

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL – PEOPLE

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

14th July 2011

commencing at 6.30p.m.

Present: Councillor Graves (Chairman).

Councillors: Beesley-Reynolds, Mrs. Burrell, Everett, McHugo and Mrs. Robinson.

Officers: R. Abbott, K. Mehta, E. O'Neill and P. Rowbotham.

Also Present: Councillor Dann (Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Birch and Dr. Bremner (Ex Officio).

117 NOTIFICATIONS OF SUBSTITUTIONS

None were received.

118 MINUTES

The Panel noted that the following amendment should be made to Minute 57:

The wording

“The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) when reasonably practicable, a report be brought to this Panel on the Council's compliance with 'Coco' (I.T. Code of Connection) to address Members' concerns that the Council's I.T. security is too great.”

be amended to read:

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (ii) when reasonably practicable, a report be brought to this Panel on the Council's compliance with 'Coco' (I.T. Code of Connection) to address Members' concerns that the Council's I.T. security **is not operating-system and web-browser neutral**.

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Panel – People held on 9th June 2011 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record, subject to the above amendment.

119 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None were received.

120 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

R. Abbott, Communications and Consultations Manager, provided the Panel with an introduction to this report.

A draft version of this report had been presented previously to the Panel on 2nd December 2010. At this point the Council had a combined 'Communication and Consultations Strategy'. At its Meeting on

2nd December 2010 the Panel suggested that two separate documents be produced (one for Communications and one for Consultations).

The Panel NOTED that spelling and grammatical errors appeared within the Communication Strategy and RECOMMENDED that these be corrected before forwarding the document to the Executive.

The Panel considered the Council's 'Communication Strategy Action Plan 2011-14' (attached at Appendix A to these Minutes) and suggested an additional item of work (shown in bold italics at Appendix A to these Minutes).

The Panel RECOMMENDED that the report be forwarded to the Executive taking into account the amendments suggested at the Meeting.

121 PUBLISHING LOCAL AUTHORITY SPENDING

K. Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, introduced this report to the Panel.

In June 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government wrote to local authorities informing them they would have to publish expenditure on items over £500 by January 2011. This included tenders, contracts and actual payments. The Government had also committed to publishing certain information on salaries and contracts by this date although this is not a statutory requirement.

The Local Government Group, working in collaboration with the Local Public Data Panel, has published a series of practitioner guidance documents for local authorities in order that the data is published in a standardised and comparative format and content. The guidance also covers implications of the Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act on the Transparency Agenda and how these should be handled in order to meet the agenda and examples of what would be considered personally- or commercially-sensitive information. They provide practical advice on redaction of information and exemption from publication.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the Council publishes the required spending information on a quarterly basis on its website.
- (ii) the Council's spending data can be found at:
http://www.harborough.gov.uk/site/scripts/news_article.php?newsID=216
- (iii) The data on senior officers' (Management Board) salaries will be published with the first quarter of this financial year ended 30th June 2011. For 2011/12 it will be the salaries as at the beginning of the financial year i.e. 1st April 2011. It is important to note that the Accounts and Audit Regulations as applying to local authorities have for a number of years required the inclusion of remuneration of senior employees in their financial statements to increase transparency and accountability in Local Government. The requirements include provision of:
 - individual data on all senior employees earning more than £150,000 by job title and name.
 - individual data on all senior employees earnings between £50,000 and £150,000 by job title only.
 - banded data in multiples of £5,000 on all other employees earning over £50,000.

The Panel were given a demonstration of how to access the Council's spending data online. The Panel noted this demonstration and thanked Officers for it.

The Meeting ended at 7.32p.m.

Appendix A

Communication Strategy Action Plan:

The table below sets out key activities planned for 2011-12 with those service users affected. This Action Plan should be reviewed annually in-line with the Portfolio & Team Plans.

| Activity | Service Users | Timescale |
|--|---|---|
| Update/refresh Council website and develop this as the Council's main communication tool | Public Businesses Staff/Councillors Worldwide Partner organisations | August 2011 |
| Implement a new intranet to support staff and Councillor's through easy, accessible information which meets the needs of new ways of working ie shared services, home working | Staff / Councillors | December 2011 |
| Undertake a review of social media and develop a protocol to meet the needs of the business and ensures good working relationships with the media | Public Businesses Staff/Councillors Worldwide Partner organisations | August 2011 |
| Promote the use of electronic communication through website and social networking | Public Businesses Staff/Councillors Worldwide Partner organisations | March 2012 |
| <i>Enabling remote access to email</i> | <i>Staff / Councillors</i> | <i>When reasonably practicable</i> |
| Ensure the corporate style and identity for the council is consistent with its mission, values and principles | Staff / Councillors | March 2012 |
| Review & monitor internal communications such as Core Brief, Newsletters etc to ensure an effective, aware and motivate workforce through good internal communications | Staff / Councillors | October 2011 |
| Monitor the effectiveness of the Council's public facing newsletter (Talkback) | Public Businesses Staff/Councillors | January 2012 |
| Review the effectiveness of all public facing communication by exploring and exploiting new channels for communication to help enhance the economic, efficient and effective operation of the council and reach the target audience in ways they want. | Public Businesses Staff/Councillors | March 2012 |