

REPORT OF THE
Policy and Resources Select Committee Annual Report
PART II

193. SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the work of Hampshire County Council's Select Committees from April 2010 to March 2011. Highlights of each Select Committee's activity are set out below.

194. POLICY & RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

1. The Hampshire Scrutiny Members Network has been maintained this year, with District/Borough and County scrutiny Members meeting in October 2010 to share local scrutiny good practice and discuss the changes anticipated in the Health Service as a result of the Coalition Government's policies. This event was well received by those in attendance, and it was agreed to re-convene the Network in 2011 once further detail was available regarding the impact of central government policy on Hampshire.

2. The committee undertook an in-depth review this year of how the County Council and partners ensured access to key services during the severe winter weather experienced in December 2009 and January 2010. This included consideration of background information regarding winter maintenance, written evidence received from local stakeholders, and two select committee style oral evidence sessions at which key stakeholders were questioned further. The review found examples of good practice locally, however a range of recommendations were made aimed at how services could work better together to improve service provision should severe winter weather affect the region again. The recommendations were accepted by Cabinet in September 2010. The review group held a monitoring meeting in January 2011 and were pleased to learn that a range of measures had been undertaken to improve the aspects identified in the review.

3. In addition to the above, the Committee's work programme has included regular attention to, and follow up of, topics within the Committee's terms of reference, such as the Corporate Improvement Plan, the Hampshire Economic Assessment and the outcomes achieved from the refurbishment of Elizabeth II Court. Consideration has also been given this year to a motion regarding fairtrade referred from full council, and the process for Chief Officer's being awarded Special Recognition Payments. Work has also been undertaken on monitoring aspects of relevant department budgets and performance bi-annually, which will be carried through to 2011/12.

4. In July 2010 a presentation was received from an organisation supported by a grant provided by the Executive Member for Policy & Resources. This provided accountability for this funding, by demonstrating the value added by the organisation, in support of the County Council's aims and objectives. The committee has also continued to have oversight of the in-depth reviews initiated by the other Select Committees.

195. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

1. The Committee has seen a year of exceptional challenge for the Children's Services Department following the election of the Coalition Government in May 2010 and its announcement of significant grant reductions to local authorities, and its setting out of a new vision for schools and children's social care which had an almost immediate impact.

2. The committee has continued to develop its approach of focusing on issues that have been identified by Members where it believes there may be risks to the successful delivery of the Council's priorities. This has resulted in the 'live scrutiny' of issues throughout the year, including the difficult budget session in January 2011. The Department has commented on a number of occasions that the meetings have been helpful, even "extremely" helpful, in a context that might be categorised as 'positive challenge'.

3. 2010 saw the conclusion and final report of a Joint Review of Therapy Services for Children with Special Educational Needs. The Review Panel comprised Members from the Children and Young People Select Committee and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) which took the lead. The Review was welcomed by the Children's Services Department and NHS Hampshire who have formed the Hampshire Joint Child Health Commissioning Board which has committed to take the work forward. Both Committees will continue to monitor progress on this.

196. CULTURE COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

1. In 2010/11 the Committee has continued to monitor developments in the Library and Information Service. This has included an update on the Vision and Strategy for the service, and consideration of changes made as part of the library service restructure. Members have been kept informed regarding the review of the Mobile Library Service, giving their views on the proposed changes.

2. The Committee has also undertaken follow up of recommendations made from previous scrutiny review's, such as the Hard to Reach Review, and the Review of Outdoor Centres. This year the Committee has also been monitoring the review of the Museums Service undertaken by the department. An additional briefing was held for Members in October regarding the proposed changes, being made due to anticipated reductions in central government funding. The committee has also been briefed on the merger of the Culture Communities and Rural Affairs Department with the Property Business Regulatory and IT Services Department (which now forms the Culture Communities and Business Services Department).

3. In addition to the above reviews, the Committee's work programme has included regular attention to, and follow up of, topics within the Committee's terms of reference, such as the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for the Sport Hampshire and Isle of Wight Partnership, aspects of the Rural Delivery Action Plan, and plans to link with the London 2012 Olympics. Work has also been undertaken on monitoring aspects of relevant department budgets and performance, which will be carried through to 2011/12.

4. Members of the committee also took part in a visit to the Basingstoke Canal, in the light of maintenance works undertaken this year at a section of the bank at risk of flooding.

5. Presentations have also been received from organisations supported by grants provided by the Executive Member for Culture & Recreation, which provides accountability. Regular pre-scrutiny of Executive Member decisions has also complemented the above work, supporting a well-balanced work programme for the year.

197. ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION SELECT COMMITTEE

1. The Committee began a new scrutiny review of 'the co-ordination and regulation of all works on Hampshire County Council's highways' in June 2010, and are due to complete this work in April 2011. The Committee have also monitored the recommendations resulting from the light-touch scrutiny of Flooding in Hampshire, and the Chairman has been actively involved in the shaping of a Flood Guide for Councillors in Hampshire.

2. In addition to the above reviews, the Committee's work programme has included regular attention to, and follow up of, topics within the Committee's terms of reference, such as real-time scrutiny of pothole management and community infrastructure levies.

3. Work has also been undertaken on monitoring aspects of relevant department budgets and performance, which have become especially significant following the grant announcements from central government in December 2010, and an 8% overall reduction in department spending throughout the municipal year. The Committee will be closely monitoring the Environment department's efficiency workstreams throughout 2011/12.

4. The Committee held an extraordinary meeting to pre-scrutinise the Hampshire Concessionary Fares Scheme in November 2010, and made resulting recommendations to the Executive Member, which were accepted. Engagement with outside bodies, such as the two National Park Authorities and Natural England, and regular information briefings, have helped to compliment the above work, supporting a well-balanced work programme for the year.

5. The Committee also built on the real time scrutiny of waste management in 2009/10 and 2010/11 by visiting waste infrastructure sites in August 2010, and the Chairman and shadow Environment portfolio holder were invited to view sites managed by Natural England in March 2011.

198. SAFE AND HEALTHY PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

1. The Safe and Healthy People Committee has undertaken a variety of work during the year, including questioning and exploring areas of interest and concern relating to the Committee's scope and terms of reference, pre-scrutinising matters from the Executive decision programme for both Adult Services and Regulatory Services, and monitoring the strategic management of performance in relation to Adult Services.

2. The Select Committee has paid special attention to the scrutiny of in-year and future budgets for Adult Services, setting up an informal sub-group to monitor perceived risk areas and evaluate the impact of central government policy decisions. This is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

3. In-depth scrutiny has been progressed on the topics of 'age-proofing mainstream public services' and 'engaging with older people' in Hampshire, as part of the wider issues facing the county of preparing for an ageing population. These reviews were completed in June 2010, the recommendations of which are being progressed by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources. The new topic of 'Fuel Poverty' was selected for in-depth scrutiny, deferred for re-evaluation in the 2011-12 year.

4. The Committee hold the responsibility for the scrutiny of 'Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships' (now termed as 'Community Safety Partnerships'), as per the Police & Justice Act 2006, and held a successful 'Annual Crime & Disorder Scrutiny' themed meeting in November 2010, which received attendance from representatives of Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire Police Authority, Hampshire Probation Trust, Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority and NHS Hampshire, as well the Hampshire County Council Chairman of the County Strategy Group.

5. Members have also kept abreast of national policy change impacting on the work of Select Committees in general.

Further details can be found at www.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings.htm by typing in the relevant reference number:

Annual Report of the Select Committees (search item reference 3132)

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