

# Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall  
Colliton Park, Dorchester on 17 October 2013.

## Present:-

Trevor Jones (Chairman)  
Mike Byatt (Vice-Chairman)

Andrew Cattaway, Deborah Croney, Lesley Dedman, Ian Gardner and Peter Wharf.

## Members in attendance by invitation:-

Hilary Cox, Cabinet Member for Environment, attended by invitation for minutes 204-205.

Peter Kimber attended by invitation for minutes 204-205.

Kate Wheller attended by invitation for minutes 204-205.

## Officers:

Mark Taylor (Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management), Sam Fox-Adams (Senior Policy and Performance Manager) and Helen Whitby (Principal Democratic Services Officer).

## The Following officers attended for certain items, as appropriate:

Debbie Ward (Chief Executive), Miles Butler (Director for Environment), Jonathan Mair (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), John Alexander (Policy and Performance Manager), Fiona Case (Audit Manager, South West Audit Partnership), Terry Bowditch (Auditor, South West Audit Partnership), Dave Hill (Group Manager, South West Audit Partnership), Mark Fortune (Strategy Officer), Don Gobbett (Head of Planning), Cyril Loveridge (Capital Programme Manager), Helen Owens (Consultation and Research Group Manager), Richard Pascoe (Head of ICT and Business Transformation), Matthew Piles (Group Manager), Jenny Strahan (Senior IT Auditor, South West Audit Partnership) and Peter Scarlett (Estate and Assets Manager).

(Note: (1) These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to be held on **26 November 2013**. (2) **RECOMMENDED** in this type denotes that approval of the County Council is required.)

## **Apology for Absence**

196. An apology for absence was received from David Harris.

## **Key Decision**

197. The Chairman informed the Committee that, in line with the County Council's Constitution, he had been asked to agree to the inclusion of an item on the next Cabinet agenda which related to a key decision in respect of ICT procurement, which was not included on the Forward Plan. Having gained members' views, he stated that he would make his decision following the meeting.

## **Code of Conduct**

198. There were no declarations by members of any disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

## **Minutes**

199. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2013 were confirmed and signed.

**Matters Arising**Developing our Approach to Risk Management – Minute 183.2

200.1 The Vice-Chairman reported that he had attended a meeting of the Risk Management Group held the previous day. He hoped to attend a future meeting of the Joint Asset Management Board and suggested that members observe other management meetings.

Action Plan Arising from Post-Project Review of delivery of the “Weymouth Showcase” Scheme

200.2 The Chairman explained that following the Committee’s last meeting, he had written to the Director for Environment and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to invite them to the meeting and welcomed them to the meeting.

**Progress on Matters raised at Previous Meetings**

201. The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which updated members of progress made following discussions at previous meetings.

**Noted****Outcomes from the LGA Peer Challenge, July 2013**

202.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive on the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review of the County Council undertaken between 16 and 19 July 2013.

The LGA Peer Challenge final report was attached as the appendix to the report.

202.2 In response to a question about the delay in the results of the Peer Review being communicated to members, the Chief Executive explained that although the letter from the LGA was dated 13 August 2013, the report findings had not been finalised until 20 September 2013. These had been distributed to members on 26 September 2013, although members had received direct feedback from the LGA Team on 19 July 2013.

202.3 The Chief Executive explained the purpose of the Peer Review, which had involved meetings with members, officers, partners and members of the Citizen’s Panel. She then summarised the key recommendations which would lead to significant change within the Authority and provide many challenges that would be incorporated into the Forward Together programme. The Cabinet had provided additional resources to enable the changes to be progressed and additional LGA support was being explored with regard to the work needed on communications. The work to adopt a “one Council” approach was supported by the work of the Policy Development Panels on Local Member Involvement and Member Development. Members were reminded that there would be a seminar on Forward Together following the County Council meeting on 14 November 2013.

