

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 15 April 2010

agenda item number **7b**

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Purpose of the Report

1. This report from the Chair of the Overview Committee further updates members on the work of scrutiny and on the implementation of recommendations made in scrutiny reviews, including updates on the work of the three standing committees.

Overview Committee

2. A bio-energy review to assess the use of woodheat boilers burning wood pellets, has been completed and a report will go to the next meeting of Overview.
3. The report will recommend that more County Council buildings - including schools - change to the environmentally friendly boilers as a way of reducing costs and becoming less reliant on oil and gas.
4. The Chair and Vice-chairs of the Overview committee are following up a report on decision-making and the inconsistencies in information excluded from 'exempt' reports. Members want to see a tightening of rules on what information can be withheld when making decisions.
5. A scrutiny review into partnerships - carried out by a small review group of members - is considering how well they achieve improvements for local communities. The County Council is involved in over 300 local partnerships and the review will examine whether they provide value for money in delivering improvements.
6. The Overview Committee are also expected to propose changes to the way the council handles petitions making it easier for the public in submit petitions, including on-line.
7. The Committee has also begun to scope a new review into domestic violence.

Standing Committees

Communities & the Environment

8. The committee is continuing its review into highway maintenance, in response to local concerns about pothole and footpath repairs. Members recently visited the call-centre to see how the authority deals with reported problems and complaints and how repair work is prioritised. Members have also heard from utility companies in considering reinstatement issues, such a compensation and the cost of claims against utility companies.

Education

9. Following a request from the cabinet members for Children & Young People's Services and Personnel & Performance and following the recent scrutiny review into School Meals, a small review group of members has concluded that all activities associated with the school food service - currently split between Children and Young Peoples Services and Communities - should be amalgamated into the Communities Department.
10. A review group of members is looking at apprenticeships in the county, and whether the public sector in general - and the county council in particular - should be offering more apprenticeships. The review is examining current provision of apprenticeships and will consider if current places meet demand. It is also identifying how young people are encouraged to use the apprenticeship route, to gain the necessary skills for employment.

Health & Wellbeing

11. Members have completed a review into NHS Nottinghamshire County to replace the accident and emergency department in a major shake-up of health provision in Newark. Members visited Newark hospital as part of the review. The report will call for the health authority and the Council to look at the need for transport from Newark to other hospitals in Mansfield and Ashfield.
12. A small review group of members has also reviewed health inequalities and access to GPs services and concluded that, although problems exist at some surgeries, there is no overall difficulty in accessing GP services for the majority of patients.

Councillor Joyce Bosnjak
Chair of Overview