

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

30 JULY 2009 AT 6.30 PM

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

Mr PR Batty, Mr PS Bessant, Mrs S Francks, Mr DM Gould, Mrs A Hall, MR DW Inman, Mr CG Joyce, Dr JR Moore, Mr K Morrell, Mrs S Sprason, Mr BE Sutton and Mrs BM Witherford.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.4, Mr R Ward also attended the meeting. Mr MB Cartwright attended on the invitation of the Chairman to present the report of the ICT Scrutiny Panel.

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

113 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mrs Camamile and Mr Ladkin with the substitution of Mr Bessant for Mrs Camamile authorised in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.3.

114 MINUTES (SC13)

It was noted that Mr Inman had submitted an apology for the previous meeting which had been omitted from the minutes. On the motion of Mrs Hall, seconded by Mrs Francks, it was

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman subject to the above amendment.

115 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

116 PRESENTATION ON CREDIT UNIONS FOR LEICESTER

George Puszczynski, General Manager of Clockwise Credit Union, gave a presentation on how Credit Unions operate and the benefits to customers and the community.

Mr Bessant arrived at 6.42pm.

Members questioned and discussed the Credit Union's criteria for approving customers and the level of debt write-off, and it was noted that since Clockwise had been set up in 2006 £1.5m had been lent and only £50,000 had been written off. Mr Puszczynski felt that this was firstly due to stringent checks on people's ability to repay loans before agreeing them and also because debtors were contacted as soon as their payment was missed.

Mr Gould arrived at 6.47pm.

Mr Puszczynski reported that despite using volunteers, they were still reliant on funding to be able to continue operating. He advised that £750,000 would be required to set up a Credit Union.

Members were keen to further examine the possibility of a Credit Union serving Hinckley & Bosworth and asked the Strategic Leadership Board to prepare a report for the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission with regard to this. It was felt that it would be more advantageous to work with a Credit Union already in existence rather than setting up a new one locally. Mr Puszczynski was thanked for his attendance and presentation.

RESOLVED – a report be prepared by SLB for the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission to examine the possibility of having a Credit Union in Hinckley & Bosworth.

117 ICT SCRUTINY PANEL AND MEMBERS' IT PROJECT (SC25)

Councillor Cartwright as Chairman of the ICT Scrutiny Panel updated the Scrutiny Commission on the work of the Panel particularly with regard to the Members' laptop project. It was explained that the objective of the project was to minimise paper usage and postage and printing costs, but that paper copies of reports and other important documents would still be available on request and that at this stage no Member would be forced to access information only by electronic means. Some Members commented that it was easier to read and refer to lengthy documents on paper rather than on a VDU.

It was noted that there were still two vacancies on the Panel and Members were asked to take the request for nominations back to their groups.

Whilst some Members had reservations about certain aspects of the scheme, for example the need to print out some documents and the difficulty of reading lengthy documents on screen, they supported the report and recommendations contained therein.

RESOLVED –

- (i) Membership of the ICT Scrutiny Panel be noted and the request for nominations to fill the two vacancies be taken back to the groups;
- (ii) Progress on the laptop project be noted;
- (iii) The project be rolled out to Group Leaders and Deputies;

- (iv) Council be RECOMMENDED to give cross-party commitment for electronic delivery of information to Members following the next Borough Council elections in 2011.

Mr Cartwright left at 7.50pm.

118 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP REVIEW (SC14)

The Scrutiny Commission was updated on current performance, challenges and successes in relation to the Hinckley and Bosworth Community Safety Partnership. It was reported that Barwell Community House had opened and also that volunteers from Wykin Community House had been given the Queen's Jubilee Award.

Members asked that Martin Ball's successor be invited to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission. It was confirmed that he had been informed of the work of the Commission and had said he would be happy to attend. It was also noted that a letter of thanks had been sent to Martin Ball.

Concern was expressed with regard to the increase in crime in rural areas and the affects on businesses and the problem of Leicestershire and Warwickshire Police not communicating which caused problems for those living near the border. It was also suggested that the number plate recognition cameras may have pushed crime out into the rural areas. The Chief Executive was asked to take these concerns back to the Community Safety Partnership.

RESOLVED – the report be noted and a further update be received in six months'.

119 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME REVIEW WORKING GROUP (SC15)

Members were advised of the work undertaken by the Local Development Scheme Review Working Group and of the conclusions reached by that group. The Scrutiny Commission was reminded of its original recommendations which included setting up the group but also included a request that the LDF Working Group reconvene to further consider issues relating to the Site Allocations DPD, which had been commenced.

With regard to the timetable for the LDF process, a Member expressed concern with regard to delaying the process further, but in response it was stated that allowing extra time to consider responses would be essential due to the unprecedented number of responses and to allow time to consider the Planning Inspector's report into the Core Strategy.

Mr Ward left at 8.28pm.

