We have chosen to split the Commission's work between three Panels and the minutes of their meetings since the last Council follow this report. My purpose in compiling this report is to take a personal overview of the Panels' progress with particular regard to the priorities set by the Commission at its August meeting.

The new panels were effectively given nine months in which to complete a full year's work. That we have made good progress to date is due to the commitment of members (thirteen of them entirely new to Scrutiny), the dedication of the officers who work with us, and the support of colleagues in granting us additional research resources. Simon Antrobus has only been with us a few weeks but members will already have seen the first of his new-style reports, designed to encourage wide-ranging constructive debate.

Scrutiny

Policy Panel has considered the Council's standing orders relating to the allocation of Executive Portfolios and its decision will be reported to the next Council.

The Rent Arrears Task Panel, the last of the old-style ad hoc panels - will conclude its deliberations later this month.

Services Panel has considered emergency flood prevention provisions and its conclusions will have been considered by our Executive by the time this Council meets. The minutes cannot convey how different to the old "critical" debates this actually was – wide-ranging, crosscutting and wholly constructive, a true "step change" in how elected members conduct their business and contribute to improvements for District residents.

Policy Development

The Policy Panel has begun work on an enormous crosscutting project for promoting healthier lifestyles. Services will shortly commence a review of various housing policies and practices. Resources is making excellent progress on the priority asset management review and is recommending Budget Guidelines for 2002/3 to this meeting. Following on from that will be recommendations regarding a new way of managing contingency funds.

Overview

At this stage in the Commission's development, overview is chiefly confined to the various Best Value reviews. The last of the old-style reviews (Council Tax, Business Rates and Cashiers Services) is to be presented to members at this meeting. The new, multi-agency reviews for this year have, in my view, got off to a worryingly slow start. A great deal of work is being done by officers but, although each Panel has appointed members to work with the officers, they are not yet actively involved. The exceptions to this are the smallscale reviews of Dog Warden and Pest Control

Services, where Cllrs Liquorish and Dann have been able to report good progress. I hope to be able to say the same of the bigger reviews in my next report to Council.

Commission members will shortly be considering feedback on the recent TalkBACK roadshows and remain committed to building on last year's initiative on engaging young people through the two senior schools in the District.

The next major step forward in Overview will be when Scrutiny members meet formally with Health Authority Executives. At its last meeting (too late to be reported in these minutes) Policy Panel approved the attendance of one member and an officer at a forthcoming training event in Birmingham. Their feedback will enable us to maximise the effectiveness of what is both a new statutory duty and, more importantly, a new opportunity.

Progress

Rather than bang on even longer, I have cobbled together the attached chart. The corporate priorities are, of course, the Council's; the activities and targets are the Commission's; but the views on progress are entirely mine.

Roger Wood
Scrutiny Commission Chair

Policy Development Scrutiny Panel

| Key Priorities | Targets | Specific Task 2001/2002 | Progress |
|-------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| CP 5, 6, 2, 4, 10 | To improve Harborough District Council's overall public satisfaction rating by 10 percentage points over a 3 year period (T17) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review response to e-government agenda to date (<i>BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002</i>) Review implementation of customer services strategy Review implementation of communication and consultation strategy Review of implementation of B V Improvement Plans | Under way |
| CP 5, 6, 4 | Complete the Scrutiny Boards review on effectively consulting with communities before April 2003 (T43) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing communication and engagement with the local community, in particular young people. | Next cycle |
| CP 8 | To encourage, promote and provide opportunities for healthier lifestyles (<i>BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002</i>) (T65) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commencement of working with and Scrutiny of NHS. <p>Review policies that can contribute to this target i.e. Community Safety etc.</p> | Under way |
| CP 6, 10 | To contribute to developing and maintaining a positive living environment. (<i>BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002</i>) (T64) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop strategy for addressing inequality (referred from Executive 6/6/01) Policy implication of Harborough Homesearch. Linkages between community needs and S106 Agreements Review how LA21 issues fit within the Council's policies and strategies | Outstanding – progress needed |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a rural housing strategy for Harborough District (T18) | |
| CP 6 | To promote community development through social interaction and participation. <i>(BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002)</i> (T66) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy for addressing inequality (see above) Assessment or effectiveness of partnerships ensuring protocols to manage arrangements | Outstanding – progress needed |
| CP 2 | Completion of Best Value Reviews in line with Council's approved programme <i>(BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002)</i> (T15) | Environment and Economic Development Policy Review Health and Community Development Policy Review | Next cycle |

Service Development Scrutiny Panel

| Key Priorities | Targets | Specific Task 2001/2002 | Progress |
|----------------|--|---|--|
| CP 1, 10, 2, 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and develop a more customer focussed service in line with the Council's Customer Service Strategy (T28) <i>(BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review progress on implementing the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Review repair standards for void properties Examination of emergency arrangements for flooding incidents | Progress required Next cycle COMPLETE NEXT CYCLE |
| CP 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase level of recycling from 9.5% to 12% (T26) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review new procedures for waste collection and recycling in line with Leicestershire Waste Management Strategy and Government Policy | Progress required |
| CP 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BVPI 66 a,b & c Improvements (I53) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete the review of Housing Rent Arrears | COMPLETE NEXT CYCLE |
| CP 1 & 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote initiatives to provide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No tasks established for 2001/2002; dependant | - |

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| | infrastructure and other changes to support outcomes from the Local Transport Plans for Leicestershire (T57) | on progress on other targets | |
| CP 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To progress issues relevant to Harborough within the Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside: Our Future over the period to 2004 (T51) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response to Rural White Paper with particular reference to housing. (BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002) | Cycle after next |
| CP 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of Best Value Reviews in line with the Council's approved programme (BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002) <p>Ensure scope at review includes LA21 issues) (T15)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highway Network Review (BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002) Dog Warden and Pest Control Review | <p>Progress required</p> <p>Good progress to date</p> |

Resource Development Scrutiny Panel

| Key Priorities | Targets | Specific Task 2001/2002 | Progress |
|----------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| CP 1 & 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify potential sources of external funding to pursue appropriate opportunities to secure resources (T37) | Investigate PFI funding opportunities PFI Initiatives (BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002) | |
| CP 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and develop a more customer focussed service. (T28) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of the budget process for improved understanding and clarity. Ensure mechanisms for sharing areas of improvement following BV Reviews | Progress at next meeting |
| CP 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By April 2003 to have reviewed the future potential of the Council's Adam and Eve Street building and the Market Hall to enable a more efficient and effective asset to be realised (T86) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake asset review (BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002) | Progress at next meeting |
| CP 10 | To carry out a car parking policy and asset review during 2001-2002 (undertake a Car Park Management Strategy Study) (T7) | Undertake Car Parking Policy Review * (BVPP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002) <u>Priority April 2002</u> | Good progress to date |
| CP 2 | Completion of Best Value Reviews in line with Council's approved | Document Management Best Value Review | Progress required |

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| | <p>programme (BVP ACTION PLAN 2001/2002) Ensure scope of review includes LA21 issues (T15)</p> | | |
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