

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

13 DECEMBER 2018 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mr KWP Lynch – Vice-Chairman

Mr DC Bill MBE, Mr SL Bray, Mr WJ Crooks, Mr DW MacDonald, Mr RB Roberts,
Mr BE Sutton, Mr R Ward and Mr HG Williams

Also in attendance: Councillor MB Cartwright, Councillor M Hall and Councillor E Hollick

Officers in attendance: Bill Cullen, Julie Kenny, Rebecca Owen, Rob Parkinson and
Madeline Shellard

303 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Camamile.

304 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Roberts, seconded by Councillor Bill and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed and
signed by the chairman.

305 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

306 UNIVERSAL CREDIT

The Scrutiny Commission was updated on universal credit and its impact on current tenant debt levels. It was noted that there were 404 council tenants in receipt of universal credit, and tenant debt levels had increased by 15% since the introduction of universal credit. Members heard that officers had developed close working relationships with the DWP to proactively support tenants. Helen Cole from the DWP expressed the concern that it was more difficult to engage with the most vulnerable tenants as they had less contact with them than those actively seeking work.

Councillor Crooks entered the meeting at 6.40pm.

A member asked whether, along with the increase in debt and the number of evictions due to rent arrears, the increased demand for foodbanks could be attributed to universal credit. In response, Ms Cole explained that there were still delays whilst claims were being processed and this was where foodbanks were often used.

It was noted that, where it was clear that a recipient of universal credit was not in a position to manage their budgeting, direct payments could be set up. This had been the case for 170 tenants. In response to a member's question, assurance was provided that officers started to work with tenants as soon as they started to get into arrears to try to resolve issues as soon as possible.

It was moved by Councillor Lay, seconded by Councillor Bill, and

RESOLVED –

- (i) The positive work of HBBC and DWP staff be noted;
- (ii) The inadequacy of universal credit for some groups of residents be recognised;
- (iii) A further report be brought to the Scrutiny Commission on the impact of universal credit for non-council tenants;
- (iv) The current level of debt be monitored.

307 AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY

Members received the annual position in relation to delivery of affordable housing in the borough. It was noted that recent 100% affordable housing schemes had had a positive impact on the statistics.

In relation to the extension of right to buy to tenants of registered providers, it was reported that a pilot was just starting in the midlands. Members expressed concern that this would affect supply of social housing in the borough.

A member asked whether there had been many challenges to developer contributions for affordable housing over the previous six months on viability grounds. In response it was stated that the situation had improved and, whilst there were still some challenges, the council was now more robust in its response.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

308 PLANNING APPEALS UPDATE

The Scrutiny Commission was updated on progress on appeals over the previous six months. Officers and members were congratulated on success at recent appeals. It was requested that future reports include whether appeals against member decisions at Planning Committee resulted from decisions in accordance with or against officer recommendations.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the report be noted;
- (ii) future reports include whether member decisions were made in accordance with or against officer recommendations.

309 SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2016-18

In considering the work programme, it was requested that an update on healthcare provision in Hinckley be brought to a future meeting. It was also suggested that information on a registered housing provider be scrutinised due to the number of complaints made by its tenants. It was noted that the report on adoption of roads was yet to be programmed. The chairman of Finance & Performance Scrutiny requested that a report on rent arrears be scheduled for that body.

310 MINUTES OF FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY

The minutes of Finance & Performance Scrutiny were noted.

311 MATTERS FROM WHICH THE PUBLIC MAY BE EXCLUDED

On the motion of Councillor Lynch seconded by Councillor Crooks, it was

RESOLVED – in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 5 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12A of that Act.

312 MARTINSHAW LANE - REVIEW OF HOUSING PROJECT

Members received the report of the Martinshaw Lane Task & Finish Group. Discussion ensued about the Scrutiny Commission's remit in making recommendations. The following points were raised:

- Paragraph 8.7: The wording should be amended to ensure it was clear that there was no criticism of individuals
- Paragraph 8.14 bullet point 1: The wording should be amended to clarify that HBBC could not adopt the road itself as this was only within the gift of Leicestershire County Council
- Correspondence from October 2017 that had been seen by some members had not been included as it had not been available to the panel or officers
- It should be considered whether a recommendation to the Executive be included in relation to resolution of the outstanding matters not within the Scrutiny Commission's remit
- A public report should be produced which looked at each area and what went well, areas for improvement and recommendations within each section.

Councillor Hall left the meeting at 8.50pm.

A member submitted further information and it was agreed that the panel would meet to review the information and make any amendments to the report as necessary, before bringing back to the Scrutiny Commission.

(The Meeting closed at 9.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN