

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

2 APRIL 2009 AT 6.45 PM

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

Mr PR Batty, Mr PS Bessant, Mr DM Gould, Mrs A Hall, Mr DW Inman, Mr CG Joyce, Mr C Ladkin, Dr JR Moore, Mr K Nichols, Mrs S Sprason and Mrs B Witherford.

Officers in attendance: Mr S Atkinson, Mr Michael Brymer, Mrs S Crossfield, Ms E Grant, Mr R Grantham, Miss L Horton, Mr M Hryniw, Mrs B Imison, Mr S Kohli, Mr D Moore, Miss R Owen, Mr R Palmer, Mr D Potter, Mr TM Prowse and Mrs J Puffet.

486 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr Morrell.

487 MINUTES (SC75)

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

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

488 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs Hall declared a personal interest in report SC79 as a Parish Councillor and member of Burbage Heritage Group. Messrs P Hall, Inman and Lay also declared a personal interest in this report as Parish Councillors.

489 URGENT ITEM – COUNCIL DECISION ON THE SALE OF LAND AT BRODICK ROAD

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission had requested that the sale of land at Brodick Road be discussed further to the decision of Council earlier in the week not to sell the land. It was explained that the aim of this discussion was not to review the decision but to consider whether the decision exposed the Council to added risk. Members were reminded that as the decision had been taken in private session, discussions from that meeting remained private.

Mrs Camamile arrived at 6.55pm.

The Executive Member for Finance referred to his claims at the Council meeting that he had not been sufficiently briefed on the date of termination of the agreement with Morris Homes. He said that he had since been made

aware and presented with previous reports (of which members of the Scrutiny Commission had also had sight) which contained the relevant information with regard to the option granted to Morris Homes. He stated that regretted that he had overlooked this information and the opportunity to terminate the agreement with Morris Homes earlier – in September 2008.

With regard to the impact of the decision on the budget, the Director of Finance explained that the Capital Programme would now be £1m short of funds and that savings would have to be found from other projects or the programme kept intact which would give rise to Revenue implications of £55,000 at best and £80,000 at worse if the Council was to borrow £1m to fund the current capital programme. Members were reminded that the budget and Capital Programme had already been set but that if this decision had been made earlier the shortage of funds could have been budgeted for. It was stated that the Capital Programme would be revised within the next few weeks before the Medium Term Financial Strategy is presented to Council on 28 April.

In terms of the legal risks, it was reported that the only legal responsibility was under the pre-emption agreement and that there were no strong grounds for Morris Homes to make any claims. As such, the only risk to the Council would be in defending any claims made and the requirement of the pre-emption agreement to offer Morris Homes an alternative site. The Director of Finance stated that the requirement to offer another site to Morris Homes in the current economic climate when land values had diminished and were at the lowest levels for some time had the risk of further diluting the Council's asset base.

Mr Bessant left the meeting at 7.40pm. Messrs Bill and Lynch left at 7.43pm.

#### 490 CONSULTATION RESULTS – CITIZENS' PANEL – WINTER 2008/09 (SC76)

The Scrutiny Commission was informed of the findings of the citizens' panel survey conducted in December 2008. The key results from the survey were presented to the Commission.

Mr Bessant returned to the meeting at 7.46pm.

During the presentation and discussion on the report, the following points were raised:

- The local press was the greatest influence on public perception of the Council;
- The spread of members of the citizens' panel was representative of the population both geographically and demographically.

With regard to litter picking, Members raised concerns with regard to the A46, and in response it was explained that there was joint responsibility for cleansing along this route. Members felt that there was still a lot of litter on this road and that the matter should be looked into. Litter picking near to schools was also discussed and it was confirmed that a report on proposed changes was planned which would hopefully recommend increasing litter picking near schools.

RESOLVED –

- (i) Officers look into the issues raised with regard to litter picking on the A46;
- (ii) the results be considered in conjunction with the development of Business Delivery Plans.

491 ANNUAL REPORT – RURAL AREAS REVIEW (SC77)

Members were updated on the achievements and outcomes arising from the annual rural areas review 2008/09. It was stated that the Executive Member for Rural Affairs held six-monthly monitoring meetings with regard to this and that the majority of the recommendations arising from the original review had been completed or had become an integral part of the Council's work programme through Business Development Plans.

It was suggested that the focus of the review should now be examined in light of the current Corporate Plan, with the Executive Member driving this. Members of the Scrutiny Commission supported this suggestion but asked that the Scrutiny Commission continues to receive an annual report.

With regard to services in the rural areas, it was requested that Parish Clerks receive schedules of grounds maintenance and street cleansing so they could inform the community when these activities were planned and monitor and provide feedback following the activity. Officers agreed to publish the new schedules when the service review had been completed.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the Executive Member for Rural Affairs be RECOMMENDED to examine the focus of the review in light of the current Corporate Plan;
- (ii) annual reports continue to be presented to the Scrutiny Commission.

