
OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last ordinary meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work the Resources Scrutiny Committee has undertaken :-

- (a) **Town Crier Funding** – Following a request by Members, Steve Jones, Head of Communications, attended one of our meetings to give us some information on the funding of the Town Crier. The information and discussion at the meeting was very useful and interesting.

It is pleasing to report that income generated from retail advertising and advertising from partner organizations and other council departments covers the costs of producing and distributing the Town Crier and that advertisers are getting good value for money with competitive rates and wide-scale distribution of the magazine by the Royal Mail.

Only seven per cent of all local authorities produce a residents' magazine or newsletter as frequently as a monthly publication and the results of a study of all council magazines by the Local Government Information Unit which appeared in a publication called Benchmarking Council Magazines and Newspapers, indicated that the unit cost of the Town Crier puts it at one of the most economically produced council magazines in the country.

The Town Crier is featured on The IDeA website as an example of best practice.

- (b) **Work Programme 2006/07** – We have considered our Work Programme and possible Review topics for the Municipal Year 2006/07. We will be continuing to work on the two major reviews which we have been undertaking in 2005/06 in relation to Gershon and Community and Voluntary Sector funding and we will be considering any additional review topics which we might wish to undertake during the year at our meetings. We will obviously also be heavily involved in considering and monitoring the Council's financial plans as part of our work programme.
- (c) **Efficiency Review Group** – As part of the work we are doing to monitor the required efficiency savings, we have received a progress report from the Review Group on its work. The Group, at its last meeting, received a presentation from Officers involved with the Street Scene Design Project and were advised that, following the implementation of the recommendations highlighted by the Project Team, it was anticipated that savings of £1.5 million would be achieved over the next four years.

- (d) **Pedestrian Heart Gas Main Diversion** – Following the decision of Council, that a full scrutiny investigation be undertaken into the circumstances in which an unexpectedly shallow gas main was found during the Pedestrian Heart works, it has been agreed that our Scrutiny Committee is the most appropriate one to investigate this matter. We have therefore, established a Review Group, comprising all Members of the Resources Scrutiny Committee and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and have agreed terms of reference for the Review. It is anticipated that the Group will meet in June 2006 to gather its evidence and make its recommendations.
- (e) **Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monthly Monitoring** – We have monitored and raised questions on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme monthly monitoring reports for January 2006. In addition, at the request of Members, we have also received an overview of costs, compared with budget's for previous years' capital schemes.

I, as Chair, have continued to have various meetings with Officers and have pursued a number of issues raised with me, by Members of the Scrutiny Committee, and reported the responses back to them accordingly.

Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair - Resources Scrutiny Committee