

EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 8TH NOVEMBER, 2007.

Present – Councillors Hussain (Chairman), Hollick (Vice Chairman), D. Brierley (as substitute for Councillor J. Walsh) Burrows, Gradwell, Hamilton, Hayes, Hornby, Murray, Rushton, and Williamson.

Councillor Morris	-	Vision Steering Group Representative
Councillor Spencer	-	Greater Manchester Fire and Civil Authority Nominated Spokesperson For Bolton Council.
Councillor Clare	-	Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive Nominated Spokesperson for Bolton Council
Councillor Ibrahim	-	Executive Member for Culture, Community Services and Area Working

Also in attendance

Mr. S. Harriss	-	Chief Executive
Ch. Ins. M. Greenhalgh	-	GM Police
Mr. D. Grogan	-	Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Ms.C. James	-	Head of Strategic Projects
Mr. C. Bullough	-	Head of Environmental Services
Ms. C. Riley	-	Principal Policy Officer
Mr. J. Addison	-	Scrutiny Support Manager

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Brierley, Chadwick and J. Walsh.

Councillor Hussain in the Chair

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13th September, 2007, were submitted and signed as a correct record.

14. MONITORING OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DECISIONS

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report that informed members of the progress of decisions taken and issues raised by the Committee.

In accordance with a request made by Councillor Hayes at the last meeting, a copy of the report considered by the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority which detailed proposals in relation to the democratic structure of that Authority as a consequences of changes in its political balance, was attached to the report

Resolved – That the report be noted.

15. EXTRACT OF PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE – NEW GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS IN GREATER MANCHESTER.

An extract of the proceedings of a meeting, together with a report considered thereon, of the Executive held on 29th October, 2007, was submitted outlining the principles underpinning proposed new governance arrangements in Greater Manchester as agreed by the AGMA Executive at its meetings on 28th September and 26th October, 2007.

The Executive had been reminded that the AGMA Executive had agreed to set up a number of sub groups which could look at certain aspects of city region working in Greater Manchester in more detail, particularly the governance arrangements which would meet the aspirations and priorities of AGMA as submitted to the Government .

The sub group on Governance had recommended a number of principles, expressed on the basis of 'Heads of Terms' ,which would inform the drawing up of a more detailed constitution which would underpin this new way of working.

AGMA had previously agreed a model which included an Executive Board, 7 Commissions and a Business Leadership Council; the structure was attached at Annex 1 to the report.

The report detailed the overall aims and objectives of the proposals ,together with the responsibilities and functions of the Executive Board and proposed membership of the Executive Board and Business Leadership Council .

Details were also provided with respect to the principles of the proposed relationship between the Executive Board and the Commissions and with respect to accountability the following had been agreed ;

- an obligation on each local authority to report back to its own Executive /Council on the decisions taken by the City Region Executive Board. The actions of any Leader on the Executive Board and his/her decisions would then be potentially subject to that own authority's scrutiny arrangements;

- the opportunity for any local authority to refer any decision taken by one of the Commissions to the Executive Board where it considered that the Commission had acted outside the delegated authority given to it by the Executive Board; and
- A system of a short written electronic digest of the Executive Board's actions and decisions would be sent after each meeting to all Councillors within Greater Manchester.

AGMA's meeting on 26th October ,2007 had also agreed proposals regarding a system for the call in of decisions of the Executive Board or Commissions .

AGMA had agreed that the principles within the report would be developed into a new constitution which would underpin the future of City Region governance in Greater Manchester.

It was proposed that the new constitution would be in place by 1 April ,2008, with the new Executive Board, Economic Development Commission and Health Commission to be operational by that time and with other Commissions to follow at a speed and time reflecting their own requirements in terms of priorities and need for organisational change.

The Executive noted that parts of the new structure would operate in shadow form before 1st April ,2008 where necessary and that the Chief Executive's group had been charged with reviewing and putting in place the necessary arrangements to ensure that the new proposals were confirmed by individual authorities before 1st April ,2008.

Members raised issues around whether the City Region agenda had been affected now that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act had now become law and the view was also expressed that the strategic role of local authorities in the City Region agenda needed to be clarified.

Resolved – That the Extract of the proceedings of The Executive be noted

16. 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 the Committee's 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.

