

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

31 JANUARY 2013 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman  
Mr PAS Hall and Mr C Ladkin – Vice-Chairman

Mr PR Batty, Mrs WA Hall, Mrs L Hodgkins, Mr DW Inman, Mr R Mayne (for Mr MS Hulbert), Mr K Morrell, Mr K Nichols and Mrs S Sprason

Also in attendance: Councillor JS Moore and Councillor Miss DM Taylor

Officers in attendance: Steve Atkinson, Katherine Bennett, Louisa Horton, Julie Kenny, Sanjiv Kohli, Tracy Miller, Robert Morgan and Rebecca Owen

380 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Hulbert with Councillor Mayne substituting in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.4.

381 MINUTES

On the motion of Councillor Nichols, seconded by Councillor P Hall, it was

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

382 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

383 DRAFT GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2013/14

The Commission was provided with the draft 2013/14 General Fund budget. During discussion, the following was raised:

- The future of the New Homes Bonus was queried and concern was expressed about the potential for the scheme to end in two years' time and the impact this would have on Council and Parish funding. The Chief Executive agreed to seek clarity over future funding from DCLG.
- The implications of the Council Tax Support Grant were questioned in light of the proposals to freeze council tax for the fifth year running. Members were informed that to increase it by 2% or more would require a referendum, which would cost more than the revenue from the Council Tax. The importance of keeping a balance between supporting the most vulnerable and keeping Council Tax increases to a minimum was reiterated.
- Concern was expressed regarding the additional work of having to chase and take action against debtors due to the change in the way benefits are paid.
- A Member asked for the monetary value of the 18.5% pension contribution and officers agreed to look into it and provide a response.

Members requested that a meeting be arranged as soon as possible to agree future plans regarding the Council Tax Scheme for 2014/15 and future Council Tax levels.

384 DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2013/14

Members were provided with the draft Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2013/14. It was noted that the budget was linked to the Council's priorities and business plans and had also undergone consultation with tenants. A Member suggested that consultation with those already in council properties was not the most representative as they would favour improvements to their homes over the building of new homes.

In response to Members questions, the following was noted:

- An increase in Right to Buy had been seen over the previous quarter;
- Convergence was anticipated during 2015/16;
- The 20% sample for the stock condition survey was an unusually large sample but therefore felt to be more representative. Officers agreed to bring this to the next meeting of the Commission.

385 DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013/14

Consideration was given to the capital programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. Projects such as the Leisure Centre and the sale of Argents Mead site were discussed. A Member raised concerns about the Parish & Community Initiative Fund and his recollection that it was agreed that if a parish had received a grant one year, they couldn't apply again the following year. Officers agreed to find out whether this was the case.

Further concern was expressed regarding the reduction in the Disabled Facilities Grants in 2014/15 and the risk of creating a backlog again. The Commission was reminded of the valuable work it had done in scrutinising the Disabled Facilities Grant situation which had led to an increase in funding and a reduction in the waiting times, but it now appeared to be reverting to less than its original funding.

A report on Disabled Facilities Grants was requested for the next meeting of the Commission.

386 DRAFT TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

Members received a report which outlined the council's prudential indicators for 2012/13 to 2015/16, including the treasury management strategy statement and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy. Members noted the contents.

387 TREASURY MANAGEMENT THIRD QUARTER UPDATE

Members received this report which had been deferred from the cancelled Finance, Audit & Performance Committee. The reduction in government funding in addition to the lack of interest payable was highlighted.

Councillor Ladkin was absent during this item.

388 UPDATE ON BUSINESS RATES RETENTION & POOLING

Members were informed that there was no information to update at the present time except to confirm that the Council was part of the Leicestershire Pool for 2013/14.

Councillors Batty and Hodgkins and Ladkin were absent during this item.

389 COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR LOCAL PRECEPTING AUTHORITIES

The Scrutiny Commission received a report which informed of financial arrangements for local precepting authorities. Concern was expressed that for larger parish councils, such as Burbage, this would mean a substantial sum of money.

Councillors Batty and Ladkin were absent during this item.

390 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Members were provided with the Council's second quarter position with regard to performance indicators, service improvement plans and corporate risks. This report had been deferred from the cancelled Finance, Audit & Performance Committee.

Concern was expressed regarding the decrease in the number of invoices paid on time. In response it was reported that since bringing the Housing Repairs service in-house there were many more invoices to pay, and when using local businesses and having to pay them within ten working days, if a pay run was missed it was very easy to exceed the recommended time limit. Commitment was given, however, to improving this figure.

With regard to answering calls within 45 seconds, such problems as an increase in calls, the impact of having to train new staff which can take 6 months, and the recent weather conditions were acknowledged.

The Commission wished to congratulate staff on achieving the District Council of the Year Govmetric award for customer satisfaction.

391 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS UPDATE

Members received the six-monthly update on the position regarding Section 106 contributions with a five year claw back clause but that had not been spent within the five year period, and those that were over four years old but not beyond the five year threshold.

Members expressed concern about two particular sites – Oxford Street, Earl Shilton, and Westfield Road, Hinckley, and it was requested that a further report be brought to the next meeting detailing the situation surrounding these two contributions.

392 PLANNING APPEAL DECISIONS

The Commission was informed of the Planning and Enforcement Appeals which had been determined and found against the Local Planning Authority since the last update. Concern was expressed with regard to different Inspectors using different approaches for calculating the five year housing land supply. It was suggested that legal advice be sought on challenging the decision.

393 SIGNING UP TO CLIMATE LOCAL

The Commission received a report which sought to advise Members of the Local Authority Climate Change declaration initiative and to discuss signing up to it. It was noted that it would work on the previous Action Plan and would not necessitate a second plan. Members supported signing up to Climate Local.

394 SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2012-13

Members were presented with the 2012-13 work programme. It was noted that those items agreed at this meeting would be added to the work programme.

395 MINUTES OF MEETING MONDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2012 OF FINANCE, AUDIT & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Finance, Audit & Performance Committee were noted.

396 MINUTES OF MEETING MONDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2012 OF BARWELL & EARL SHILTON SCRUTINY GROUP

The minutes of the Barwell & Earl Shilton Scrutiny Group were noted. It was suggested that the group should have some input into the consideration of the Planning application for Barwell SUE.

(The Meeting closed at 8.45 pm)

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CHAIRMAN