

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6 DECEMBER 2011**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

17

**TITLE OF REPORT : TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT ON PROJECT BOARDS -
ADDENDUM REPORT**

1. SUMMARY

This report includes the comments from the Senior Management Team (SMT) on the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Report on Project Boards. This report should be read in conjunction with the main report (paragraph 4.2).

2. SMT COMMENTS

General Comments

- 2.1 SMT welcomes the more concise report format and the way that the feedback from the providers of evidence has been incorporated within the report. SMT is also mindful of the progress that has been made in the process of undertaking Task and Finish Groups in the civic year and commends the use of the one day format for Task and Finish Groups in circumstances where the subject matter is appropriate.
- 2.2 SMT hopes that Members found the evidence useful in their deliberations on the use of Project Boards at North Hertfordshire District Council and it further endorses the way that the evidence has been conveyed in the draft report.
- 2.3 Having had an opportunity now to consider the draft report in detail, there are a limited number of areas of clarification that are sought in relation to the evidence section (Section 3).
- i) In relation to membership of Project Boards, it should be emphasised that the nature and membership of Project Boards may vary at different stages of a project. It is normal practice upon the formation of a Project Board for the Project Executive in conjunction with the Leader (and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Project Manager) to decide the composition of a specific Project Board. The democratic accountability for the progress of a project in the first instance would stem from a decision of either Cabinet or Council to approve a project to go forward and as such, paragraph 3.15 makes reference to the fact that Project Boards are not themselves intended to be a democratic structure, but rather a mechanism to ensure the delivery of a project. SMT would wish to emphasise that having fixed rules on Project Board membership would add unnecessary constraints and potentially costs to project delivery and that Project Boards need to be flexible depending on the nature of the project and

the particular phase of project delivery. These comments are reflected in relation to recommendation 2.2 (see paragraph 2.5 below).

- ii) In relation to "communication and visibility" the draft report should be clarified at Section 3.26 in referring to the publication of board minutes on the internet - this was a specific reference to minutes in relation to the Hitchin Town Hall/Museum Project Board, where the project communication strategy included publication of minutes. The communication strategy for each project board will differ depending on the commercial sensitivity of the project.

Comments on Proposed Recommendations

- 2.4 Recommendation 2.1 - SMT agrees that the Project Management protocol on communications should be followed, although it should be emphasised that there may be specific reasons or constraints around communication matters, which in some instances will affect the level of detail that can be communicated (e.g. legal or contractual constraints).
- 2.5 Recommendation 2.2. The Task and Finish Group helpfully recognise two different types of projects which are regularly undertaken. In relation to Project Boards which provide public facing projects, SMT would emphasis that Project Boards need to reflect the type of projects, the phase of project and the scale of the project. In such instances detailed consideration is, and should be, given to the Member role on a Project Board, however, to require a local member as well as a relevant Portfolio Holder as a matter of principle, is seen as unduly prescriptive and inflexible.
- 2.6 There is some concern that recommendations 2.3 and 2.4 would add additional time and cost burdens on an individual project. High level reporting on the progression of projects is contained within the monitoring process for corporate priorities, which is reported to Cabinet (and often subject to consideration at Overview and Scrutiny Committee). A flexible approach should be used to the publication of information which might be through an item in the Member's Information Service, an update report at an Area Committee or via another means.
- 2.7 Recommendation 2.6 is strongly supported in order that maximum benefit can be gained from such project delivery.
- 2.8 Recommendation 2.7. The sentiment of the Task and Finish Group in relation to the naming of Project Boards is fully understood. The renaming of Project Boards as Project Advisory Boards, may cause some confusion with other parties (e.g. contractors or external delivery organisations) who would normally use the accepted points to naming of Project Boards. It may be more appropriate to place greater emphasis on recommendation 2.8, which is seeking to provide more of an understanding to Members generally about the scope and role of Project Boards.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the comments of SMT and considers whether or not the Task and Finish Group makes any adjustments to its draft report.

4. CONTACT OFFICERS

**Brendan Sullivan
Scrutiny Officer**

Telephone 01462 474612

E-mail brendan.sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk

David Scholes

Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Enterprise

Telephone 01462 474836

E-mail david.scholes@north-hert.gov.uk

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