17. SPEED LIMIT ENFORCEMENT AND POLICE PRESENCE IN THE TOWN CENTRE

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report the purpose of which was to remind Members that at the meeting of the Council, the following question was asked under Standing Order 9(a) by Councillor R. Allen and referred to this Committee, viz:-

Will the External Organisations Scrutiny Committee agree to bring a report to Council outlining current police policy in respect of speed enforcement and, in particular, their responsibilities for enforcement of 30mph and 20mph speed limits.

Members were also reminded that at a meeting of the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee held on 20th August, 2007, a discussion took place in regard to the Police presence around Bolton Town Centre and, in particular, about the Police presence around Bolton Bus Station.

Following discussions at this Committee on 13th September, 2007, it was agreed that a representative of GM Police be invited to attend this meeting of the Committee to discuss with members the issues raised in the above questions. Prior to the meeting, Members had been contacted in an effort to identify particular concerns around the enforcement of speed limits. In this regard issues around residents using speed guns in the Chew Moor area to record vehicle speeds; complaints made at the Heaton, Lostock and Hulton Area Forum about speeding on Glengarth Drive; and whether hand held speed guns could be made available to residents groups to monitor speed limits on Chorley New Road, were raised.

Accordingly Chief Inspector Greenhalgh attended the meeting to address the above and in particular explained GM Police policy in relation to the enforcement of speed limits and some of the difficulties encountered in that area. Chief Inspector Greenhalgh gave an explanation of GM Police Drive Safe policy and expressed the view that, subject to certain constraints, colleagues would have no objection to residents using equipment to monitor speed limits along Chorley New Road.

In relation to the Police presence within Bolton Town Centre, Chief Inspector Greenhalgh explained that no change had been made to operational arrangements but that the move to the new Headquarters which were not in the Town Centre might have given the impression that the Police presence had lessened. It was confirmed that the Police telephone was still situated in the One Stop Shop.

Resolved – That Chief Inspector Greenhalgh be thanked for attending Committee and addressing Members concerns and issues.

18. APPOINTMENTS MADE BY COUNCIL TO OUTSIDE BODIES – INTERIM REPORT

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report detailing the current position in relation to a review of the way the Council engaged with partner organisations.

Each year at its Annual Meeting, Council made numerous appointments to various internal/ outside bodies and organisations. At the Annual Meeting in May, 2007, the Council made appointments to some 130 internal and outside organisations. Appointments were made on an Executive Member/portfolio basis.

In undertaking research for the review, the following assumptions had been made.

Firstly, that the Council would continue to appoint to significant regional and national organisations such as AGMA Joint Authorities and Local Government Association Committees.

Secondly, that appointments would continue to be made to the various local charities to which the Council had made appointments for numerous years.

Finally, that School Governing Bodies would not be included in the review.

This reduced the number of bodies to be investigated to 105 details of which were appended to the report. The list detailed the organisations in Executive Member/Portfolio order, sets out the appointed representatives and advised of the appointing body.

Of these 105 appointments, 33 were internal appointments and 72 were outside organisations. The term internal appointments referred to organisations which were administered via a Council Department. Prior to each Annual Council, Directorates were contacted and asked whether those bodies were still in existence and required an appointment to be made for a further 12 month period. This process had been repeated for the purpose of this review and the comments of Directors included on the list.

Neighbouring authorities had been contacted to ascertain their processes in relation to appointments to outside bodies. Responses had been received from Blackburn with Darwen Wigan, Oldham and Trafford Councils, and these, in the main, pointed to similar processes to that adopted by the Council. Manchester City Council had delegated appointments to outside bodies to individual Directors.

Members expressed the view that some effort should be made to ascertain whether some of the organisations were still in existence and whether the Council representatives were of the opinion that the Council should be represented by an elected member or officer.

Resolved – That the Director of Legal and Democratic Services contact the Council’s representatives on outside organisations seeking information on their viewpoint as to the frequency and usefulness of the body to which they are appointed and whether the Council should continue to nominate to it.

19. REVENUE FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

The Chief Executive submitted a report which advised that each year, the Council entered into Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with ten voluntary and community sector organisations which received grant funding from the Council. These were grants to provide services which were Borough wide or of a community nature. In addition, there were other relationships with the community and voluntary sector across other Council departments who commissioned specific specialised services to them.

Support was also given to groups by way of notional rents for groups that worked from Council owned buildings. The Council was currently conducting an audit in regard to buildings/premises and the nature of their use.

