



**MINUTES of
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 JULY 2016**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor M S Heard
Vice-Chairman	Councillor E L Bamford
Councillors	H M Bass, R P F Dewick, M W Helm, N R Pudney and S J Savage
Substitute Member	Councillor Mrs M E Thompson

315. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman drew attention to the list of notices published on the back of the agenda.

316. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs P A Channer CC. In accordance with notice duly given, Councillor Mrs M E Thompson was substituting for Councillor Mrs Channer.

317. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED

- (i) that the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 June 2016 be received.

Minute 149 – Chairman's Notices

The Chairman sought to amend the second line of the first paragraph from “made special mention to Councillor N R Pudney.” to “welcomed Councillor N R Pudney as a new member.”

Minute 151 – Use of Microphone and Sound Recording Equipment

The Committee confirmed the intention, raised at the last meeting of the Council, that item 10 of the Protocol states “... the Chairman of the Committee *will* be informed.”

Minute 156 – Criteria for Setting Scrutiny Work Programme

Concern was expressed by one Member that Officers had twice mentioned during the last meeting that there was no longer a requirement for an Overview and Scrutiny Committee under the Council's Governance Structure. It was noted however that this was a fact, but still added value to the Council.

In response to a request for clarification on advice received from the Local Government Association (LGA) the Director of Resources confirmed that it had never been stated that LGA advice had been sought or provided although reference had been made to LGA Guidance issued on the matter and which had been appended to the report.

Minute 157 – 2016/17 Work Programme

The Chairman was asked to clarify the non-use of his casting vote on this matter. He replied by stating that he had not voted at all on the matter, the majority view prevailed, and therefore the issue of a casting vote did not arise.

RESOLVED

- (ii) that subject to the above amendment, the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 June 2016 be confirmed.

318. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was none.

319. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Councillor N R Pudney declared a non-personal interest in any matter connected with the Health Service as he was an employee.

320. ELECTIONS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Returning Officer providing an update on progress made with the implementation of the Elections Improvement Plan in the wake of the successful delivery of both the Police and Crime Commissioner Election (PCC) on 5 May 2016 and the European Union Referendum (EUR) on 23 June 2016.

321. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

Because of an issue with the sound recording, the Chairman adjourned the meeting briefly to enable attention to be given to the sound recording equipment. When the meeting resumed, and to ensure openness and transparency, the Chairman recapped on the business transacted to this point. The Committee agreed this was a fair and accurate summary.

322. ELECTIONS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee continued to give consideration to the report of the Returning Officer which also sought confirmation, on the basis of the update provided in this report, that the Elections Improvement Plan can now be removed from the Committees' Work Programme for 2016 / 17. The Committee was also asked to note that ongoing improvement work will of course continue, as part of business as usual, in order to further refine and build upon the processes and procedures now in place to enable the effective delivery of Elections and Electoral registration.

Appendix 1 to the report listed a number of further action/improvements identified and alongside a listing of actions that had worked well.

The Returning Officer referred to the fact that the Core Team of Officers had worked closely with Councillor H M Bass, the Member sponsor, on this and that there had been some positive feedback on the improvements introduced at the recent elections. She made particular references to the ballot box preparation, polling station and count staffing, postal voting, customer service and staff training. Another positive feature was the improved information provided to agents. The Returning Officer said that she was pleased with the recent outcomes which demonstrated good teamwork. She added that further improvements incorporated in the plan were still to come through.

Councillor H M Bass concurred with the summary and the report. He mentioned that polling stations appeared better equipped than before but advocated caution over the efficiency of postal voting in that much dependency rested with Royal Mail from whom future assurances would need to be sought. With regard to the speed and efficiency of the count, he said that doing the job properly was the first priority. He added that this had been a most worthwhile exercise and proposed that subject to a brief report back to the Committee after the next full election this item now be removed from the work programme. This was seconded by Councillor N R Pudney.

In the continuing discussion reference was made regarding communications with the electorate, the need for accuracy and timeliness in responding to telephone messages left at the Offices, and the demands on the Council on the Referendum polling day given the severe weather conditions. It was noted that all polling stations opened on time.

RESOLVED that subject to a further update report to the Committee following the 2017 County Council election, this item is now deleted from the Committee's Work Programme.

323. OTHER SCRUTINY ITEMS

Councillor N R Pudney raised a healthcare matter which he felt could have a significant impact on the District. He had learned of the possible downgrading of the accident and emergency facility at Broomfield in favour of Basildon. He felt that the Community Services Committee should be made aware and that a representative of the Clinical Commissioning Group should be invited to address this Committee. He had forward to the Chief Executive some communications on this subject.

Members expressed concern that in the wider context of the community hospital project there had been little progress since four representatives of health service provider organisations visited the Committee over two years ago and that a further report back from them was long overdue.

With regard to the overall Work Programme, it was agreed that there should be a work programme update report presented at all future committee meetings, this will include the various topics agreed at the last meeting and that whenever possible, one meeting should be devoted to each topic.

It was agreed that an early review of the health services topic, to include the community hospital and also Broomfield A&E, should be brought to the next meeting with the Chief Executive inviting the appropriate representatives to attend.

There being no further items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.34 pm.

M S HEARD
CHAIRMAN