

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
4<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2006 AT 6.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Mr. M.R. Lay - Chairman  
Mrs. R. Camamile - Joint Vice-Chairman  
Mr. K.W.P. Lynch - Joint Vice-Chairman

Mr. P.R. Batty, Mr. D.R. Bown, Mrs. D. Finney, Mrs. S. Francks, Mr. D.E. Hinton, Mr. K.A.J. Hunnybun, Mrs. M.L. Sherwin, Mrs. E.A. Spencer and Mr. J.E. Stanley.

Mr M.O. Bevins attended the meeting to present reports SC77, SC78 and SC79.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.4, Mr. N.B.L. Davis and Mrs. R.W. Wright also attended the meeting.

Officers in attendance: Mr. S. Atkinson, Mr. Michael Brymer, Mr. D. Bunker, Ms. J. Carter, Mr. P. Cash, Mr. B. Cullen, Miss R. Owen, Mr. R. Palmer, Mr. T.M. Prowse, Mr. D. Purnell, and Mr. D. Tilley.

Mr. N. Toms from the Audit Commission was also present.

546 APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr. D.C. Bill, Mr. R.D. Ellis, Mr. M.A. Hall and Ms. J.E. Price and the substitution of Mr. D.R. Bown for Mr. Ellis and Mrs. Finney for Mr. Bill authorised in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.3.

547 MINUTES (SC76)

On the motion of Mrs. Spencer, seconded by Mr. Stanley, it was

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

548 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr. Batty declared a personal interest in report SC93 – Neighbourhood Improvements to Council owned Estates, as his wife was a member of Ratby Parish Council. Mr. Hunnybun also declared an interest in the same item as a Ratby Parish Councillor.

Mrs. Camamile and Mrs. Sherwin declared a personal interest in report SC91 – Minutes of the Hinckley and Bosworth Health Scrutiny Subcommittee, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006, as members of the Health Scrutiny Subcommittee.

549 NOTTINGHAM EAST MIDLANDS AIRPORT (NEMA) MASTER PLAN (SC80)

The Committee was informed that the consultation on the NEMA Master Plan would end on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2006, and Members' comments were welcomed.

Under the section of the report headed 'Noise Control', it was questioned why point 3 indicated an increase in penalties for "operations that for *unavoidable* reasons slip into the night period", as it was felt that penalties should be incurred

when the reason was *avoidable*. Members asked for this comment to be passed on. Members also highlighted that there was poor public transport to the airport.

RESOLVED – the above comments be included in the response to NEMA.

550 COUNCIL VISION – PROGRESS IN 2005/06 AND PLANS FOR 2006 – 2011 (CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PLAN) (SC77)

The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive presented a joint report which outlined the end of year performance position for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. It was noted that the Corporate Performance Plan had now been extended to cover five years instead of three, to reflect the more forward-looking ethos of the Council.

With regard to young people, a Member asked if there were plans to develop work with this group in rural areas. In response it was stated that a group of representatives was being put together to look at youth issues and the lack of engagement in rural areas would be addressed. Some Members felt that they had not been kept informed about the work of the Youth Council, but were notified that they would be making a presentation to business Council on 9<sup>th</sup> May.

Concern was expressed about the Pilot Neighbourhood Warden Service, and the difficulty of having only three wardens to cover the entire borough. It was stated that as part of the budget workshops for 2007/08 later in the year, an extension of the Service would be considered. It was also noted that other planned changes would be included in this consideration, such as the possible increase in the number of generic wardens due to the onset of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement.

Concerns were raised with regard to community safety, and the Commission was reminded that this would be the subject of scrutiny as part of the Work Programme over the next few months.

Customer Service was highlighted as a weak area in the authority as allegedly calls were not answered, and return calls were not received when promised. The Commission was informed about the new Contact Centre, which was intended to act as a 'one-stop-shop', resolving 80% of enquiries in one phone call by March 2007. It was felt that the main telephone number for the Council should be changed, as members of the public now had no confidence in the number.

RESOLVED – the report be noted and the concerns expressed by the Scrutiny Commission be considered and addressed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

551 CORPORATE ASSESSMENT REPORT 2006 (SC78)

Consideration was given to a report which advised Members of the findings of the Corporate Assessment by the Audit Commission, for which the Council volunteered in December 2005.

Concern was expressed about the identified weaknesses in political leadership, and also about the comment in the report that the Community Safety Partnership was working well, which was felt to be a contradiction to comments made during discussion on the previous item.

A Member highlighted the issue of rural areas and officers stated they were committed to improving rural engagement and were currently working on putting together a rural summit and rural regeneration strategy.

Concern was also expressed that the report had identified a lack of Member involvement, and in response it was stated that initiatives were being created to engage Members.

Members asked that an updated report on the progress of those areas of concern be presented to the Commission later in the year.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the actions being taken to address the areas for improvement be supported;
- (ii) a report on the progress of those areas of concern be brought to the Scrutiny Commission later in the year.