492 HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (SC78)

The Scrutiny Commission was informed of changes to the Hinckley & Bosworth Community Safety Partnership's Crime and Disorder Reduction plan 2008/2011 made through its statutory annual refresh and of the Council's Beacon Round 10 award. During presentation of this report reference was made to how a small authority with limited resources can achieve a safe place with innovative schemes and partnership working.

Members congratulated officers on the report and the success of the partnership. It was hoped that schemes such as neighbourhood watch would be adopted in other areas of the borough as they had been so successful in Burbage, but it was noted that the ongoing cost of such schemes was high. Members expressed their gratitude to the Community Safety Manager and Inspector Martyn Ball of Hinckley LPU for their hard work and success.

RESOLVED – the Partnership’s refreshed plan for 2009/10 and related priority action plans be endorsed.

493 PARISH AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FUND (SC79)

At this juncture, Mr Batty declared a personal interest in this item as a Parish Councillor.

Members were provided with a presentation which showed how some of the Parish & Community Initiative Fund had been used by parishes previously, and outlined the Assessment Panel’s recommendations for the awarding of this year’s funds. It was noted that 18 applications had been accepted (two had been withdrawn) totalling £263,000 – the Council’s contribution to this would be £84,000.

The Executive Member for Rural Affairs said he would like to carry the underspend forward and the Scrutiny Commission supported this. Officers confirmed that they would not reduce the budget as a result of the underspend.

RESOLVED – the Scrutiny Commission

- (i) supports the proposals made by the Assessment Panel; and
- (ii) RECOMMENDS:
  - (a) that SLB approves these proposals;
  - (b) that the underspend be carried forward.

Mr Crooks left the meeting at 8.38pm and Mrs Hall left at 8.40pm.

494 ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY (SC80)

The Scrutiny Commission was presented with the final draft of the Hinckley & Bosworth Economic Regeneration Strategy 2009-2012.

Concern was expressed with regard to the current economic climate and businesses that may be struggling as a result. It was suggested that a development agency-type initiative be investigated by which programmes could be facilitated by the Authority but run by commercial (perhaps local) companies, drawing on government initiatives. Members supported this suggestion.

Mrs Hall returned to the meeting at 8.45pm.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the publication of the Strategy be supported;
- (ii) the support that may be provided by the Borough Council be investigated.

Mrs Camamile left the meeting at 8.47pm.

495 HINCKLEY TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SC81)

Members were presented with proposed amendments to the above document which had been prepared jointly with Leicestershire County Council and consultants White Young Green. It was noted that the document supported the current Area Action Plan and had been through working groups and would soon require approval by Council.

Mrs Camamile returned to the meeting at 8.50pm.

Members highlighted the importance of improving cycle routes and looking at initiatives such as 'cycle parks' due to the need to change transport culture.

Mr Batty left the meeting at 8.49pm and returned at 8.51pm.

Members were asked to feed any comments back to Richard Palmer within ten days of this meeting.

RESOLVED – the report be endorsed and the SPD be RECOMMENDED for adoption by Council.

496 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (SC82)

Further to a request at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Commission to hold a review of the Local Development Scheme process, Members were provided with some initial information on the Scheme, in particular the timetable for consultation and examination of the Development Plan Documents currently being prepared. Officers explained that there were many aspects to consider including the Planning Inspectorate timetable, and that the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant was awarded according to meeting milestones.

It was felt that there were two aspects which needed investigating, firstly whether the process was fair, and secondly if it had been followed. It was suggested that a working group be set up to look at the issues. It was also requested that the LDF working group be reformed, although it was noted that this was not a working group of Scrutiny and therefore the Commission could only recommend that it be reconvened.

It was agreed that Mr Bessant would chair the working group, and that it would consist of five Councillors including the Chairman.

RESOLVED –

- (i) a working group be set up, chaired by Mr Bessant along with four other Members;
- (ii) the LDF working group be RECOMMENDED to reform.

497 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

The Scrutiny Commission were informed of the Councillor Call for Action which came into force on 1 April 2009 and which allowed for Councillors to call for a Scrutiny debate on a topic of neighbourhood concern. It was stated that a full report and procedure would be brought to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

Mr Inman left the meeting at 9.21pm.

498 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORKSHOP

Members were informed that a Scrutiny planning and training evening would be held at the Council offices on 30 April at 6.30pm, with a buffet available from 6.00pm.

499 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09 (SC84)

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

The Chairman reported that she had met with representatives of Blaby District Council's scrutiny function to discuss joint scrutiny. It was also suggested that a public transport review be added to next year's work programme.

RESOLVED – the Work Programme be agreed.

500 FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL DECISIONS (SC84)

Members received the Forward Plan of Executive and Council decisions.

RESOLVED – the Forward Plan be noted.

501 MINUTES OF SELECT COMMITTEES

Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (i) Council Services Select Committee, 28 January 2009 (SC86);
- (ii) Finance & Audit Services Select Committee, 16 February 2009 (SC87).

(The meeting closed at 9.29 pm)