

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Committee Room, Fourth Floor, Council Building, 2 High Street, Perth on Wednesday 21 April 2010 at 2.00pm.

Present: Councillors K Baird, I Campbell and B Vaughan and Mr D Stewart.

In Attendance: B Malone (Chief Executive); D Burke, Executive Director (Housing and Community Care); T Yule, F Mackay, M Cochlan and M Kay (all Chief Executives); H Stuart, S Devlin and J Gilchrist (all Education and Children's Services); R Thomson, B Renton and B Reekie (all Environment Services) and L Cameron and H Turley (both Housing and Community Care).

Apologies for Absence: Councillors A Gaunt, W Lumsden and D Scott and Mr I Jackson.

Councillor Baird, Convener, Presiding.

215. COUNCILLOR JOHN LAW

Prior to commencement of business, Councillor Baird referred to the untimely death of Councillor John Law and paid tribute to his contribution to the work of the Committee as Vice-Convener.

216. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

217. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(i) Scrutiny Committee

The Minute of Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of 10 February 2010 (Arts. 73 – 76) was submitted, approved as a correct record and authorised for signature.

(ii) Audit Sub-Committee of 20 January 2010

The Minute of Meeting of the Audit Sub-Committee of 20 January 2010 was submitted and noted. (*Appendix I*)

(iii) Social Work Complaints Review Committee of 31 March 2010

The Minute of Meeting of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee of 31 March 2010 was submitted and the recommendations approved. (*Appendix II*)

218. INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES (Art 119)

There was submitted a joint report by the Chief Executive and Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (10/208), (1) on the outcome of the Validated Self-Evaluation of Education and Children's Services undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education; and (2) setting out the evaluation of effectiveness of the leadership, management and performance of the functions within Education and Children's Services, which was endorsed by Perth and Kinross Council on 24 February 2010.

Officers from Education and Children's Services were present to answer Members questions in relation to (1) the steps taken to ensure consistency of approach and effectiveness of self-evaluations in schools and across the Service, including the various sources of challenge and validation, both internal and external; (2) the pilot "How Good is our Culture and Sport?"; (3) benchmarking with areas of good practice elsewhere in Scotland; and (4) confirming Perth and Kinross schools preparedness for the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence in August 2010.

The Chief Executive referred to the Shared Risk Assessment which had been carried out by External Scrutiny Bodies to inform the development of an Assurance and Improvement Plan, due to be submitted to all Scottish local authorities in May 2010, which would set out each Council's Scrutiny Plan for the next three years; this Plan would identify the Scrutiny Bodies' estimation of the strength of self-evaluations carried out to assess whether they were sufficiently robust upon which to be relied.

Resolved:

The contents of the Validated Self Evaluation as detailed in Appendix 1 to Report 10/208, which was endorsed by Perth and Kinross Council on 24 February 2010, be accepted.

219. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEW OF POLICY INTEGRATION (MORE CHOICES, MORE CHANCES)

There was submitted a report by the Head of Business Transformation and Improvement (10/209) outlining the scope for a review to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee which would focus on implementation of Council and Partnership strategy in respect of the group of young people needing additional support through the More Choices, More Chances strategy.

Resolved:

- (i) The proposals for a review of implementation of Council and Partnership strategy in respect of the group of young people needing additional support through the More Choices, More Chances strategy, including the scope and terms of reference for the review to be carried out by the Committee as outlined in Appendix 1 to Report 10/209, be approved.
- (ii) A final report detailing findings from the review be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in December 2010.

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MR D STEWART LEFT THE MEETING DURING DISCUSSION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM.

220. STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2008/2009 - SUMMARY OF AUDIT SCOTLAND'S COMPARISON OF SCOTTISH COUNCILS

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive (10/190), (1) summarising Perth and Kinross Council's Statutory Performance Indicator results for 2008/2009 in comparison with other Scottish local authorities; (2) how Perth and Kinross Council measures its performance; (3) detailing where the Council's performance had improved; areas where improvement was needed and actions required to ensure improvement and (4) the future of Statutory Performance Indicators.

Officers from relevant Services were present to answer Members' questions on the report.

B Reekie, the Environment Service, circulated supplementary information in relation to Indicators 81 and 82, Net Cost per Property of Refuse Collection and Refuse Disposal, as compared with other rural authorities, as requested by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that morning. He explained the background to variances between authorities in recording and calculating related costs, in the range of waste collection services provided, the number of households, the effect of an authority operating its own landfill site and the effect on costs of transport and disposal elsewhere not being included. Councillor Campbell suggested that a more useful measure would be cost per tonne.

R Thomson, Head of Property, provided background to Indicator 37 in relation to Public Buildings that are Accessible to Disabled People, explaining that, until 2008, all local authorities set their own criteria in measuring how well the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 were being delivered, and that, following the introduction in 2008 of national 12 point criteria, the approach taken in Perth and Kinross had been to assess all property against the new criteria, allocate a budget for necessary improvements, and to report on only those assessments completed to date.

In response to concern expressed by Councillor Campbell that greater weight should be given to SPI comparisons when determining priorities, the Chief Executive advised that there were many examples of the currently reported SPI's not providing a true reflection of Council performance, as many related to cost of inputs rather than a measurement of whether needs were being met. Officers pointed to examples which showed the shortcomings of pure statistics without clarification or context being provided, such as Indicators 48 to 52 relating to the Library Service, with no way of reflecting innovations in service delivery or measures of quality. As highlighted in the Waste Disposal indicator, differing methods of recording and basis of calculations could distort the figures.

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In response to a question from Councillor Campbell on Indicators 56 and 57 in relation to Average Time to Relet Houses, it was noted that better management of void properties had led to significant savings in the repairs budget.

Resolved:

- (i) The results of Perth and Kinross Council Statutory Performance Indicators (SPI) for 2008/2009 in comparison with other Scottish Councils, taking into consideration the explanations for performance as set out in Report 10/190 and responses from officers, be noted.
- (ii) The contents of Report 10/190 be considered in conjunction with each Service's Joint Business Management and Improvement Plan and Annual Performance Report as SPI results did not provide a comprehensive overview of Perth and Kinross Council's performance and should not be considered in isolation.
- (iii) Any issues arising for individual Services be taken forward and reported to the appropriate Committee for consideration.

221. RESPONSE TO THE ACCOUNTS COMMISSION'S 2008 STATUTORY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS DIRECTION

There was submitted a report by the Head of Business Transformation and Improvement (10/191) setting out Perth and Kinross Council's proposed response to the Accounts Commission's 2008 Statutory Performance Indicator (SPI) Direction for implementation at the end of the financial year 2009/10.

T Yule, Chief Executive's Service, further reported on the way in which the change in approach to SPI's set out in the Audit Commission's 2008 Directive, which reduces the number of mandatory SPI's, would alter internal performance reporting arrangements. It was proposed that, to streamline reporting, in addition to the revised Statutory Indicators, a number of other existing indicators would be retained, and other indicators would be developed to provide quality measures and link in with the performance reporting arrangements of the Single Outcome Agreement and would be included in Service Business Management and Improvement Plans.

Resolved:

- (i) The changes resulting from publication of the 2008 SPI Direction by Audit Scotland be noted.
- (ii) The list of performance indicators for publication by the Council in 2010, contained in Appendix 1 of Report 10/191, be noted.
- (iii) The proposal to integrate SPI's with current public performance reporting be noted.
- (iv) The proposal to review the process for collecting all corporate performance data be noted.
- (v) The Performance Indicator in relation to % Attainment of S5 pupils be included in the Single Outcome Agreement.

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