The following ten voluntary and community sector organisations had SLAs with the Council which reflected the service provided by each organisation:-

- Bolton Citizens’ Advice Bureau;
- Octagon Theatre Trust;
- Bolton Community and Voluntary Service;
- Bolton Volunteer Centre;
- Bolton Racial Equality Council;
- Bolton District Victim Support and Witness Service;
- Bolton Shopmobility;
- Bolton Community Transport and Furniture Services;
- Relate Greater Manchester North; and
- Bolton Unemployed Workers Advice Centre.

Each SLA was subject to approval on an annual basis by the Executive Member for Culture, Community Services and Area Working. Each approval followed a series of financial arrangements together with an agreed monitoring process. Details of the amounts awarded and the monitoring process were detailed in the report.

In addition to the commissioned activity with the ten organisations detailed above, the Council awards small grants (currently up to £500) via its Voluntary Sector Grants Scheme. These grants were for locally based community and voluntary activity and were awarded via the Council's Area Forums. Each ward was allocated £2,000 each financial year. Examples of such grants were detailed in the report.

Certain other grants schemes were also available to community and voluntary organisations. The Big Bolton Fund was currently in the development stage although the Council had allocated £25,000 from the Voluntary Sector Grant Programme to help establish the fund. The fund would be available to voluntary and community groups and would be administered by Bolton CVS with decisions being made by a community panel. Monies to this fund would come via a variety of sources including donations, legacies, dormant trusts and fundraising events.

Members expressed a view that it would be useful for the Committee to have a better understanding of the various funding mechanisms of the organisations concerned and whether the Council awarded funding triggered other funding mechanisms. It was also stated that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act could have a significant impact on the way that the Council interacted with the voluntary sector especially in the way that it made finance available.

Resolved – (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That a report be submitted to the Committee on 13th March, 2008, on any major changes in the way that the Council interacts with the voluntary sector in the light of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act.

20. MOOR LANE PUBLIC CONVENIENCES – CONTRACT MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS.

Pursuant to Minute 2 of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th July, 2007, the Director of Environmental Services submitted a report updating Members in relation to the refurbishment of Moor Lane Public Conveniences.

Councillor Clare, the Council's nominated spokesperson on the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE) attended the meeting to answer any issues raised by Members.

The Moor Lane Public Conveniences had undergone a substantial refurbishment in partnership with GMPTE. The contract had been managed by the GMPTE with the Council contributing 40% of the refurbishment costs. The project had been completed within timescale and within budget. The routine maintenance and cleaning would be provided by the Council's Environmental Services Department.

There were currently no other jointly managed Council and GMPTE contracts.
Resolved – (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That reports on the management arrangements of any future jointly managed contracts between the Council and GMPTE be submitted as necessary.

21. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH BILL – UPDATE

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report advising that the Government had agreed to align the current two versions of the Call for Action policies following the third reading of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.

In effect, the Government had removed Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 to remove the “Community Call for Action” and replace it with the “Councillor Call for Action” as proposed in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.

In practice, this would mean that Members of the public would not be able to raise Community Calls for Action on crime and disorder matters (and thus elected members would not be under a duty to respond to them on such issues). There would be no right of appeal via the Council’s Executive if the community was dissatisfied.

The Councillor Call for Action encompassed any local government matter relating to any function of the authority and affecting the Councillor’s ward or constituents.

Resolved – That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the mechanisms to be put in place to effect the Councillor Call for Action.

22. 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 and any decisions taken by the joint authorities since the last meeting which impacted on the authority.

In relation to the Greater Manchester Police Authority, a copy of the criteria for applying for awards from the Police Property Fund Act, as requested at the last meeting, was attached to the report. Copies of the reports considered by the Police Authority in relation to Policing Plan Performance Indicators – First Quarter 2007/08 and the Authority’s Scrutiny Committee had also been circulated to Members.

In relation to the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority, the Authority had met on 18th October, 2007, but there were no items specifically relating to the Council.

The Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority had met on 19th October, 2007, and considered, inter alia, a report updating Members on Rail Stations Improvement Strategy, a copy of which had been circulated to Members.

The Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority had met on 19th October, 2007, and a copy of the report entitled Performance Monitoring – Recycling and Composting had been circulated to Members..

Resolved – That the Committee continue to receive reports on the issues in relation to joint authorities in the current format.

(The meeting started at 2.00pm and ended at 3.30pm)

