
RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT 2005/06

1. I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Resources Scrutiny Committee to Council on behalf of the Members of that Committee. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Officer support given to us over the last year and to convey a special thanks to Councillor Don Bristow, Cabinet Member with Resource Management Portfolio, who has attended and contributed to the majority of our meetings. His contribution to debate and discussion has enhanced the work we have undertaken. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Brian Boggon, Assistant Director, Financial Services, who has been temporarily seconded to work on another project. Brian has been our Lead Officer for a number of years and the support and advice he has given us has been invaluable.
2. A lot of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee, both at ordinary scheduled meetings and special meetings has obviously surrounded the Council's Revenue and Capital Medium-Term Financial Plans. Detailed discussions and questioning have taken place on these plans and recommendations have been forwarded to Cabinet and regular monitoring will continue to be undertaken.
3. Our three major reviews this year have been in relation to Community and Voluntary Sector Funding, the Gershon Review and sickness absence.
4. It is pleasing to report that, in relation to sickness absence, the Council's projected out-turn for the end of the financial year 2005/06 is 9.49 days and within the target set of 9.5 days. The figures are encouraging and show good sustained improvement and we thank the Members of the Task and Finish Review Group and the Head of Human Resource Management and her staff for all their hard efforts in reducing the level of sickness absence within the Authority.
5. The second piece of work we are doing, which has involved all Members of the Scrutiny Committee, and which will continue in 2006/07, is to look at Gershon and what this Council is doing to meet the requirements of the Review. We have regularly monitored the Council's progress in meeting the requirements and we are satisfied that the Council is on target to meet its projected 2005/06 efficiency gains. As part of this process, we have also monitored the progress of the work undertaken as part of the Street Scene project, which is one of the major corporate programmes identified under the Leading Edge organisational development programme and we have been advised that current predictions show that cumulative savings of £1.5 million over the next four years will be saved following the recommendations highlighted by the project. Members were keen to see the tangible evidence of the savings and to achieve this we have also undertaken a small review to look into the work and the outcomes of that project.

6. The final review, which has again involved all Members of the Scrutiny Committee, has been in relation to Community and Voluntary Sector funding. To date, we have looked at the Local Compact and are satisfied with the progress of the actions.
7. As part of our monitoring role, Corporate Governance has also featured highly on our agenda and we have considered the progress since January 2005, on the application of the Local Code of Corporate Governance within the Authority. The Council's Auditors, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, have recognised the Local Code as a key management tool for strengthening and improving the Council's corporate governance arrangements and it is pleasing to report that the Annual Audit and Inspection letter for 2005, produced jointly by PWC and the Audit Commission have stated that Corporate Governance arrangements within the Authority are strong, systems of risk management are well embedded and internal controls operate effectively. Further information about Corporate Governance is available on the Council's Intranet.
8. At our ordinary scheduled meetings we have scrutinised a number of issues within our remit and The Director of Development and Environment has attended a couple of our meetings following some concerns we had about budget issues in his Department, in relation to car parking, Green Bus and supported bus services and the Local Transport Plan. Following very detailed responses from the Director to our questions, we were satisfied that no further action was required by us.
9. Other issues we have looked at are the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan, the Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, the draft self assessment document to be submitted to the Audit Commission to support this Council's Corporate Assessment as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process, and Local Education Authority funding.
10. In addition, I have had numerous meetings and discussions with leading Officers outside the formal scrutiny process and have reported back to Members on the outcome of these meetings.

Councillor Ian Haszeldine
Chair of Resources Scrutiny Committee