

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7th December 2011

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Mrs. Plenderleith (Chairman), Councillor Atkin (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor Mrs. Hood.

Labour Group

Councillors Bambrick, Bell and Pearson.

OS/15. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillor Mrs. Patten (Conservative Group) and Councillor Mrs. Mead (Labour Group).

OS/16. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 26th October 2011 were submitted. An amendment was made to Minute No. OS/12 on the Treasury Management Aspects of HRA Self-Financing – Income Strategy, clarifying that the total required works would cost just over £108m. Subject to this amendment, the Minutes were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

OS/17. **FUNDED VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS REVIEW – PRESENTATION BY PEOPLE EXPRESS**

The Chairman welcomed Julie Batten, who gave a presentation to the Committee. Copies of the People Express Annual Report had been circulated, together with other literature. Examples of the projects undertaken by People Express were showcased through a presentation accompanied by a short video. This included a young peoples' film "Young, Gifted and Angry" which had engaged individuals with different social needs, those with mental health issues or who had been the subject of bullying or domestic violence. Through maintaining contact with the individuals it was seen how this initiative had improved their lives and the project had now been developed on a County-wide basis.

Another example was the Aspirations Dance project, where the students had gone on to become leaders delivering further projects in their own schools. Other projects were participation at the Festival of Leisure, contemporary dance workshops, hand crafted wooden products and the Hope exhibition for women suffering from domestic abuse. There were examples of disabled childrens' activities at Rosliston Forestry Centre and a project to raise awareness of sexual health issues at Granville School. The presentation

included wider community projects in the Hatton area and statistics on the number of participations for the previous year.

Members had been given the opportunity to submit questions, which had been provided to People Express and resulted in a further document circulated at the Meeting. These issues had been covered through the presentation, although there was the opportunity for further questions. It was confirmed that People Express worked exclusively in the South Derbyshire area. Details were provided of other external funding secured to provide bespoke support for individual projects. It was questioned whether participants were charged for the services provided. This was not the case, but there was recognition of the current financial climate and the need for additional funding might be required, whilst not breaching the organisation's charitable status. There was a discussion about the funding secured for the building in which People Express were located and recognition by the Arts Council of the outstanding services provided. Further areas discussed were how People Express engaged with disadvantaged groups, the criteria for referral and other potential funding opportunities. The representatives of People Express were thanked for the presentation and for hosting the Meeting.

The Committee discussed the way forward with this project and there was a consensus that similar individual presentations should be provided by those organisations which received funding of more than £25,000 per annum from the Council. For the remaining groups, it was proposed that a Special Meeting of the Committee be arranged in April 2012 to consider each of these. A questionnaire would be circulated to each group, based on the areas identified by Members for this review. The information received would be submitted to the Committee, along with each organisation's Annual Report. Following the completion of the process, a report would be submitted to the Housing and Community Services Committee. It was suggested that the Citizens Advice Bureau be approached to give the next presentation and subject to their availability, this would take place at the Committee's Meeting on 18th January 2012.

It was agreed:

- (1) To note the presentation and information supplied by People Express.**
- (2) That the Committee approves the way forward outlined above for the completion of the other reviews of Funded Voluntary Organisations.**
- (3) That the Citizens Advice Bureau be requested to make a presentation to the Committee's Meeting on 18th January 2012.**

OS/18. **SWADLINCOTE WOODLANDS EXIT STRATGY**

A report was submitted to provide progress with regard to the management and development of the Swadlincote Woodlands site and to update the action plan. The Committee was reminded of previous reports, including the Options Appraisal submitted in February 2011 and recommendations made at that

Meeting. The updated action plan had been circulated and was reviewed. The drawdown on Section 106 monies at the end of 2010/11 was £7,060, which left just under £51,000 remaining in the account. At current levels of expenditure the remaining funding would last until 2017/18, after which time the Council would be required to fund maintenance costs.

