

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

8 JANUARY 2009 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mrs R Camamile - Joint Vice-Chairman
Mr P Hall - Joint Vice-Chairman

Mr DM Gould, Mrs A Hall, Mr DW Inman, Mr CG Joyce, Mr C Ladkin, Mr R Mayne, Dr JR Moore, Mr K Morrell, Mr K Nichols and Mrs S Sprason.

Officers in attendance: Mr S Atkinson, Mr D Bunker, Mrs T Darke, Miss L Horton, Mr S Kohli, Miss R Owen and Mr TM Prowse.

346 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr Batty, Mr Bessant and Mrs Witherford with the substitution of Mr Mayne for Mrs Witherford authorised in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.3.

347 **MINUTES (SC54)**

On the motion of Mr Nichols, seconded by Mrs Hall, it was

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Dr Moore arrived at 6.31pm.

During confirmation of the minutes, Mr Ladkin said he had asked a question at the previous meeting, to which officers said they would respond by email, but he had received no response. He repeated the question as follows, and was promised a response within three working days:

“Given the movement of the economy into recession since the appointment of the Tin Hat Partnership as developers of the Bus Station Site, what is the current position with regard to the financial viability of this consortium?”

348 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared at this stage.

349 CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL (SC55)

The Scrutiny Commission received a report which had been referred by the Finance & Audit Services Select Committee in December 2008 on the position regarding Concessionary Travel for the year 2008/09.

It was reported that the original estimates received from the County Council in autumn 2007 indicated that the cost of the new concessions would be in the range of £400,000 to £500,000. The budget for 2007/08 which funded the previous local scheme was £612,000. This budget was retained in order to provide some headroom against the higher estimate of £500,000. This estimate from the County Council changed in October 2008 to just over £760,000 and then in November 2008 to just under £880,000. Members were informed that revised estimates had been prepared for the remainder of this financial year and a provisional estimate of £900,000 for 2009/10.

Members were informed that the reasons for this increase had been challenged on several occasions but no explanations were forthcoming. It was explained that one factor may be the increase in bus passes issued in the Borough which had risen from 2,600 in February 2006 to 16,000 in September 2008. It was also felt that the increase in the County Council's charges for the scheme was not an equal percentage throughout all districts. It could not therefore be claimed that the increase was due to rising fuel costs as the increase for Hinckley and Bosworth was disproportionate to the rest of the Leicestershire Districts.

Members enquired about the possibility of undertaking an independent review of scheme, and in response officers stated that other districts had expressed an interest in a joint review.

It was felt that the current situation was unacceptable as the districts were funding the scheme but were receiving no risk assurance, and that more work should be done to achieve some assurances and pressure should be exerted upon the County Council to present the districts with an explanation about how the current situation arose.

It was proposed by Mr Lay, seconded by Mr Nichols and

RESOLVED –

- (i) A letter be written to Leicestershire County Council requesting an explanation and setting out the next steps should a response not be received;
- (ii) Should a satisfactory response not be received from the County Council, an independent review of the Concessionary Travel scheme be undertaken and the possibility of a joint district review be explored.

Mr and Mrs Hall left the meeting at 7.13pm.

350 ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY – INTERIM REPORT (SC56)

Members received a report which provided a further update on the work commissioned on behalf of the Scrutiny Commission to inform and scope an anti poverty strategy for Hinckley and Bosworth.

It was reported that a stakeholder meeting had been held and although this had not been well attended we were now in a position to draft the strategy which would go out to consultation when endorsed by the Commission. It was noted that the final report of Ci Research and a draft strategy would be brought to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

It was suggested that anti-poverty strategies produced by other countries should be looked at as they had some useful ideas. In response to a Members' request, it was confirmed that Ci Research had looked at other strategies, authorities and initiatives in the course of their work.

Mr Joyce left the meeting at 7.20pm.

Members welcomed the report and asked that these comments be taken into consideration when drafting the strategy.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the report be noted and endorsed;
- (ii) the final report by Ci Research and draft anti poverty strategy be brought to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

Mr Joyce returned at 7.23pm.

351 CPA RESULT

Members were referred to the report which was presented to Council on 15 December and which gave the result of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Attention was drawn in particular to comments in the report about the Overview and Scrutiny function of the authority, which were all positive.

RESOLVED – the comments be noted and previous and current Members of the Scrutiny Commission and scrutiny support officers be thanked.

352 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS (SC57)

The Scrutiny Commission was informed of the position in respect of the Section 106 contributions that had not been spent within the five year period and therefore may be clawed back, and those that were between four and five years.

It was reported that work was being undertaken with Parish Councils to try to use the £11,000 available, and a database was accessible to Parishes to

allow them to see the money available. It was noted that there were controls in place to ensure parishes intended to spend the money appropriately.

RESOLVED – the report be noted.

353 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09 (SC58)

Members gave consideration to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/09.

RESOLVED – the Work Programme be agreed.

354 FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL DECISIONS (SC59)

Members received the Forward Plan of Executive and Council decisions. Concern was expressed with regard to the Climate Change Strategy as a decision was due to be made by Council on 24 February, but the Scrutiny Environment Group was not due to meet again until March and would not have finished looking at the strategy until then. It was requested that the timetable be examined and amended if necessary.

It was noted that the Medium Term Financial Strategy would come to the Scrutiny Commission in April and the Transport Framework Assessment SPD had also been deferred to that meeting.

RESOLVED – the Forward Plan and comments above be noted.

355 MINUTES OF SELECT COMMITTEES

Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (i) Barwell & Earl Shilton Scrutiny Working Group, 6 October 2008 (SC60);
- (ii) Finance & Audit Services Select Committee, 3 November 2008 (SC61);
- (iii) Council Services Select Committee, 13 November 2008 (SC62);
- (iv) Scrutiny Environment Group, 9 December 2008 (SC63).

(The meeting closed at 7.49 pm)