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SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 August 2007 – 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Williamson (in the Chair); Councillors M Coleman, Collins, Cook, Easter, Field, Reynolds, C Walker and Weymouth.

Councillor Plant attended as an observer.

Mr S Duncan (Head of Financial Services), Mr D Glason (Planning Policy Service Manager), Mr P Hardy (Executive Director) (Environment and Economy), Mr R Hodds (Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer), Mr T Howard (Head of Regeneration and Environment), Ms H Speechley (Executive Officer) and Miss K Edmonds (Senior Member Services Officer).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Wainwright.

1. FORMER COUNCILLOR SUE ROBINSON

The Chairman asked all Members of the Scrutiny Committee to observe one minute's silence in memory of former Councillor Sue Robinson.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2007 were confirmed subject to an amendment that Councillor Cook and Councillor Weymouth had given their apologies.

(Councillor Collins and Councillor Reynolds declared a personal (non-prejudicial) interest in the following item as Members of the Greater Yarmouth Tourist Authority).

3. PUBLIC BROADCASTING SCREENS

Members considered the Head of Regeneration and Environment's report on the Public Broadcasting Information Systems.

The Chairman informed Members that the report was an interim report and that a detailed report would be presented at the next Scrutiny meeting on Monday, 17 September 2007.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment detailed the eight areas that Members had requested further information on and stated that these could be broken down into three main areas; namely governance, procurement and contractual arrangements. Members' attention was drawn to section two detailing the work that would be carried out, which included looking at the relationship between the Council and ADI along with the malfunction of the screen in the Market Place. Members were informed that staff involved in the *inte*GREAT scheme would be spoken to along with Jim Dumolo, Herbert Tonkin and David Marsh.

Members were informed that the Council's insurers had repudiated the claim on the basis that the fault was integral to the screens and not as a result of an external incident such as a power surge.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment stated that there was a need to commission an investigation into the fault and, once the fault was identified, it would then be possible to make a decision on the appropriate action to take. A Business Plan was in the process of being produced for the Seafront screens which had been running effectively for the past three weeks. Members were informed that the Tourism Manager had been nominated as the responsible officer to oversee the running of the screens.

Members asked if the screens were under guarantee or if the guarantee could be extended. The Head of Regeneration and Environment stated that he would be looking into the guarantee and would also be looking at a maintenance programme. It was reported that the two screens on the seafront had been maintained by ADI and had been running well for the past few weeks and had been repaired at no extra cost to the Council.

A Member queried the action to be taken on the basis that the insurance company is not paying out for the repair of the Market Place screen. The Head of Regeneration and Environment stated that there was a need for the Council to undertake their own assessment of the screen to see what the fault was and to then ascertain the cost of repair. The Executive Director (Environment and Economy) informed Members that he would be able to update them on the insurance company's position at the September meeting.

Members agreed that they were happy that a business plan was being produced along with a comprehensive review of the screens. The Head of Regeneration and Environment stated that there was a need to explore the options of winter usage in order to receive revenue.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the process and methodology for this review as set out in the Head of Regeneration and Environment's report be agreed and that a detailed report be produced at the 17 September 2007 meeting.

- (ii) That Jim Dumolo, Herbert Tonkin and David Marsh be invited to the September Committee meeting.

(Councillor Weymouth declared a personal (non prejudicial) interest in the following item in her position as the Parish Clerk for Hemsby).

4. SECTION 106 REPORT

The Committee considered the Head of Financial Services' report which gave a financial summary relating to Section 106 Agreements.

It was reported that there was a need to look at each individual Section 106 agreement in order to see how much had been spent. Members were informed that a database would be created to record the details of the Section 106 agreements, along with information such as any land given in lieu would be included. It was reported that Colchester Borough Council would be visited as a best practice Council which was currently running such a database, to see if this would be suitable for this Council.

Members noted that Caister and Castle Green in Gorleston were missing from the figures produced.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Section 106 Receipts and Applications, as detailed in the Head of Financial Services' report be noted.
- (ii) That a report be brought back to Members following the compilation of a database detailing the current position on all outstanding Section 106 agreements.
- (iii) That an investigation into the database used by Colchester Borough Council be pursued.

5. FORWARD PLAN

Members noted the Forward Plan for the period 1 July 2007 to 31 October 2007.

6. OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL LETTER

The Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer gave Members an overview of the Ombudsman's Annual letter stating that 46 complaints had been received during the year, which was a significant increase on the 29 received in the previous year. The two main areas of complaint were about benefits and planning, although it was noted that nationally there had been a rise in planning complaints. It was reported that 19 of the 46 complaints received were premature, which is 40% of the total number of complaints received, and it was higher than the national average of 28%. The average time for responding to complaints was 27.8 days, being an improvement on 36 days in the previous year, and placing the Council in the top 50% of District Councils nationally. 19 of the complaints received were noted as premature and a discussion ensued around possible training for staff to prevent this from occurring.

RESOLVED:

That the Ombudsman's Annual Letter be noted.

7. SCRUTINY CONFERENCE

The Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee of the details of the Scrutiny Conference at the Norwich UEA Sport Park on Friday, 16 November 2007, along with the proposed agenda for the day. Members were informed that there were 12 places available for the Borough Council and that any unfilled places would be offered to non Scrutiny Committee Members.

(Councillor Williamson declared a personal (non prejudicial) interest in the following item about the Integrated Service Centre as an employee of the PCT)

8. FUTURE ITEMS FOR THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members were asked to consider the following items as possible issues to be addressed by the Scrutiny Committee:-

- Partnership Working between Local Strategic Partnerships and other such groups as appropriate.
- Look at improvements to the Town Hall in order to hold weddings and other such functions.
- Look at the Integrated Service Centre and the costs involved in staff moving and the savings that could be made.
- Look at how the Tourist Authority markets Great Yarmouth as a Heritage location.

It was also suggested that the Committee looked at how the Tourist Authority markets Great Yarmouth.

Another suggestion was that the Committee should look into the SHARP project as this was half way through its process and it was asked what the money was being spent on and whether this was being spent in the right areas, as it was felt that this scheme was being run at a distance from the Council. The Executive Director (Environment and Economy) informed Members that he would be looking into the project.

The issue of Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans being delayed was raised and the consequence of this on the Council.

Members discussed the need to look at the Town Hall and the improvements and repairs that were required. The Chairman stated that this item was placed as a possible issue due to the closure of Ferryside which would result in the possible relocation of the Registrar to the Town Hall.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a report be presented to the October meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for a review of the Sharp Project.
- (ii) That the Member Services Manager and Scrutiny Officer be requested to liaise with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman in order to produce a work programme of future items to be reviewed.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday, 17 September 2007 at 6.30 pm.

10. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm.