

AT A MEETING of the POLICY AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on Thursday, 21 April 2016.

PRESENT

Chairman:
p Councillor Elaine Still

Vice-Chairman
p Councillor Keith Evans

Councillors:

p Ray Bolton	a Anna McNair Scott
p Adrian Collett	a Andy Moore
p Criss Connor	p Mark Staplehurst
a Keith House	p Bruce Tennent
a Roger Huxstep	p Ken Thornber
p Robin McIntosh	a Sharyn Wheale

Also in attendance:

Cllr Andrew Joy, Executive Member for Communities, Partnerships and External Affairs

124. **BROADCASTING ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman announced that the press and members of the public were permitted to film and broadcast the meeting. Those remaining at the meeting were consenting to being filmed and recorded, and to the possible use of those images and recording for broadcasting purposes.

125. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Anna McNair Scott. The Conservative Substitute Member had been invited to attend in her place but was unable to attend. Apologies were also received from Cllr Andy Moore, Cllr Sharyn Wheale and Cllr Keith House. The Liberal Democrat Substitute Member Cllr David Harrison attended in place of Cllr House.

126. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 3 Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they

believed they had a Personal interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 4 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

127. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Policy & Resources Select Committee meeting held on 25 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Minutes of the Policy & Resources Select Committee Sub Committee meeting held on 2 March 2016, which had considered applications for large community buildings capital grants, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman reported that the recommendations by the Sub Committee had been passed on to the Executive Member for Policy & Resources, who was due to take a decision regarding the grant applications at the decision day on 22 April 2016.

128. **DEPUTATIONS**

No deputations were received at this meeting.

129. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements to make on this occasion.

130. **CONSULTATION POLICY REVIEW**

The Select Committee considered a report and supporting presentation from the Assistant Chief Executive (see Item 6 in the Minute Book) providing an update on the County Council's consultation policy.

Members heard that:

- Following a Task & Finish Group of the Policy & Resources Select Committee making recommendations, a new corporate consultation policy was agreed by Cabinet in February 2015
- As requested by the Select Committee, guidance for staff undertaking consultation had been developed and published internally
- A repositioned central team now has responsibility for providing support on consultation, and this team was receiving an increasing number of queries from staff across

the organisation seeking support with consultation activity

- It was planned to refresh the webpage about consultations as part of the broader update of the County Council's website known as 'hantsweb2'
- Adopting the policy on consultation had been positive, and having a central team was supporting the consistency, quality and accessibility of consultations undertaken by the County Council

Following questions, Members heard:

- That a variety of methods are used to consult the public, not only online surveys. For example, the recent library service consultation included use of telephone surveys, and other consultations had used face to face forums
- That while consultations generally sought preferences regarding presented options, it was always possible for the public to provide unrestricted feedback in addition to the set questions. It was noted that this opportunity could be made clearer in some cases.

Members commented:

- Members welcomed centralising support for consultation
- That it was important to demonstrate how consultation feedback influences decision making, and to evidence any changes made as a result of responses received
- That when small scale local issues are consulted on e.g. planning and road changes, consultation needs to be with more than just the adjacent landowners, as a broader population are affected
- The new webpage for consultations could include the consultation principles in the adopted policy
- That it was preferable to consult the public early at the stage of policy formulation

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee note the report, and retain the topic of consultation on the work programme for a further update in future.

Update work programme

131. **TRADING STANDARDS**

The Select Committee considered a presentation from the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services (see Item 7 in the Minute Book) regarding the Trading Standards service.