Members took the opportunity to review the action plan in detail and to submit questions. There were discussions about the previous endeavours to establish a “Friends of” group but with limited success and a passive interest. The site’s location between Swadlincote and Woodville didn’t help, but it was felt there was growing use of the site for walking, cycling and wildlife enthusiasts. Previous problems with anti-social behaviour were reducing. There was discussion about the information centre, marketing and the low comparative maintenance costs. Members also referred to the capital funding in a further Section 106 agreement, which was in addition to the revenue funding used for maintenance. There was a discussion about the sporting strategy aspects for pitch improvement and how these would be funded. In terms of the way forward, it was suggested that the review be closed at this stage, but that a further progress report be provided in 12 months time.

It was agreed to receive the update on the development actions for Swadlincote Woodlands, to close the review at this time and that a further progress report be submitted in 12 months.

OS/19. **REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 – QUARTERLY REPORT**

The Committee was reminded of the purpose of this legislation and the approval by Council in September of the Council’s RIPA Policy and Guidance document. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was authorised to review the Council’s use of RIPA and for the period June to October 2011 there had been no authorisations requested or granted for the use of these powers.

It was agreed to note the report.

OS/20. **REIMBURSEMENT OF HOUSING BENEFIT SUBSIDY**

The Committee was advised that this item had been withdrawn.

OS/21. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed an annual work programme, which was reviewed at each Meeting. A copy of the updated work programme had been circulated and Members were asked to consider this document and the items to be included on the Agenda for the next Meeting. Members were also asked to consider revising the dates for the Housing Benefit Subsidy Review work, advised of plans to submit reports on the Treasury Management Aspects of HRA Self-financing and confirmed the next review area under the Funded Voluntary Organisation work. A further area was a proposed for a combined report on leisure facilities in the Autumn of 2012, subject to scoping and further consideration at the Annual Focus event.

A review had been proposed for the Committee's work programme relating to the Grounds Maintenance Service, with a review of performance and value for money. This review area had been proposed by 3 non-Members of the Committee. Members gave consideration to the scoping document. Further information was submitted about the client and service delivery roles within the Authority and difficulties with the suggested timing of this review work. It was considered the scope of the review was potentially quite wide and it would be useful for the Members proposing and supporting the review to attend the next Meeting, so that the scope could be refined, prior to its approval. There was discussion about how the review would be undertaken and it would be useful for newer Members to receive some background about the delivery of this service. Other issues discussed at this stage were maintenance frequencies and communication issues.

A number of verbal updates were then provided to the Committee. The Chairman reminded of the previous consideration of HRA Self-financing, reporting on the briefing provided to all Members of the Council, in line with this Committee's recommendations. An update was provided on the Derbyshire County Council health scrutiny work being undertaken, following a Meeting on 2nd December. It was reported that the Chairman and Officer would also be attending the East Midlands Regional Scrutiny Network this Friday. An update was then provided on the task groups relating to mobile telephones and early years provision. It was requested that a letter of thanks be sent to People Express for their presentation and for hosting this Meeting.

(1) It was agreed to update the work programme as follows:

- **That further reports on the Housing Benefits review area be submitted to the Committee's Meetings on 18th January and 8th February 2012.**
- **That updates on the Treasury Management aspects of HRA Self-financing be submitted to the Committee's Meetings on 18th January and 8th February 2012.**
- **That a review of leisure facilities be considered at the Annual Focus Session with a view to being submitted to the Committee in Autumn 2012.**

(2) With regard to the Grounds Maintenance Review, it was agreed:

- **That Officers from Leisure Services support this review area, initially liaising with the Members proposing the review, to discuss its scope.**
- **That an invitation be extended to the Members proposing and supporting the review to attend the next Committee Meeting.**
- **That Members of the Committee be invited to submit their views on the draft scoping document to Officers, to enable these to be discussed at the next Meeting.**

MRS. A. PLENDERLEITH

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 8.00p.m.