

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMISSION
18th NOVEMBER 2004 AT 6.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Mr. M.R. Lay - Chairman

Mrs. R. Camamile, Mrs. M.J. Crooks, Mr. R.D. Ellis, Mrs. S. Francks, Mr. K.W.P. Lynch, Mrs. M.L. Sherwin and Mr. J.E. Stanley

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.4 Mr. J.F. Collins also attended the meeting.

Officers in attendance: Mr. I. Bham, Mr. B. Cullen, Mr. G.B. Gethin, Mr. D. Jinks, Mr. S. Jones, Mr. S. Kohli, Ms. J. O'Connor, Mrs. P.I. Pitt, Mr. T.M. Prowse, Mr. P. Reid, Mr. M. Roffey and Mr. D. Tilley.

261 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr. D.C. Bill, Mr. M.A. Hall, Mrs. E.A. Spencer, Mr. K. Vessey and Mr. R. Ward, the former being substituted by Mr. Stanley in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.3.

262 MINUTES (SC25)

On the motion of Mrs. Camamile, seconded by Mr. Ellis, it was

RESOLVED - the minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2004 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

263 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs. Camamile declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Report No. SC28.

264 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA) IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS (SC26)

Members were reminded of the content of the Council's CPA Improvement Plan which sought to address issues raised in the Audit Commission's CPA report and informed of future reporting arrangements to both the Commission and Scrutiny bodies generally.

There then followed a presentation by the Performance & Scrutiny Manager on the development of the Improvement Plan and the respective roles in this of all Members and the scrutiny process.

Mrs. Sherwin entered the meeting at 6.46 p.m.

So far as reporting arrangements to this Commission were concerned Members were agreed as to the vital role for Scrutiny in such process and the Acting Chief Executive indicated that Members would receive regular updates on budget spending on each project.

265 INCREASING THE VITALITY AND ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF OUR TOWN AND VILLAGE CENTRES (SC27)

The Commission was advised of progress with regard to meeting the Council's Corporate Plan priority to increase the vitality of our town and village centres. Whilst being informed that of the nine actions within this priority, six were borough-wide initiatives, Members were of the opinion that there should be continued emphasis on improvements in village centres and called for a comprehensive report as to how these accorded with the community plan, together with an indication as to how town centre proposals such as the Masterplan impacted on the surrounding villages.

Mrs. Camamile, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item withdrew from the meeting at 7.48 p.m., whilst it was considered and voted upon.

266 REDUCTION IN THE BUDGET FOR HOME IMPROVEMENT GRANTS FOR 2004/05 AND A CHANGE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL POLICY FOR 2005/06 (SC28)

Consideration was given to the following decisions taken by the Cabinet on 3rd November which had been called in for scrutiny by Messrs. Bill, Ellis and Lay, having regard to the budget and adequacy of evidence:-

- (a) The current Private Sector Renewal Policy be continued until 1st April 2005 but spending on minor works grants be reduced by £100,000; and
- (b) the new private Sector Renewal Policy for 2005/06 attached to the report of the Head of Environmental Services and which includes a budget of £350,000 for home improvement grants be adopted.

As part of the scrutiny process questions were put to, and issues addressed by, a number of persons present including the Head of Environmental Services and the Manager of Care & Repair (West Leicestershire) Limited. The latter attended at the invitation of the Chairman and tabled suggestions on the proposed savings and the effect of these on older and vulnerable households. In addition to the foregoing, regard was had to the possible serious consequences of the proposals and to the following:

- (1) The need for an impact assessment;
- (2) the Council's statutory obligations to meet Best Value Performance Indicators and decent home standards; and
- (3) the condition of residential accommodation in retail areas.

It was, therefore, moved by Mrs. Francks, seconded by Mrs. Crooks, and

RESOLVED -

- (i) the above mentioned decisions of Cabinet be referred to Council with a recommendation that they be overturned; and
- (ii) Cabinet be advised accordingly.

Mrs. Camamile returned at 8.43 p.m., at which time Mr. Stanley left the meeting.

267 MINUTES OF SELECT COMMITTEE/SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS

Placed before the Commission were the minutes of the following meetings:-

- (a) Housing Stock Options Appraisal Scrutiny Panel - 30th September (SC29).
- (b) Council Services Select Committee - 12th October (SC30).
- (c) Finance & Audit Services Select Committee - 14th October (SC31).

Mr. Stanley returned at 8.46 p.m. and Mrs. Francks left the meeting at 8.47 p.m.

268 MATTERS FROM WHICH THE PUBLIC MAY BE EXCLUDED

On the motion of Mr. Ellis, seconded by Mrs. Crooks, it was

RESOLVED - in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remaining item of business on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 12 of Part I of Schedule 12A of that Act.

269 GROUND CARE (SC32)

Members were informed of the position regarding the Groundcare contract since its inception and operations prior to and since August 2004.

Mrs. Francks returned at 8.53 p.m. and Mr. Collins left at 9.03 p.m. returning at 9.07 p.m.

On the motion of Mr. Ellis, seconded by Mrs. Camamile, it was

RESOLVED -

- (i) The position with regard to the operation and performance of the Groundcare contract be noted; and
- (ii) Cabinet be requested to agree the establishment of a DSO Improvement Board to oversee the review of the Groundcare and refuse services, with particular attention to be paid to the Groundcare service in the first instance.

(The meeting closed at 9.16 p.m.)