202.4 In response to a question, the Chief Executive explained that an action plan to address the Peer Review recommendations would be created, but she was eager that this should be progressed along with other activities under the Forward Together programme to ensure clear focus and direction and avoid the need for numerous action plans.

202.5 The scrutiny role of overview committees was highlighted and the need for members to be given independent advice and support to help them provide challenge and improve their skills. Attention was also drawn to the potential difficulty members might have in scrutinising something which they had helped develop. The Chief Executive agreed to contact the LGA with regard to best practice.

202.6 Members discussed member development and ways in which the Authority could become more member-led as these were fundamental issues within the report. This provided a challenge for members and staff to do things differently. The Chief Executive confirmed that this would be included in the action plan.

202.7 The Vice-Chairman, who had attended a meeting of the Risk Management Group the previous day, suggested that the Committee look at management systems and structures to see what roles they had and how effectively they were carried out. He also asked for a matrix of how they fitted together and what they delivered. The Chief Executive explained that these were outside of the policy making and decision-taking processes.

### **Resolved**

203. That the action plan arising from the Peer Review be provided for consideration at the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 26 November 2013.

### **Review of "Weymouth Showcase" Scheme to implement Real Time Passenger Information for Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester**

204.1 The Committee considered a report by the Audit Manager, South West Audit Partnership (SWAP), which set out the findings of an Internal Audit review requested by the Committee into the key issues arising from the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system in Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester. The matter had been considered by the Committee at meetings on 23 July and 17 September 2013. Members were provided with copies of articles which had appeared in the Dorset Echo on 26 and 27 September, and letters from the Leader of the Council on 28 September and First Bus on 5 October 2013.

204.2 The Auditor outlined the report which provided a summary of the key issues arising from the implementation of RTPI in Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester and provided suggested ways forward.

204.3 The Director for Environment considered the report to be an accurate summary of the position. He reminded members that an explanation of the project management arrangements had been given at the last meeting and of the pressures placed upon the Authority to deliver the Olympic Games. He recognised that the RTPI Project had not been given the attention it warranted and Risk Register requirements had not been applied as they should have been. The position with First Bus had now been agreed and the nine buses without the RTPI equipment would have this fitted within the month at First Bus's expense. Negotiations between the County Council and First Bus continued to ensure that all agreements were in place for the future. The RTPI system was working now for the Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester corridor but there would be buses in Dorchester which would never be part of the RTPI scheme unless the County Council bought equipment to put on these buses. The Cabinet Member for Environment added that she had been involved since the summer. The relationship with First Bus had now improved and lessons had been learnt from this experience.

204.4 The Chairman referred to previous bids for capital funding being made in other areas by the County Council without any assessment of whether the capacity to undertake such projects was available. He felt that the Council was a small authority, with reducing resources and a limit to what it could effectively do, and was concerned that initiatives could be bid for without the ability to deliver, which could put the Council at reputational risk. Other members thought the County Council should take advantage of bidding opportunities but manage the process effectively to ensure that public services were delivered, otherwise reputation and public assurance would be affected. Attention was also drawn to the liaison role of local members between the Council and the public and the need for them to be engaged and informed on any issues affecting their wards. The Cabinet

Member for Environment referred to a forthcoming meeting with First Bus on commercially sensitive issues and undertook to inform members about the outcome.

204.5 The Group Manager stated that in the run up to the Olympic Games more engagement was undertaken with local members than with any other project. He confirmed that following his last meeting with First Bus, he had provided an update for the Chairman as was requested at the previous meeting.

204.6 With regard to replacing the equipment currently fitted to buses when it became obsolete, the Group Manager explained that the current agreement with First Bus would end in May 2014. New vehicles were expected as part of First Bus' investment and a follow-on agreement was anticipated on similar lines to that in place with Bournemouth and Poole.

204.7 One member asked whether RTPi would be extended beyond the Weymouth, Portland, Dorchester corridor. The Director explained that this would require additional investment by the Council and there were no proposals to do this currently. The Chief Executive added that one of the lessons learned was that any processes should add value and be followed. Processes would not be added unless they made a difference.

204.8 Reference was made to the article which appeared in the Echo on 26 September 2013 which was factually incorrect and the subsequent rebuttal the following day. It was suggested that if a positive press release had been issued by the County Council at an earlier stage a lot of errors and upset would have been avoided. It was also suggested that the Echo should have checked the information contained in their article before publication.

204.9 The County Council Member for Portland Tophill drew attention to the fact that Portland residents were heavily reliant on bus services, and this was particularly true for residents who lived on the Common or at the Grove, so it was important that real time information was accurate. He would like passengers to be able to give feedback on their experience and thought it would be helpful if First Bus gave a presentation for Council local members as they had recently done for Weymouth and Portland Borough Councillors. He also drew attention to the recent experience of one of his constituent's in trying to get to Dorset County Hospital by bus.

204.10 The County Council Member for Portland Harbour stated that one of the problems had been First Bus' lack of commitment but this had improved recently. First Bus had met with Weymouth and Portland Councillors recently and had indicated that they would be happy to do the same for County Councillors. She agreed that it was easier for local members to answer residents' questions.

204.11 The Group Manager stated that the Weymouth and Portland service was the best service in Dorset, but congestion was the real issue and local members needed to be contacted about where these concerns lay. He invited members to visit the control room so that they could see it in operation.

204.12 The Chairman asked for a final report to be provided for the next meeting which looked at lessons learned about project management, confirmation that the RTPi system in Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester was working and that measures were in place to ensure that it would continue to work in the future. The report should be provided by the Director with SWAP officers scrutinising it to ensure it was achievable.

**Resolved**

205. That a final report be provided for consideration at the meeting on 26 November 2013 as set out in minute 205.12 above.

### **Internal Audit Quarterly Report**

206.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which summarised the work of the Council's Internal Audit Service. This provided an overall positive assurance opinion on the Council's management of risk and the systems of internal control from the review work undertaken by South West Audit Partnership (SWAP), details of scheduled audits undertaken and details of audit reviews which had received a "partial assurance opinion".

206.2 The SWAP Group Manager confirmed that audit processes now included specific reference to efficiencies and added value. Although it was recognised that at present only 12 % of the audit plan work had reached draft or final report stage, a total of 53% of audits were in progress. The SWAP Group Audit Manager gave the Committee an undertaking that all audits would be completed by the end of the financial year, with minimal overlap into 2014/15 to finalise reports. No potential significant risks had been identified from the Internal Audit work during 1 July to 30 September 2013 and partial assurance reviews had been given for only four areas - repairs and maintenance, IT key controls, assessment and referral and troubled families.

206.3 The Group Manager referred to practice in other councils whereby members had reviewed audit processes and he invited the Committee to take part in such a review. This might involve a small number of members reviewing a couple of randomly selected audits and this process could be repeated if this was felt necessary or appropriate. Mike Byatt, Lesley Dedman and Peter Wharf expressed an interest in taking part in such a review, along with the Senior Policy and Performance Manger and the Head of Internal Audit, Insurance & Risk Management.

206.4 One member asked whether there was any risk associated with the delay in implementation of shared IT solutions in Children's Services. Whilst the Audit Manager confirmed that there was a risk she provided assurance that the risk would be managed whilst the IT solution was awaited.

206.5 With regard to IT Key Controls, one member stated that issues relating to change control management had been raised previously and considered it to be unacceptable that changes were made without the necessary authorisation and suggested that a change control board be introduced. The Senior IT Auditor confirmed that significant changes did follow the correct change control procedure, whilst smaller changes had not been properly managed. The Senior IT Auditor had met with the SAP Operations Management Team and it was hoped that the system would be better managed now. A follow up audit was scheduled in June 2014. The Senior IT Auditor added that she had met with the Change Manager and requests were being monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that the procedures were being followed. The team was dealing with many requests and this raised the question as to why there were so many when the DES system had been in place for some time and the number of requests should have been lessening. The Senior IT Auditor reported that a benefit realisation review was to be undertaken shortly and the outcomes would be reported to the Committee through the usual Internal Audit Quarterly report. In view of the number of requests for changes being made, some members questioned whether the DES system was fit for purpose. The Chairman asked that SWAP be provided with copies of previous staff survey results on DES use.

206.6 The Committee noted that two audits relating to business alignment with ICT - the Dorset Public Sector Network and Broadband Dorset UK - were to be undertaken to assess the position and, where necessary, identify where improvements could be made.

The Council was leading on these big projects and, where appropriate, lessons learnt would be identified for future ICT projects, and would be reported to the Committee in January 2014.

### **Resolved**

207.1 That the work undertaken by SWAP, the positive conclusion reached that risks were generally well managed and the systems of internal control were working effectively be noted.

207.2 That progress made by managers in implementing agreed actions on areas of potential significant corporate risk to the Council (Appendix B) be noted.

207.3 That those audit assignments which had been given a "Partial" assurance opinion, but were not considered to present significant risks to the Council's overall operations (Appendix D) be noted.

207.4 That those audit assignments which had been allocated either a "Substantial" or "Reasonable" assurance opinion, where it had generally been concluded that controls were operating satisfactorily (Appendix C) be noted.

207.5 That a Panel comprising Mike Byatt, Lesley Dedman and Peter Wharf, meet to scrutinise the internal audit process.

### **Corporate Evidence Strategy Update**

208.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Environment which provided a six month update on the progress of the Corporate Evidence Strategy, including the results of the latest evidence checks on committee reports, and addressed questions asked by the Committee about the Citizens' Panel at their meeting on 16 April 2013.

208.2 The Head of Planning briefly introduced the report and reminded the Committee that since the last meeting a Peer Review had been undertaken and an action plan would be produced shortly. Members were also reminded that the Corporate Evidence Strategy Group had been established some four or five years ago and had brought together research and consultation teams from across the organisation.

208.3 Members noted that the State of Dorset report would be considered by the Corporate Evidence Group the following week before being widely circulated. This gave a snapshot of datasets held and identified key issues for the County Council. This process was still developing and suggested improvements were welcomed.

208.4 One member commented that data sets were not well used generally and did not relate to electoral divisions or were not provided in different formats, which would be of more use to members and lower tier authorities. The Consultation and Research Group Manager explained that work was being undertaken to redesign web delivered information so that it was locality based. However, data sets held by Children's and Adult Services were not currently included and work was being undertaken with Public Health to make the information held within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to be more locality based.

### **Noted**

### **Quarterly Asset Management Update**

209.1 The Committee considered a joint report by the Director for Environment and the Director for Corporate Resources which provided a quarterly update on progress against the asset management objectives and on the Buildings, Highways, Waste Management, ICT and Fleet Management programmes. A fuller version of the report had been considered by the Cabinet on 2 October 2013.

209.2 The Capital Programme Manager summarised the report and the recommendations. There had been little progress with reducing the property estate over the

summer but the Committee would consider a report on the baseline strategy in November 2013. Attention was drawn to the increased number of Premises Responsible Persons identified, the planned school expansion to address increased pupil numbers, the four delayed ICT projects, the age of the current fleet and the anticipated start date of the Bridport Integrated Waste Management Centre.

209.3 Attention was drawn to the length of time that had been spent on trying to achieve the Bridport Integrated Waste Management Centre. The Estate and Assets Manager explained that there had been significant issues with the acquisition of the site. Issues raised by Natural England and the Highways Agency had been resolved and agreement had now been reached with the landowner so the project should progress. The Chairman suggested that a start date of January 2014 was optimistic given that planning consent had not yet been obtained and he asked that members be provided with an update.

209.4 Officers responded to questions about the budget for Queen Elizabeth's School, the inclusion of Bere Regis School in the list of significant capital building projects, and whether floor areas were included in the pie chart shown at paragraph 2.1 of the report. Officers agreed to confirm why Streets Meadow, Wimborne was still included in the list of significant capital building projects, given that the project was completed six years ago and whether this was because of unresolved defects.

209.5 The Chairman referred to his experience of past school expansion schemes and the poor quality of build used. He was concerned that this not be repeated. The Capital Programme Manager explained that, in the current economic climate, construction would be robust and would follow national guidelines. Buildings would be basic, fit for purpose and functional with energy use and maintenance kept under strict control. The Senior Policy and Performance Manager confirmed that early testing of building specifications would be undertaken and that this would involve members. In view of the Committee's previous concerns about construction standards, it was suggested that they scrutinise the structural design for robustness. Members remained concerned about the process and asked officers to provide information about who and how construction would be tested.

### **Noted**

### **Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013/14, including Meeting Future Challenges (MFC) Update**

210.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which provided a summary of the budget position as at 31 August 2013 and an update on the Meeting Future Challenges projects.

210.2 The Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management reminded the Committee that they had particular responsibility for monitoring the Corporate Resources Directorate and the Chief Executive's Office. The Corporate Resources Directorate had a projected overspend of 1.5% and the Chief Executive's Office a projected underspend of 1.1%. The most significant variation was the ICT and Business Transformation budget which had a projected overspend of £320.4k. Since the report had been written, however, this situation had been improved and currently there was a projected overspend of £40k.

210.3 With regard to the ICT and Business Transformation budget, a member asked that these areas be shown separately in future.

### **Resolved**

211.1 That the budgets for ICT and Business Transformation be shown separately in future.

211.2 That the report be noted.

**Corporate Performance Monitoring Report – First Quarter 2013/14 (1 April-30 June 2013)**

212.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which provided a summary of the performance of the County Council's Budget and Corporate Plan for the first quarter of 2013/14. The report had been deferred from the Committee's meeting on 17 September 2013.

212.2 The Policy and Performance Manager summarised the content of the report. At the end of the First Quarter 69% of indicators met or exceeded their targets, and 85% of actions were on course or complete. Although the projected overspend for Quarter 2 had reduced from £2,845.28K to £437k service pressures continued and overspends in Children's and Adult Services remained at £2m and £2.6m respectively.

212.3 Members expressed concern about budgets which year on year had overspends which were reduced later in the year by savings or underspends from elsewhere. It was suggested that either alternative models of interventions be pursued even if this meant investment to save later, or that managers should be more realistic and base budgets on actuality. The Policy and Performance Manager stated that he would need to contact relevant Heads of Services before he could respond to these points.

212.4 One member highlighted that emails were still not being responded to within the prescribed timescales and he asked that response times be measured. The Head of ICT and Business Transformation explained that there was a practical issue with measuring response rates but mystery shoppers were engaged so that response rates could be improved. The Policy and Performance Manager added that the new Corporate Plan and Corporate Priorities would address these areas and the Committee would be able to comment on these in due course.

212.5 With regard to why the performance outcome for EN1 (Support the delivery of local economy, including maximising the legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games) was off target, the Policy and Performance Manager agreed to provide this information outside of the meeting and added that the recent Peer Review had highlighted that economic development had not been given enough priority in the current Corporate Plan and this would be addressed next year. A member referred to the 100% target for Risk EN01 (highways defects to be made safe within defined service levels) which he thought was unrealistic.

212.6 Attention was then drawn to red indicators in Aim 5 (provide innovative and value for money services) which the Committee had responsibility for. None of these were considered to be a high risk on the Corporate Risk Register.

212.7 The Policy and Performance Manager drew attention to the timeliness of the report and questioned its usefulness given that the information had been out of date at the time of the last meeting when the report had been deferred. Given that managers used unverified and up to date information to manage performance, there was an issue about members being provided with out of date information to scrutinise performance. The Corporate Management Team was considering how members could be provided with more up to date information. Attention was drawn to the recent Peer Review which had highlighted the need for greater member engagement and the need for them to be provided with the appropriate level of information. Members stated that they were currently provided with a lot of unnecessary information and were concerned that changes highlighted in the Peer Review would need to be driven if they were to be delivered in the given timescales. The Policy and Performance Manager added that the Corporate Plan and Priorities were



currently being reviewed in the light of the Peer Review and Forward Together programme and draft proposals would be ready before Christmas.

### **Noted**

#### **Meeting Future Challenges – Progress Report**

213.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive on progress of the Meeting Future Challenges (MFC) programme which aimed to deliver savings of £43.2m over the three years of 2013-14 to 2015-16. Savings proposals totalling £16.5m for 2013-14 had been approved by the County Council on 14 February 2013 and assimilated into the MFC programme.

213.2 The Head of ICT and Business Transformation introduced the report highlighting the number of projects within the Programme and their current status. Three projects currently were red in status and the identified savings unlikely to be realised. The Committee noted that five challenge groups had been established to identify further savings for 2014-17.

213.3 When asked why the level of risk attached to the report was “High” for both current and residual risk, the Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management explained that it would be expected that steps identified to mitigate risk would reduce the residual level but, in this case, this did not appear to have had any impact of the resultant assessment of risk. The Head of ICT and Business Transformation could offer no explanation of risk levels and agreed to review this.

213.4 In view of the large number of boards and management processes within the County Council, the Vice-Chairman asked for a map of these to be provided, including their relationships to one another, their benefit and effectiveness. The Head of ICT and Business Transformation agreed to provide this information, although current arrangements were being reviewed in the light of the Forward Together programme.

213.5 With regard to how MFC2 work would dovetail with the outcome of the Peer Review, it was explained that this would be the prime focus of the Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet. It was suggested that other members of the Council be involved in this process too.

### **Noted**

#### **Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2012/13**

214.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive which provided an analysis of the complaints recorded under the County Council’s complaints procedure in 2012-13 and details of learning points and improvements made as a result of complaints. The report also included end of year statistics provided by the Local Government Ombudsman in her annual review. The report had been deferred from the Committee’s meeting held on 17 September 2013.

214.2 The Policy and Performance Manager presented the report highlighting that the level of complaints for 2012/13 had increased on the previous year, although fully justified complaints had reduced by 30%. Attention was drawn to the work undertaken by the Chief Executive’s office on Stage 2 complaints where there had been 14 submitted in 2011/12 and 23 this year so far.

214.3 The Committee noted that the number of complaints relating to children in care was also increasing but there did not seem to be any clear reason for this although it might relate to the increase number of children going into care.

214.4 With regard to why documents being returned to service users were checked by a supervisor, it was explained that other local authorities had received significant penalties for breaching data protection legislation. This step was a means to try to avoid this happening in Dorset and to prevent the County Council's reputation being damaged. The Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk Management also stressed that it remained important that any decision taken to add process and/or capacity were properly assessed in terms of risk and were proportionate.

214.5 One member asked whether information relating to complaints regarding the many different aspects of the Council's work was held in one place. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that this information was kept but not captured centrally. The Committee regularly received a number of reports relating to this.

#### **Resolved**

215. That the Complaints Annual Report 2012-13 be approved.

#### **Reason for Decision**

216. To provide the Audit and Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to review the Complaints Annual Report 2012-13 including the learning points and improvements made and action required to further improve the management of complaints.

#### **Joint Scrutiny Review Panel**

217.1 The Committee received the notes of the meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Review Panel held on 25 June 2013.

217.2 The Vice-Chairman reported that the Panel had been renamed the Joint Scrutiny Review Sub-Committee and meetings were now open to the public and agenda information available on the Dorsetforyou.com website. He was keen to promote the work of the Sub-Committee to all members. At the last meeting concerns about the governance arrangements of the Joint Asset Management Group were expressed particularly as there was no member involvement. He suggested that the Committee review these arrangements and he would report back following his attendance at a forthcoming meeting of the Board.

217.3 It was also reported that some district councils were conducting reviews of the Dorset Waste Partnership arrangements despite the Joint Sub-Committee having recently completed a similar review.

#### **Noted**

#### **Policy Development Panel on Engaging and Consulting Local Members**

218.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources on the outcomes of the Policy Development Panel on Involving Local Members. Members were provided with a copy of suggested amendments by the Chairman.

218.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the protocol formed part of other changes within the Authority to bring about cultural change. The Protocol outlined officer and member responsibilities and would be monitored for compliance. If the Committee supported the Protocol, it would be considered by the Standards and Governance Committee the following week and by the County Council in November 2013. The Protocol would then be cascaded by senior officers and through team brief so that it was understood and embedded within the organisation with a clear requirement for it to be followed. The Chairman suggested three minor amendments to be made.

218.3 One member asked about all press releases being approved by the Cabinet member with responsibility for communications. As this was a recent change, she asked whether this would delay press releases if the Cabinet Member was on holiday or absent for any reason. She also expressed concern about political bias. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the Cabinet Member for Education and Communications had taken part in the work of the Policy Development Panel and she currently worked closely with the Communications Team and saw all press releases. Another member added that this was an attempt to prevent press releases being issued which contradicted one another.

218.4 There was some discussion about how use of the Protocol would be monitored and how Heads of Service would be expected to ensure their staff used and complied with it.

218.5 The Committee supported the Protocol, as amended, and noted that members could pursue any specific concerns when the Protocol was discussed at the County Council meeting in November 2013.

### **RECOMMENDED**

219. That the County Council be asked to approve the new protocol on engaging and consulting with local members, as amended, and the proposed arrangements to embed and monitor the protocol and bring about cultural change.

### **Reason for Recommendation**

220. In order to bring about a culture of consultation and engagement with local members of the County Council.

### **Six Month Progress Report on the Committee's Work**

221.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director for Corporate Resources which detailed a six monthly update on the outcomes of issues considered by the Committee that had not already been completed.

221.2 It was noted that from the items where a determination was required to keep them on the progress report, or to remove them, the following decisions were made:

1. Planning Obligations - Developer Contributions to Highways and other Infrastructure Projects – Remove
2. Protocol for Involving Local Members in Matters Affecting Their Electoral Division – Retain
3. Review of the County Council's Consultation Arrangements – Retain
4. Queen Elizabeth's School Call to Account – Retain
5. The home to school transport service in Dorset – Remove
6. Schools' Repairs and Maintenance (repairs and maintenance implications of schools becoming academies) – Remove
7. Highways Asset Management Plan (Volume 1) – Retain
8. Initial Assessments - Remove
9. Audit and Scrutiny Committee's Contribution to Risk Management – Retain
10. ICT Incident – 14 September 2012 – Retain
11. The Government's Requirements for Data Transparency – Remove
12. Review of the "Weymouth Showcase" Scheme to implement Real Time Passenger Information for Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester – to be removed following the meeting on 26 November 2013

221.3 In view of the Committee's previous concern about home to school transport, they asked for an update on how the service had fared in September 2013 and for an annual report to be provided for future years.

**Resolved**

222. That the actions detailed within the report be removed or retained as set out in minute 221.2 above.

**Work Programme**

223.1 The Committee considered its updated work programme and items were added as specified in minutes 206, 221.3 and 223.2.

223.2 In view of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's responsibility for the scrutiny of Public Health, the Chairman asked that the Director of Public Health be invited to attend the next meeting to give an explanation of the work of public health.

**Noted**

**Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

224. The Committee received the County Council's Forward Plan for October 2013 published on 3 September 2013 and the draft Forward Plan for November 2013.

**Noted**

**Questions**

225. No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

**Farewell**

204. The Chairman referred to the forthcoming retirement of the Director for Environment and, on behalf of the Committee, wished him well for a long and happy retirement.

Meeting duration: 10.00am to 3.30pm