Members heard that:

- Trading Standards enforce over 200 pieces of legislation covering a range of issues

- The team work with other departments, particularly adult safeguarding, and the police regarding doorstep crime
- The Trading Standards approval scheme provides quality assurance for small and medium enterprises, and is a source of income for the service
- The service saves money for victims of crime e.g. by intervening with rogue traders. In 2015/16 this was estimated to be £148,000
- The service also receives Proceeds of Crime income. Where the County Council is successful in prosecutions, a proportion of the proceeds from the criminal activity is awarded to Trading Standards (around 38%), which can be used to fund further prevention of crime activity. This income varies and in recent years has been from £50,000 to £250,000
- In future, Trading Standards services are likely to be more resilient in a context of declining public sector budgets if they are provided over a larger area. Southampton City Council had initiated discussions about a potential shared service arrangement which was being considered

Following questions, Members heard:

- That a significant proportion of the law Trading Standards enforce derives from EU law e.g. regarding food and product safety. The outcome of the EU referendum on 23 June 2016 was awaited, as coming out of the EU would mean consideration would need to be given to whether such laws would be replaced, as they were generally considered to be useful for consumer protection
- Trading Standards staff sit in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and work with Police Community Support Officers, to help support staff coming into contact with potentially vulnerable people, regarding the assistance Trading Standards can provide

RESOLVED:

That the presentation is noted, and the work of the Trading Standards team is supported and welcomed.

132. **HAMPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

The Select Committee considered a presentation from Hampshire Association of Local Councils (see Item 8 in the Minute Book) regarding the work they do to support parish and town councils in Hampshire.

Cllr Collett declared a personal interest: that he is a Vice Chair of Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC) and a member of two parish councils.

Members heard:

- That in 2011 HALC signed a partnership agreement

with the County Council regarding the role of local councils, and what the County Council expects in return for the grant provided to HALC. It was suggested that as the context for local government has changed since then, it could be timely to review this agreement

- HALC help parishes respond to consultations e.g. on planning issues. Learning and development for parishes is also offered e.g. support with employment issues. A member query service is also provided, which also covers the Isle of Wight, and is offered further afield for a fee.

- A monthly newsletter is produced for parishes by HALC, which is often used to pass on messages for parishes from the County Council

- HALC has been considered a national exemplar for being ahead of the game in terms of how it operates. This includes working to drive out administrative process and costs

- HALC has been working to reduce the organisation's reliance on the grant they receive from the County Council. The grant they now receive is 76% of the grant awarded in 2010, and it was accepted that given the outlook for local government finances, their grant funding may reduce further in future

- Since 2010 parish affiliation fee income has increased by 17% and income from learning and development activity has doubled from £22k to £53k

- In 2010 the Hampshire County Council grant was 49% of the organisation's income. In 2016 the grant now represented 29% of their budget

Following questions Members heard:

- That there was scope for parishes to take on greater responsibility, in line with the localism and devolution agenda. It was preferable for parishes for a gradual approach to devolution of powers/service provision, to allow time for them to build capacity. Small grants were considered useful, then parishes can add value through volunteer time

- It was recognised that parishes may need to raise their precept in order to take on greater responsibilities

- For the current year and past two years, HALC had received a grant of £70,000 from the County Council under a three year funding agreement, and therefore had not seen reductions to their grant this year where other organisations had. Discussions were beginning regarding the level of grant that would be considered for the next financial year, as the three year agreement had now finished

- That HALC had been involved in the devolution discussions taking place in Hampshire

The following recommendation was proposed and agreed as a result of this item:

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Executive Member for Policy & Resources initiates a review/refresh of the existing Hampshire Local Councils Partnership Framework Agreement (agreed in 2011) to reflect recent developments in the context local government operates within, and reviews the level of county grant provided to Hampshire Association of Local Councils for 2017/18 accordingly.

Recommendation notified to Executive Member

133. **ANNUAL REPORT OF SCRUTINY**

The Chairman presented the summary of activity across each of the Select Committees in 2015/16, for approval for submission to the County Council as the annual report of scrutiny (see Item 9 in the Minute Book).

It was noted that each Chairman had approved the summary for the Select Committee they chaired. It was requested that N/A be updated to 'none in this period' for clarity.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report is approved, for presentation to County Council by the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Select Committee.

134. **WORK PROGRAMME AND ONGOING WORK ACROSS ALL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Members noted the work programme for the Committee and the overview of scrutiny activity across all Committees (see Item 10 in the Minute Book).

RESOLVED:

That the work programme is agreed, subject to any amendments arising from this meeting.

Chairman, 14 July 2016