

EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2008.

Present – Councillors Lever (Chairman), Cottam (as substitute for Councillor Hornby) Hayes, Mistry, Norris, J. Rothwell, Rushton, Shaw (as substitute for Councillor Hollick) J. Walsh, White, and Williamson.

Councillor Morris	-	Vision Steering Group Representative
Councillor Spencer	-	Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority Nominated Spokesperson
For Bolton Council		

Also in attendance

Mr. A.R. Eastwood	-	Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Mrs. M. Stoney	-	Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Mr. C. Bullough	-	Assistant Director of Environmental Services
Mr. McKean	-	Special Projects and Partnerships Manager
Mr. J. Addison	-	Scrutiny Support Manager
Mr. I.D. Mulholland	-	Scrutiny Team Leader

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Burrows, Chadwick and Hollick

Councillor Lever in the Chair

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th June, 2008, were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

10. WORK PROGRAMME OF THE COMMITTEE

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which provided members with suitable criteria to aid in the selection of topics for scrutiny and outlined possible subjects which could be included in the work programme.

Members views and comments were sought in relation to any further items and issues that they wanted including on the Committee's work programme.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

11. EXTRACTS OF MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE.

Extract of the proceedings of meetings of The Executive held on 2nd and 27th June, 2008, were submitted in respect of the Manchester Multi Area Agreement, Future Governance Arrangements of AGMA and the Transport Innovation Fund.

Members sought clarification from the Director of Legal and Democratic Services in relation to indemnity cover for the Greater Manchester Returning Officer regarding any consequences arising from the Greater Manchester wide poll on the Transport Innovation Fund proposals.

Resolved – That such extracts be noted.

12. SUPPORTING THE COUNCIL'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The Chief Executive submitted a report which set out proposals to strengthen and support the Council's relationships with external organisations.

Whilst the report suggested that that the Council's relationships with regional and sub regional bodies and the workings of the local strategic and themed partnerships were ideally suited to the work of this Committee; it also suggested that the scrutiny

of the Council's relationships with organisations which work in partnership with the Council along with the work of various voluntary groups and organisations to which the Council appointed representatives might lie within the remit of other scrutiny committees.

The report also suggested that the scrutiny committee could expand its role in evaluating how the Council could maximise the value of its relationships with the numerous outside bodies to which the Council made appointments. It was possible that better support to Members would improve the value of the relationships with these organisations. The Committee could work with Member representatives at future meetings, and potentially some of the organisations, in order to be able to suggest ways in which such support could be offered.

For example the following suggestions were made:-

- _____ Criteria be developed to guide how Members were appointed to external organisations. These could include consideration of Members' skills, experience and interests.
- _____ That new appointees be briefed on the purpose, role and activity of the organisation concerned. These briefings could also be used to explain how the relationship with the organisation assisted the Council's/Partnership's objectives, and what the Council hoped to achieve from it. Briefings could be provided by the organisation or by appropriate Council officers
- _____ Review meetings to be held with Member appointees. Such meetings would allow Members to report on the work of the organisation over the year, to reflect on their experience, to highlight issues about the relationship with the organisation, and to suggest whether the Council's/Partnership's

objectives were achieved. Appointees could also indicate any need for additional support.

- _____ Members appointed to external bodies meet as a forum periodically to share experiences and learning.

Finally, the report suggested that in terms of the scrutiny function, the Committee would not be concerned with reviewing the performance of the organisations per se, as this was done by other means but that the Committee could examine the process the Council utilised in determining the Service Level Agreements and partnership working issues in general with each of the ten larger voluntary organisations that received financial support and how these were monitored and reviewed.

The Committee concurred with the reports proposals to provide Members with better support following their appointment onto outside organisations but that consideration needed to be given to the most appropriate mechanism by which this could be achieved.

Members also expressed the opinion that the report had been instrumental in resolving many of the areas of confusion in relation to the remit of the Committee.

Resolved – (i) That the clarification of the remit of the Committee, as detailed in the report, be welcomed.

- (ii) That the Committee's work programme be reviewed
 - (a) to ensure that the Council's nominees on each of the larger voluntary organisations which received funding from and/or provided services on behalf of the Council were invited to future meetings of the Committee to discuss the process by which Service Level Agreements were determined and partnership working issues in general; and

- (b) to ensure that it receives regular performance and monitoring reports in relation to the Community Strategy/3 Year Plan and the Local Strategic Partnership(LSP)/themed partnerships
- (iii) That measures be put in place to ensure that Members who so desired, were adequately briefed prior to taking up any appointments to outside bodies.

13. ISSUES IN RELATION TO JOINT AUTHORITIES

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report advising of the appointments made by the Council to the joint authorities together with details of the financial contributions made. Attached to the report were reports from:-

- _____ Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority on a proposal to establish a scrutiny panel to support the various initiatives undertaken through the Innovations and Partnership Board; and
- _____ Greater Manchester Police Authority's Complaints and Professional Standards Committee on the main emerging trends from conduct complaints recorded between May 2006 and April 2008.

The Director of Environmental Services updated the Committee, insofar as was possible under commercial confidentiality rules, on the current position regarding the Waste Disposal PFI Contract and other issues affecting the Authority.

Resolved – (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That arrangements be made for all Members of the Council to receive an in confidence briefing on the current position regarding the Waste Disposal PFI Contract.

14. WORK UNDERTAKEN IN REGARD TO PARTNERSHIP WORKING.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report advising that, at the request of the Chairman of the Committee, he had prepared a report the purpose of which was to update the Committee on the work undertaken thus far in regard to partnership working.

By way of background information, the report reminded Members of the work undertaken and the data received from questionnaires sent to various organisations during the period January to April, 2008.

The Committee was advised that the rationale behind the work currently being undertaken was initially to gather information about those organisations with which the Council had some form of partnership. These arrangements could vary from formal contractual agreements , to the awarding of grants or down to informal arrangements where the Council provided benefits in kind such as advice. There was a need to understand the extent of the Council's relationships with these organisations in an effort to identify any possible risks to which the Council might be exposed as a result of the relationship.

Work was currently underway to identify such partnerships and to seek various information from them such as:-

- ____ The status of the organisation;
- ____ The nature of the relationship with the Council, was it temporary or permanent;
- ____ The nature of the relationship of the organisation to the Council, was it financial or some other;
- ____ The risk management and/or insurance arrangements in place;
- ____ The organisations financial accountability arrangements;

- _____ Details of parties signing agreements; and
- _____ Whether there were any formal reporting arrangements.

In addition, work was being undertaken to produce a definitive “Partnership Toolkit”. This would be used when developing all new partnership arrangements and could be used to review all existing arrangements to ensure that a written agreement existed covering key governance issues. Using the toolkit would ensure clarity of roles, responsibilities and relationships between partners and would reduce the risk of uncertainty or confusion over accountability.

The risks of a lack of accountability with partner organisations had been recognised and entries have been made in the Corporate Risk Register to take account of this.

Once this work has been completed, a report would be presented to the Executive Member for Strategy and External Relationships to approve the adoption of the Partnership Toolkit and to the production of a partnership working database which could be updated on an annual basis.

Resolved – (i) That a further report on Partnership Working arrangements be made to the Committee in January, 2009.

(ii) That consideration be given to including details of the Council’s aspirations in regard to its relationships with partner organisations in the partnership database.

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 2.50pm)

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NOTES