

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL – PEOPLE

held in the Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough

2ND December 2010

commencing at 6.30p.m.

Present:
Councillor Graves (Chairman)

Councillors: Davies, Dunton, Mrs. A. Hill, Holyoak and Mrs. Robinson.

Officers: R. Abbott, L. Butler, T. Day, S. Mortimer and E. O'Neill.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beaty, Dann (Portfolio Holder) and Hart.

399 MINUTES

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Panel for People held on 28th October 2010 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

400 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None were received.

401 ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

The Panel was asked to consider the Anti-Poverty Strategy for Harborough District Council. The report was presented by T. Day, Community Partnership Manager, and L. Butler, Revenues and Benefits Manager. The strategy set out the way in which the Council would work to address the causes and effects of poverty and deprivation within the District.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the action plan for 2011/12 would try to cut out duplication of work and endeavour to produce a more efficient approach to service delivery by working with other agencies.
- (ii) One in six people within Harborough District is in risk of poverty, although the District is one of the least deprived in the region.
- (iii) the strategy has been developed in the context of the recession and the central government plans to significantly reduce funding for public services over the next four years.
- (iv) the effectiveness of the strategy at coordinating various services and organisations will be measured through an annual self-assessment. This offers an opportunity to lead Officers to see their service in context, and develop their skills to ensure effective engagement between services and customers. It also enables different and innovative ways of working to be championed to secure improved service outcomes and efficiencies.

The Panel expressed concerns regarding the Council's ability to implement the strategy in light of the likely cuts in local authority grants.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the annual self-assessment be used to identify clearly-defined priorities.
- (ii) the Anti-Poverty Strategy is brought back to Scrutiny annually after each self-assessment has been carried out.

402 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION STRATEGY

The report was introduced by P. Rowbotham, Head of Customer Services, and R. Abbott, Communications and Consultations Manager.

The purpose of the report was to review the current Communication and Consultation Strategy with a view to creating two separate strategy documents (one for Communication and one for Consultation) and to invite Members to give their views on the documents.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) it is hoped that the new consultation strategy will assist staff and Members to carry out consultations which will be of a high quality and meet the needs of the District's residents.
- (ii) the strategy will review the methods of communication used by the Council, to see if they meet the needs of our customers and staff.
- (iii) increased use of the Council's website can lead to more cost-efficient consultation methods by reducing the cost of postage, paper and capturing of data.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) work continue on the draft strategies.
- (ii) the Communication and Consultation Strategies be brought back to Scrutiny for comment in 2011 (date to be agreed).

403 MATTERS OF SPECIAL URGENCY

None were received.

The Meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.