

## SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Wednesday, 14 September 2005  
(6:00 - 8:05 pm)

**Present:** Councillor Mrs P A Twomey (Chair), Councillor R C Little (Deputy Chair), Councillor W F L Barns, Councillor B Cook and Councillor Mrs D Hunt

**Also Present:** Councillor P Waker (Lead Call-In Member), Councillor D S Miles, Councillor L R Waker (Call-In Members), Councillor C Geddes, Councillor G J Bramley, Councillor M A McCarthy and Councillor L A Smith (representing the Executive)

**Apologies:** Councillor J R Denyer, Councillor C J Fairbrass, Councillor Mrs M M West and Mr B Phillips (Education Co-opted Member - Secondary)

### 16. The Call In Process

Noted.

### 17. Private Business

**Agreed** to exclude the public and press from the remainder of the meeting, as the business was confidential.

### 18. Call In - Re-Tendering the Citizen's Panel Contract

The Board considered a Call-In following the Executive's decision for 19 July 2005 to tender the contract package for the Citizen's Panel and other consultation projects as the existing contract is due to expire in March 2006.

Councillor P. Waker referred to the reasons for the Call-In set out on the form submitted by the Call-In Members, mainly covering their feelings as follows:

- the high level of surveys and consultation work undertaken by the Council
- the degree of benefit of the consultation process on providing better Council services and the lack of such information in the report submitted to the Executive
- the lack of examples on the impact of surveys upon Council policy
- the Council's consultation on specific changes / projects is focussed and more effective and that such consultation happens regardless of an established Citizen's Panel
- the decision to continue with Citizen's Panel should be made as part of considering all of the Council's consultation methods
- a holistic approach to consultation would provide a better overview, including cost effectiveness
- the financial implications of the proposals
- potential implications of ensuring that the Citizen's Panel is demographically representative
- Councillor's represent the whole community by making decisions about

Council policies, services finances and represent the interest of people in their ward. Continuous improvement in this link is more beneficial to the decision making process than consultation via a Citizen's Panel

Councillors Bramley, Geddes and Wade responded on behalf of the Executive, commenting as follows:

- the Citizen's Panel gives the opportunity to know the general view of the public of large on all matters in a systematic approach, which helps Members to ensure the balanced and effective prioritisation and use of resources
- the Citizen's Panel provides a pre-selected demographically representative sample of the Borough which provides a strong means of knowing how issues are viewed by a cross section of the population
- the statutory requirements to consult and being able to demonstrate effective consultation processes rates highly in Comprehensive Performance Assessment and other inspections

The Director of Corporate Strategy also commented on the cost and the use of a Citizen's Panel and the potential implications of using as hoc consultation arrangements should use of a Citizen's Panel be discontinued.

All parties withdrew at 7.30 pm for the Board to deliberate and reconvened at 7.50 pm for the Board's decision

After weighing up all the evidence the Board agreed to refer the matter back to the Executive because of their concern that there was a lack of detailed information in the Executive report relating to the cost effectiveness of the proposal. The Board will set up a scrutiny panel into all consultation methods be used within the Borough and bearing in mind also the review of the Community Forums currently taking place, recommends that the Executive defer tendering arrangements for the Citizen's Panel and Consultations Projects pending the outcome of these reviews