

AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel was held on 24 March 2016.

PRESENT: Councillors J Sharrocks (Chair); Councillors J G Cole, T Higgins, J Hobson, L Lewis and P Purvis (substitute for Councillor G Purvis).

OFFICERS: A Crawford and C Walker

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor T Mawston, Councillor L McGloin, Councillor G Purvis, Councillor D Rooney.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest made by Members at this point of the meeting.

1 GOVERNANCE OFFICER - MINUTES OF THE MEETING

The Chair referred to the fact that, due to staffing issues in Democratic Services, there was no Governance Officer available for the meeting. Under the circumstances, no detailed minutes of the meeting would be produced but a note of key points would be produced by the Scrutiny Support Officer.

NOTED**2 MINUTES - AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL - 25 FEBRUARY 2016**

The minutes of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel held on 25 February 2016 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

3 COUNCIL USE OF CONSULTANTS - FURTHER INFORMATION

The Scrutiny Support Officer submitted a report that provided information concerning other local authorities' approach to the use of consultants. It was explained that this was not intended as a definitive guide but to illustrate some of the different approaches adopted in respect of this issue.

Information had been obtained in respect of other Tees Valley authorities as follows:

- a. Hartlepool Borough Council - The issue was examined by scrutiny some time ago. A structured policy was produced as a result.
- b. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council - The authority had no agreed policy but applied normal procurement rules.
- c. Stockton Borough Council - No agreed policy but a structured procurement process was used.

In addition, information was obtained in respect of the following local authorities nationally:

- Crawley Borough Council
- Torbay Borough Council
- Worcestershire County Council
- Powys County Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

The submitted information highlighted issues such as:

- Use of detailed policies on appointment of consultants.

- Involvement of specialist procurement officers.
- Preparation of detailed business cases.
- Authorisation processes, including senior officer and Executive Member involvement.
- Centralised recording, monitoring and reporting systems.
- Examples of best practice/possible areas for improvement.
- Identification of quantifiable and measurable outputs.

Reference was also made to the scrutiny panel's agreed term of reference regarding information concerning the costs of consultants across the authority.

The Council's Procurement Manager explained that, as a result of discussions at previous meetings of the scrutiny panel, a system had now been put in place to gather/collate the required information. A breakdown of consultant costs relating to Outcome Area 1 (of the change Programme) - Economic Growth - had been circulated to the panel. It was advised that it was envisaged that the same exercise would now be completed for all Outcome Areas.

AGREED:

1. That the submitted information be noted and taken into account in preparing the scrutiny panel's final report on this topic.
2. That a draft final report be submitted to the panel's next meeting.