

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Head of Corporate Services

REPORT NUMBER F216

TO: COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING: 17 April 2007

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (STEWARDSHIP)
COMMITTEE**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee must report annually to Council on its work during the last year and make recommendations for future work programmes and if appropriate, amended working methods.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee's Annual Report for 2006/07 be noted.
- 2.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee's Work Plan for 2007/08 be approved.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There have been no financial implications to date other than the costs of officer time and normal allowances for Members that are included in the budget.
- 3.2 Any development of the work of in depth scrutiny, including items such as the payment of out of pocket expenses for expert and other witnesses can be accommodated within existing budgets for 2007/08. The position for future years will be addressed through the Service and Financial Planning Process, if that is necessary.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

This report is an update on work completed during 2006/07, together with a draft programme for 2007/08. Risk management considerations for individual topics will be included in reports to the Committee as the year progresses.

5. KEY INFORMATION

5.1 WORK IN 2006/07

Appendix 1 outlines the Committee's main areas of work in 2006/07. The majority of items included in the Committee's original work plan have been progressed by the Committee, and the following is a brief summary of the Committee's main achievements during the year:

- A considerable amount of work has been undertaken by the Service and Financial Planning Member Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to ensure that draft budgets reflect the Council priorities and approved policies. A joint meeting of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees was held to consider the Budget Framework, and the two committees then scrutinized the draft budget proposals before final approval by the Strategy Committee and Council.
- The draft Corporate Plan for 2006/07 has been scrutinized.
- The Committee has scrutinized the audit fee increase for 2006/07, and as a result of Members' comments the District Audit proposes to produce a summary of the Audit and Inspection Plan for 2007/08.
- The Audit Plan and the annual report were considered, and a small Member Group considered the Council's Statement of Internal Control before this was approved by the Strategy Committee as part of the 2005/06 Statement of Accounts. The Internal Audit work programme for 2007/08 has been approved, subject to adjustments to include work on CAST and any issues arising from the Annual Audit Letter.
- The Capital Programme has been regularly monitored. Members have noted the excellent progress on council housing work, but on several occasions have discussed the problem of 'slippage' on the other items in the capital programme. It has been agreed that there should be further consideration on the future capital programme early in the life of the new council.
- The Revenue Budget has been regularly monitored, and since November 2006 information about this has been integrated with updates on risk and performance management, with clear linkages to Corporate Plan objectives.
- Performance indicators have been monitored throughout the year, since November 2006 in the integrated format referred to above. There has been close consideration of certain key areas such as Benefits and Land Charges. With regard to the latter, performance has improved to such an extent that the Committee has agreed that this close monitoring is no longer considered necessary. Complaints to the Council have also been monitored.
- The arrangements for District and Parish/Town Council elections in May 2007 have been considered.
- Reviews have been conducted into the Council's approach to overview and scrutiny and into the Call-In procedures.
- Progress on procurement strategy and on the CPA Improvement Plan has been monitored.
- The Committee has considered reports about Use of Resources and Value for Money.

The following items on the Committee's original Work Plan for 2006/07 have not yet been considered:

- review on informing Members of issues arising in their wards, and dealing with Member complaints - This work was postponed while vacancies in the Policy and Communications Section were being filled. The intention is to bring a report on these issues to the Committee early in the new Council year.

- the evaluation of Strategic Partnerships. – This task has now been passed to the Project and Programme Executive who, in conjunction with the Head of Corporate Services, will complete the evaluation.
- progress on outstanding actions in relation to key areas where weaknesses were identified by Internal Audit. – This will be reported as part of the 2006/07 Internal Audit annual report to be considered at the meeting scheduled for 17 July 2007.
- follow-up actions arising from Council's decisions on the items deferred from the Review of the Constitution. – The Corporate Plan for 2007/08 states that "Following the elections in May 2007, the new Council may review the constitution and model of governance". It is therefore thought prudent to hold over the remaining actions until the constitution has been discussed by the new Council.

5.2 WORK PLAN FOR 2007/08

Appendix 2 sets out a list of items of work that Members and Officers have identified for consideration by the Committee during 2007/08.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee: Resume of Work in 2006/07

Appendix 2 – Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee: Proposed Work Plan for 2007/08

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:

None.

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