

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

7 MAY 2009 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mr P Hall - Joint Vice-Chairman

Mr PR Batty, Mr PS Bessant, Mrs A Hall, Mr DW Inman, Mr CG Joyce, Dr JR Moore, Mr K Morrell, Mr K Nichols, Mrs J Richards, Mrs S Sprason and Mrs BM Witherford.

Officers in attendance: Mr S Atkinson, Miss L Horton, Miss R Owen and Mr TM Prowse.

554 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mrs R Camamile, Mr DM Gould and Mr C Ladkin with the substitution of Mrs Richards for Mrs Camamile authorised in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.3.

555 MINUTES (SC88)

It was acknowledged that the minutes should have stated that Messrs DC Bill and KWP Lynch were also in attendance at the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 2 April 2009.

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

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2009 be confirmed subject to the abovementioned insertion and signed by the Chairman.

556 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

557 QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER

It was reported that this item would be deferred to the following meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.

558 ALLOCATION OF HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT (SC89)

Following consideration by Council of this report, the Scrutiny Commission had asked to receive more information with regard to the process and criteria for allocating the monies received through this grant.

Mr Morrell arrived at 6.35pm.

It was explained that the grant was awarded dependant upon performance. During discussion the following points were highlighted:

- Part of the money would be used to fund pen-tablets for staff to be able to work more remotely. This scheme was being trialled until October 2009;
- Work had been undertaken with Parish Councils to encourage them to exchange information electronically. A small amount of funding could be obtained by Parish Councils from Leicestershire County Council to go towards purchasing IT equipment;
- The need for site location plans in Planning Committee so Members can easily identify the location of the site in relation to the surrounding area;
- The Housing and Planning Delivery Grant was not ringfenced but the purpose was to support the delivery of housing and planning and was subject to external audit checks.

It was noted that there was no specific guidance with regard to allocating the funding to particular projects, but that pressures were identified by staff through the year which were then considered by officers in consultation with the Executive Member. It was suggested that this information should come to the Scrutiny Commission so Members were aware of where the funding had been allocated, and which proposals for funding had not been successful. It was also suggested that a list of those proposals which had not received funding this year be circulated for information.

Dr Moore arrived at 6.56pm.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the recommendations for spending the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant, including rejected funding projects, be brought to the Scrutiny Commission in future years before a final decision is made;
- (ii) Members be provided with a list of all applications for this year, for information;
- (iii) the report be noted.

559 ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY (SC90)

The Scrutiny Commission was presented with the final draft of the Anti Poverty Strategy and accompanying action plans for Hinckley and Bosworth.

During discussion on the action plan, the following points were raised:

- The self-serve stations in the reception at the Council Offices and in Markfield which would help people to access the Council's services electronically, enabling them to access benefits advice and calculator on the Council's website;

- The need to produce information in a range of languages. It was noted that information was currently available in eight languages and that there was also a translation and interpretation service provided by Leicestershire County Council which could be used;
- The success of Leicester City Council's Passport to Leisure Scheme which made sport and leisure accessible to those on low income rather than those under 16 or over 60, who may not be most in need of such support. In response it was noted that free swimming for these two groups was a national scheme;
- The need to promote the provision of loft insulation grants to the private sector;
- The close monitoring of the mortgage support schemes which were only recently implemented, and the need to promote these schemes;
- The availability of fact sheets to provide useful information, which could also be handed out by Councillors when asked;
- The need to promote adult education in areas which are not so affluent. In response officers reported that they were awaiting action plans and input from the college;
- The need for rigorous monitoring of the Strategy.

It was moved by Dr Moore and seconded by Mr Lay that a discounted leisure scheme be explored. This motion was CARRIED.

In response to questions raised previously, it was noted that a Credit Union approach was being explored, along with hosting flea markets and car boot sales. It was agreed that these be noted at the back of the action plan. Members asked that the problem of loan sharks be investigated and that the possibility of sponsoring or hosting a job fair be explored.

The Head of Corporate and Scrutiny Services was thanked for her hard work on this project.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the work undertaken to date be noted and endorsed;
- (ii) the Draft Anti Poverty Strategy and Action Plan be approved and RECOMMENDED to Council for adoption;
- (iii) a discounted leisure pass scheme be explored;
- (iv) the other initiatives noted above be explored.

560 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (SC91)

Members were presented with information regarding the new Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) process which had come into force on 1 April 2009 and provided a procedure for invoking the process. It was explained that CCfA should be used as a last resort and must be an issue which affected all or part of a Member's ward and could not be vexatious or discriminatory or with regard to quasi-judicial matters including planning and licensing. Should a CCfA issue be brought to the Scrutiny Commission, the Commission would then decide what action to take, for example if it would be appropriate to undertake a review.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the report be noted and principles contained therein be agreed;
- (ii) the Councillor Call for Action procedure be RECOMMENDED to the Executive for adoption.

561 UPDATE ON CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL

It was noted that there was no further information on concessionary travel but that joint scrutiny with Blaby District Council was being pursued.

562 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

Feedback from the previous week's Overview and Scrutiny workshop was given and it was agreed that Members be provided with a full list of suggested topics for consideration which arose from the workshop and that the draft work programme for 2009/10 be included with the Annual Report.

RESOLVED –

- (i) Members be provided with a full list of topics suggested at the workshop;
- (ii) the draft 2009/10 work programme be attached to the Annual Report which would be presented to the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission in June.

563 FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL DECISIONS (SC92)

Members received the Forward Plan of Executive and Council decisions. It was felt that the report on the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant should have been highlighted to come to the Scrutiny Commission before a decision being made by Council. It was noted that the LDF Site Allocations DPD report had been delayed from Council in June.

RESOLVED – the Forward Plan be noted.

564 MINUTES OF SELECT COMMITTEES

Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (i) Finance & Audit Services Select Committee, 16 March 2009 (SC93);
- (ii) Council Services Select Committee, 19 March 2009 (SC94);
- (iii) Scrutiny Environment Group, 6 April 2009 (SC95).

(The meeting closed at 8.25 pm)