RESOLVED

- (i) the Director of Community and Planning Services presents a report to Council making appropriate recommendations for revisions to the Local Development Scheme, in particular recommending an extension to the timescale for submission of

the Site Allocations and Generic Development Control Policies Development Plan Document to the Secretary of State;

- (ii) arrangements be made for Member training sessions / briefing note on the Local Development Framework Process, to emphasise the reasons (other than financial) for proceeding to the current timetable;
- (iii) Scrutiny Commission recommends the need, wherever possible, for joint working across the county on strategic planning matters, particularly the identification and provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers;
- (iv) Scrutiny Commission recognises the value of joint commissioning of evidence bases and the role of the county wide Housing, Planning and Infrastructure Group;
- (v) The LDF Working Group be reconvened to reconsider the Council's position on Gypsy and Traveller sites.

120 PLANNING APPEAL DECISIONS

Members were informed that there had been no appeal decisions against the Council in the first four months of the year.

At 8.35pm the meeting adjourned and reconvened at 8.40pm. Mrs Francks and Mr Gould left the meeting at 8.35pm.

121 REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION (SC16 & SC17)

Members were presented with the changes to the Council's Constitution as part of the annual review. It was noted that the document was considerably shorter as some elements had been removed as they were available separately anyway, but in these cases reference to the relevant documents was included.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- Motions without notice: Concern was raised regarding the way motions were dealt with, particularly moving to the vote or next item without discussion with only the agreement of the Chairman. It was noted that this had now been amended in the Constitution to require the consent of the majority;
- 9.30pm guillotine: it was felt that this may limit debate but should be applied from the start of the meeting proper if this was after 6.30pm or that presentations should take place before 6.30pm;
- Amendments to motions: It was noted that the section with regard to the definition of an amendment had been clarified in the Constitution in 15.6(a). It was also suggested that if amendments to motions on notice were substantial, they should be submitted in writing by no later than 5.30pm on the day of the meeting;
- Scope of motions: Members felt that this was limited and that the scope for

topics of motions should be wider as many things affect residents of the Borough indirectly. It was noted that this could be included in 13.3 ('Scope') as a "wellbeing" duty;

- Public questions: A Member asked why there was no provision for public questions at Council, and that this should be allowed on the same terms as Member questions. In response it was explained that operational questions could be asked at other committees and strategic questions could be asked of the Executive, or members of the public could ask a question via their Councillor. In addition to this the petitions power had recently been expanded;
- It was suggested that a Leaders Question Time be included on the Council agenda to give Members opportunity to ask questions of the Leader. It was noted that although there is an opportunity to ask questions of the Leader at Council in response to his position statement, the topics were clearly defined by the Leader. There was however some concern that this may lead to confrontation.
- It was felt that meetings should be recorded or if possible transmitted via webcast.

Further to this discussion, it was agreed that with regard to the first point above, there should be agreement of two thirds of the Council to move to the vote or to the next item of business.

It was suggested that any of the above could be trialled for a limited period, but that a working group of interested Scrutiny Commission members be held to look in more detail at the Constitution and role profiles before making a recommendation to the Standards Committee and to Council. This meeting was agreed for 2 September at 6.30pm.

RESOLVED –

- (i) a Scrutiny working group be held on 2 September to look at the Constitution and Councillor Role Profiles and give further consideration to the points raised and noted above;
- (ii) it be RECOMMENDED that
 - (a) motions to move to the vote or to the next item require the consent of two thirds of the Council;
 - (b) the Scope of motions in 13.3 be amended to include wellbeing of residents;
 - (c) substantial amendments to motions be submitted in writing by no later than 5.30pm on the day of the meeting;

122 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 (SC18)

Members received the work programme for 2009/10. It was requested that the Fire Service be invited to the next meeting. Mr Inman stated that he was in the process of drafting the Older Persons Services Strategy and it was agreed that this be brought to the Scrutiny Commission on 10 September. The LAA2

report would be moved to the December meeting in light of the addition to the agenda for the next meeting.

The Chairman requested that the meeting in October be moved to 29 October. This received the agreement of the Scrutiny Commission.

RESOLVED – the work programme be agreed with the abovementioned additions and amendments and change to the date of the meeting in October.

123 FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL DECISIONS (SC19)

Members received the Forward Plan of Executive and Council decisions.

RESOLVED – the Forward Plan be noted.

124 MINUTES OF SELECT COMMITTEES

The minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (i) Council Services Select Committee, 21 May and 9 July 2009 (SC20 and SC21);
- (ii) Barwell and Earl Shilton Scrutiny Group, 8 June 2009 (SC22);
- (iii) Finance & Audit Services Select Committee, 15 June 2009 (SC23);
- (iv) Scrutiny Environment Group, 6 July 2009 (SC24).

Although these minutes were included for noting only, it was stated that the Barwell and Earl Shilton Scrutiny Group had expressed support for an officer to assist with creating a strategy. Representatives of this group were asked to prepare a report for the Scrutiny Commission with clear recommendations.

(The meeting closed at 9.30 pm)