Unconfirmed minutes – subject to approval/amendment at the next meeting of the Policy & Resources Select Committee

Policy and Resources Select Committee

15th September 2010 – At a meeting of the Select Committee held at 10.30 a.m. at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Britton (Chairman)

Mrs Arculus  Mr B Hall  Mr O’Brien
Mr Coomber  Ms Hendon  Mr Stevens
Mr Crow  Mr Jones  Mr Waight
Mrs Field  Mrs Millson  Dr Walsh

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Coleman and Mrs Richards.

In attendance by invitation: Ms Goldsmith (Leader), Mr Brown (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources).

Declaration of Interests

75. The following declarations of interest were made in relation to Item 7, Joint Scrutiny Arrangements in West Sussex:

- Brian Coomber, as a member of Adur District Council
- Duncan Crow, as a member of Crawley Borough Council
- Brian Hall, as a member of Mid Sussex District Council
- Peter Jones, as a member of Chichester District Council
- Steve Waight, as a member of Worthing Borough Council
- James Walsh, as a member of Arun District Council

Minutes

76. Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Select Committee held on 23rd June 2010 be approved as a correct record, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Cabinet Member Responses

77. The Committee considered responses by the Leader to the recommendations of the Human Resources Task Force, by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to the recommendations of the Human Resources Task Force and to the recommendations of the Committee in respect of the Community Loan Scheme, and the letter by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to the Under Secretary of State about the Local Authority Grant and Area Cost Adjustment (copies appended to the signed minutes).

78. The Committee asked questions/made comments, including those that follow:-

- Asked if there were plans to create a specific Work Experience Policy and whether more emphasis would be placed on helping children in care and leaving care.
Ms Goldsmith assured the Committee that the Council was committed to helping all young people and would continue to build on work already done in this area.

- Questioned the type of apprenticeships being made available. Ms Goldsmith said they were modern apprenticeships and that firms in West Sussex were being encouraged to run apprenticeship schemes.

- Asked for an update on the Local Authority Grant and Area Cost Adjustment. Mr Brown, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, spoke to the Committee of his meeting with the Under Secretary of State, who said he understood the Council’s problems – however he did not accept or reject any of the Council’s specific requests. He added that primary legislation would be needed to make the workings of the Area Cost Adjustment available to the public. Mr Brown informed the Committee that Andrew Tyrie, MP, was still pursuing the issue.

79. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Cabinet Members’ responses.

Production of a Performance Framework 2010/11 to supersede the Corporate Plan 2010/11

80. The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Finance and Performance and Head of Performance (copy appended to the signed minutes).

81. The report was introduced by Geoff Lowry, Head of Performance (copy appended to the signed minutes). Mr Lowry gave a brief summary of the report and took questions from members of the Committee.

82. The Committee asked questions/made comments, including those that follow:-

- Asked about the information that would be available for the Members’ Workshop on 29/9, and how members who could not attend could contribute. Mr Lowry replied that information would be sent out in advance of the workshop, and that any Member who could not attend could send comments to him or the Executive Director Finance and Performance. Ms Goldsmith added that the intention was to send the draft Framework to all members sometime next week (i.e. week commencing 20th September).

83. Resolved – That the Committee endorses the revised proposal for taking forward the engagement of members in performance planning in 2010-11; and in 2011-12, through sessions on 29th September, and 3rd November, 2010.

Joint Commissioning with NHS West Sussex

84. The Committee considered a report and presentation by the Executive Director for Adults and Children and Director of Operations – Joint Commissioning (copies appended to the signed minutes).

85. The report and presentation were introduced by Sara Weech, Director of Operations – Joint Commissioning. Mrs Weech emphasised that joint commissioning was about planning to meet customers’ needs, and that the Council had a history of successful working with the NHS. Mrs Weech said that Joint Commissioning was a
medium to long-term design of services set against resources that were expected to shrink by 25% (Infrastructure management costs were expected to reduce by about 30% across the Council and NHS West Sussex). Mrs Weech also commented on the NHS White Paper (Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS) which she said brought opportunities to the Council and decision-making closer to clinicians. Mrs Weech referred to a slide that showed how £1.2bn would be re-distributed from NHS West Sussex, including the ring-fencing of money for public health (controlled by the Council). Mrs Weech said that the formal partnership agreement between NHS West Sussex and the Council would be in place by the end of October, after which time, detailed work would begin. She also referred to the key question of governance arrangements; informing the Committee that the Joint Commissioning Board would hold its meetings in public, with proposed decisions notified in the Forward Plan, and that one of the key issues for the Committee was to identify the shape of suitable scrutiny arrangements, especially for items of work that crossed select committee boundaries.