552 ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2004/05 (SC79)

Mr. Toms from the Audit Commission summarised the content of the Annual Audit and Inspection letter, which covered areas of performance, governance and accounts. In general, he stated that areas that were already performing well had improved, but that in comparison with other authorities, there had been a decline overall during 2004/05 since 2003.

It was requested that the Council Services Select Committee should continue to receive regular reviews on performance of the authority's services, such as refuse collection and grass cutting, as these are the aspects that members of the public use to judge the Council.

Mrs. Finney left the meeting at 7.45p.m. and returned at 7.55p.m.

Officers stated that improvement targets had been set, and that performance would now be managed rather than simply monitored. Members were reassured that the allocation of resources had been looked into, and should an underspend be identified at the end of the financial year, this would be earmarked for the areas that needed to improve.

Members were concerned about the overall decline in performance in comparison with other authorities, and it was suggested that the outturn of performance for 2005/06 and the position over the next six months were critical in judging the authority's ability to improve.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

553 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME – FINAL DRAFT (SC81)

Members gave consideration to the final draft of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2005/2006 and the Work Programme for 2006/2007.

The Commission was informed that a questionnaire had been sent to all Members, asking for their opinion on the success of the Scrutiny function and their expectations for its future success. A 70% return had been achieved, and overall these responses had been positive.

Members were reminded of the forthcoming Community Safety investigation, and it was agreed that plans for this would be discussed between the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the Commission.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the final draft of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2005/06 be endorsed and reported to Council on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2006;
- (ii) the items identified for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be endorsed and reported to Council on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2006;
- (iii) the Select Committees receive their Work Programmes for discussion and approval at the first meeting scheduled in the municipal year;
- (iv) the approved Annual Report and Work Programme be circulated to all Members, Senior Officers, key partners and the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

554 CABINET FORWARD PLAN (SC82)

Members were given the opportunity to identify issues from the Forward Plan that they wished to consider at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

It was agreed that the report 'Revision of Section 106 Developer Contributions' be considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 15<sup>th</sup> June before a decision being made by Cabinet.

RESOLVED -

- (i) the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted;
- (ii) the report 'Revision of Section 106 Developer Contributions' be brought before the Scrutiny Commission on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

555 MINUTES OF SELECT COMMITTEES / SCRUTINY PANELS

Minutes of the following meetings were agreed:

- (i) E-Government Scrutiny Panel, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2006 (SC83);
- (ii) Finance and Audit Services Select Committee, 6<sup>th</sup> February (SC84);
- (iii) Housing Task Group, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2006 (SC85);
- (iv) Finance and Audit Services Select Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2006 (SC86);
- (v) Finance and Audit Services Select Committee, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006 (SC87);
- (vi) Housing Task Group, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2006 (SC88);
- (vii) Council Services Select Committee, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2006 (SC89);
- (viii) Housing Task Group, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2006 (SC90).

556 MINUTES OF HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH HEALTH SCRUTINY SUBCOMMITTEE, 30<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2006 (SC91)

The Scrutiny Commission received the minutes of the Hinckley and Bosworth Health Scrutiny Subcommittee, held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

RESOLVED – the minutes be noted.

557 CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS – DRAINAGE CLEARANCE

This item had been included on the agenda at the request of Mr. P.R. Batty. He explained that he would like to see a report about the cost of providing the drainage clearance service with regard to private domestic properties, due to concerns he had about the work of the authority's subcontractors. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the Council Services Select Committee to consider the item.

RESOLVED – a report on drainage clearance arrangements be presented to a future meeting of the Council Services Select Committee.

558 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 2005 – OVERSPEND (SC92)

The Chief Executive presented a report which was supplementary to that considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006. The report provided additional information arising from further investigations into the overspend on the provision of Christmas Lights for 2005.

It was reiterated that there had been no warning of an overspend through the financial system due to the correct procedures not having been followed therefore, officers and Members were not aware until February of this year. The problem of officers leaving the authority and not providing information to their successors was highlighted as another issue which had contributed to the overspend.

Concern was expressed that the funding for the Christmas Lights in Hinckley had come from the whole of the Borough, not from special expenses.

Generally, Members felt that the report addressed most of the problems identified and that lessons had been learned about the role of portfolio holders, financial management and weaknesses, and the relationship with contractors. It was also suggested that Portfolio Holders should liaise with the Head of Service rather than with more junior members of staff.

RESOLVED – it be recommended to Cabinet that:

- (i) the recommendations in the original report be supported;
- (ii) the line of communication for all Portfolio Holders be to the relevant Head of Service;
- (iii) Heads of Service provide a monthly financial overview on the services within their remit to the relevant Portfolio Holder.

559 MATTER FROM WHICH THE PUBLIC MAY BE EXCLUDED

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 paragraphs 3 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12A of that Act.

560 NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENTS TO COUNCIL OWNED ESTATES (SC93)

Members received a report which advised of requests received for improvements to common areas on Council owned estates, and which sought agreement of criteria to form the basis of supporting future scheme requests.

RESOLVED – the recommendations contained within the report be supported.

(The meeting closed at 9.15 p.m.)