86. The Committee asked questions/made comments, including those that follow:-

- Queried whether the Comprehensive Spending Review would have an impact on the agreement between NHS West Sussex and the Council, and how the agreement would be scrutinised. Mrs Weech said that the agreement was about the transfer of functions and budget so would not be directly affected by the Comprehensive Spending Review. Although there was a short timescale to finalise the agreement, it would be possible for it to come before the Committee at its meeting on 21st October.

- Asked if there were plans to build relationships with GPs who were unused to working in an environment where their decisions would be scrutinised. Mrs Weech said that some GPs in West Sussex were used to working with pooled budgets though Practice Based Commissioning. She added that work had begun on preparing GPs for the future arrangements, and that the complete changeover would not be until 2012 or 2013. She agreed that a great deal of effort would be needed to get all GPs engaged with the commissioning process and used to the notion of external scrutiny of their commissioning activities. Mrs Weech also told the Committee that NHS West Sussex wanted GPs on the Joint Commissioning Board. Consideration was being given to a formal engagement strategy to work with GPs and explain the democratic process.

- Asked on what lines GP consortia would be formed. Mrs Weech said that it was likely that clusters would form around the acute hospitals with which GPs worked. She added that West Sussex already had a coastal federation of GPs and three boards in the north of the county who were working together.

- Raised concerns that the public may feel that some services would reduce. Mrs Weech said that services might seem different than before, some would be better for less money and people would do more for themselves.

- Asked what effect the National Commissioning Board would have on local services. Mrs Weech told the Committee that the National Commissioning Board was expected to manage national services such as dentists and some specialist services, but might develop to include regional representation.
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- Was concerned at the possibility of health scrutiny being duplicated by county, district and borough councils. Mrs Weech said that the County Council had a clear lead role in public health and should co-ordinate any scrutiny, however, district and borough councils have a very important role to play.

- Thought that the responsibility for public health moving to local authorities brought opportunities as well as challenges, and that public health matters would have to be considered in all aspects of the Council’s policies.

- Thought that Cabinet Member decisions on health matters should be scrutinised in public and that cross-cutting areas of scrutiny could, for example, be done by select committees meeting jointly, or through a process where one select committee takes the lead role with other interested select committees being represented by the participation of at least their Chairmen and Vice Chairmen. Members also agreed that the Business Planning Groups would need to become much more active in considering the best ways of scrutinising issues depending on what they were.

- Asked how the Cabinet would handle its responsibility for public health and whether a specific Cabinet Member would be assigned this role. Ms Goldsmith, Leader, said that the Cabinet's role was evolving through monthly meetings with the Chief Executive of NHS West Sussex, and that the possibility of a Cabinet Member with responsibility for public health would be considered. Ms Goldsmith also said that the Council would need to be proactive on health issues in the future, rather than reactive as it largely had been in the past. She said that the West Sussex Joint Commissioning Board was one of the best and would help the evolution towards the new partnership arrangements.

- Emphasised the need to avoid duplicating the work of the Joint Commissioning Board and the need to look at how health is scrutinised in local authorities.

87. Resolved – That the Committee welcomes

a) The proposals for joint commissioning of services, led by the County Council;

b) The proposed partnership agreement to enable the transfer of functions from the NHS to the County Council;

c) The revised governance arrangements relating to the Joint Commissioning Board and the potential opportunities for scrutiny arising from these which, in terms of cross-cutting issues, might be addressed along the lines considered in the debate;

d) That the idea that a Cabinet Member with specific responsibility for public health will be given consideration in due course.

Joint Scrutiny Arrangements in West Sussex – Responses from West Sussex District and Borough Councils
88. The Committee considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

89. The report was introduced by Debbie Allman, Scrutiny Manager, supported by Mr Crow, who had chaired the Task and Finish Group which reported to the Committee in April. Mrs Allman drew members’ attention to the appendix of responses by district/borough councils to the joint scrutiny arrangement proposals and the suggestion that the Steering Group should not meet until early 2011. She reminded members that the proposed arrangements were designed to create a mechanism enabling joint scrutiny if participating authorities agreed that this was appropriate; they did not compel authorities to engage in any particular joint scrutiny activity.

90. The Committee asked questions/made comments, including those that follow:-

- Agreed to wait for Arun District Council’s response.

- Queried the specific nature of Adur District Council’s concerns. Mrs Allman advised the Committee that Adur District Council had asked for clearer rules regarding the membership of the Steering Group and voting rights. She pointed out that Adur District Council had played an active part in the Task and Finish Group that agreed to set-up the Steering Group and its terms of reference.

- Asked what had been done to encourage Worthing Borough Council to join the partnership. Mrs Allman said that she and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services had given feedback to officers at Worthing Borough Council to try to allay fears.

- Felt that sufficient consultation had taken place regarding governance arrangements, and that any new changes might not be acceptable to those partners who had already agreed to participate, and that the trial period should go ahead. Outcomes of the trial should be shared with participating and non-participating councils.

- Thought that one of the main areas originally deemed suitable for joint scrutiny (the Local Area Agreement) was no longer such an issue due to changes brought about by the new government, but that other areas, such as public health, would be something that could be scrutinised jointly.

- Felt that any joint scrutiny should be carried out only by those partners with an interest in the subject (a non-participating council may join if there is an issue affecting it) and should be kept lean and simple to avoid duplication and being over bureaucratic. Mrs Allman commented that it would be the role of the Steering Group to decide whether there were any areas where joint scrutiny would be beneficial. Ms Goldsmith, Leader, added her support for the work going forward, not least because the mechanism could be used to develop the wider agenda for joint working. She pointed out that scrutiny members of the county, district and borough councils would have control of joint scrutiny and could end arrangements if they were not fulfilling their role as anticipated.

91. Resolved – That the Committee:
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a) Notes the responses received from the West Sussex district and borough councils, and;
b) Endorses the setting-up of the first meeting of the Steering Group to be held early in the New Year, to allow Adur and Arun District Councils time to complete their consideration of the invitation to participate.

Printing and Publications

92. The Committee considered a presentation by the Head of Office and Facilities Services (copy appended to the signed minutes).

93. The report was introduced by Rosemary Perry, Head of Office and Facilities Services. Mrs Perry told the Committee that the Print Contract Review came about partly because the in-house service was losing money. A decision was made to outsource the service to Corporate Document Services who were delivering an improved, cost-effective service. She reported that further savings were envisaged and that the service could be contracted out to partners such as district and borough councils, which would mean a rebate to the County Council.

94. The Committee asked questions/made comments, including those that follow:-

- Asked whether Cabinet Members could override the system to get publications produced. Mrs Perry informed the Committee that the service was involved in the design of possible publications, advised on the best way forward and could challenge the quantity, paper type and number of colours proposed.

- Queried the expense of short print runs over long print runs. Mrs Perry advised that modern technology meant that short print runs were now no longer much more expensive than long print runs.

- Asked what management fee was charged by Corporate Document Services. Mrs Perry told the Committee that it was £80k per year.

- Wanted to know if Forest Stewardship Council recycled paper and sustainable inks were used in County Council publications. Mrs Perry said that recycled paper was expensive and not always suitable for the purpose needed but confirmed that forestry stewardship was an industry standard. She said that the issue of using sustainable ink would be investigated.

- Thought the amount spent on business cards was still too high. Mrs Perry advised the Committee that templates were being devised to allow people to produce their own cards to reduce costs further.

- Asked if equipment used by the former in-house service had been sold. Mrs Perry said that it had and had raised £40k. She added that more money had been saved by ending leases on other equipment.

95. Resolved – That the Committee notes the savings achieved and congratulates Mrs Perry and her team on the work done and savings made.
Forward Plan of Key Decisions

96. The Committee considered an extract from the Forward Plan, September to December 2010 (copy attached to the signed minutes).

97. The Committee raised some concerns over the decision on the Procurement of Insurance Programme regarding self-assurance and whether members of the public organising small local events could be covered by the Council’s public liability insurance. Mr Hornby, Executive Director Finance and Performance, assured the Committee that self-assurance was looked at regularly and that, while it was not feasible for the public to be covered by the County Council’s insurance because of the risks which might emerge and the levels of excess on the policy, he would arrange for enquiries to be made about what the County Council’s insurers could do to help in such cases.

98. Resolved – That the Committee notes the Forward Plan.

Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held on 21st October 2010 at 10.30 a.m. at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting finished at 12.52 p.m.
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