

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

29 AUGUST 2013 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mr C Ladkin – Vice-Chairman

Mr PR Batty, Mr PAS Hall, Mrs WA Hall, Mr MS Hulbert, Mr DW Inman, Mr JS Moore, Mr K Morrell and Mr K Nichols

Officers in attendance: Steve Atkinson, Adam Bottomley, Bill Cullen, Simon D Jones, Andrew Killip, Sanjiv Kohli, Rebecca Owen and Caroline Roffey

129 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Bessant.

130 MINUTES

On the motion of Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Inman, it was

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Ladkin arrived at 6.32pm.

131 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

132 TOURISM & NATIONAL FOREST UPDATE

Steve Wegerif, Chair of the Hinckley & Bosworth Tourism Partnership, provided Members with an update on the work of the Tourism Partnership and the National Forest including information on tourism statistics across the Borough. In particular it was highlighted that tourism suffered in 2012 due to the poor weather, but the decline within the Hinckley & Bosworth area reflected the national position. This year the situation had improved and had in fact exceeded targets.

Councillor Hulbert arrived at 6.38pm.

The key facts from the 2012 STEAM tourism data model were highlighted:

- Positive economic impact within H&B = £15m
- Number of visitor days = 3.7m
- Number of FTE's in tourism related employment = 1,653

It was reported that the Tourism Partnership no longer received any direct funding from Leicestershire County Council and that small tourism businesses were suffering from lack of support as they were too small in terms of numbers of employees to be able to apply for loans etc.

The need to make the most of the connection between the Borough and Richard III was emphasised, and it was suggested that transport links between Bosworth Battlefield and

the planned Richard III Centre in Leicester be developed. In response it was stated that more research was underway regarding the exact site of the battle, after which transport links would be considered.

Concern was expressed regarding lack of a Tourist Information office in Hinckley. Mr Wegerif said the partnership had been disappointed to lose the office but that tourist information was available in the library, via accommodation providers and at the Tourist Information centres at the Battlefield and Twycross Zoo. It was also reported that the Tourism Partnership had a strong online presence. It was also suggested that a stall be used by the Tourism Partnership at the Farmers' Market, but there was the problem of finding someone to run the stall.

RESOLVED – the update be welcomed and work of the partnership acknowledged and commended.

133 HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY STUDY

Members received a report which considered the Renewable Energy Capacity Study which was intended to be used as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. Members of the Commission were pleased to see the report.

Some Members felt that minimum distances should be incorporated into the document, and a case in Milton Keynes was cited as an example. In response it was stated that councils had been advised by Government not to include minimum distances in their policies and that the judge in the Milton Keynes case had said that distances should focus on the positive and should also be based on evidence. At present, the only evidence for stating minimum distances was health and safety (risk of toppling) and acoustic buffering.

With regard to the indicative renewable energy technology table at appendix A to the report, some members felt that this may mislead the public and also lead to applicants submitting applications for the maximum scale of turbines indicated. It was also felt that the maps, whilst representing the possible areas for the siting of renewable energy, did not give sufficient detail on the most acceptable locations. In response, it was stated that there were many other constraints to take into consideration in determining an application and that there was no precedent for a type of "allocations" document for renewable energy. It was agreed that this document, however, would be used as a basis for investigating possibilities in more detail.

The importance of preventing widespread proliferation and not leaving the authority open to problems through lack of policy direction, whilst giving the industry some level of guidance on what may be acceptable, was reiterated. It was

RESOLVED –

- (i) the report be welcomed;
- (ii) an update on progress be presented to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission;
- (iii) the Executive be RECOMMENDED to remove the word 'approximately' from the number of wind turbines that would be required to provide the power output indicated in appendix A.

134 CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

The Scrutiny Commission considered the proposed Clean Neighbourhood Strategy which set out standards for the service. It was reported that surveys had been undertaken in preparing the strategy in order to identify priorities.

The importance of educating the public was emphasised and the value of educating children and young people not only for the future, but also to help educate their parents, was discussed. Members felt that the untidiness left by Leicestershire County Council after grass cutting did not set a good example to those who were being encouraged to keep neighbourhoods tidy, as there was often grass across the roads and pavements.

A high priority continued to be prevention and removal of dog fouling. Members praised all concerned regarding the speed to remove dog fouling, but the problem needed addressing to prevent it in the first place. A Member asked if the council could facilitate training for parish councils on enforcement for dog fouling, which officers agreed to arrange subject to financial contributions from the relevant parishes.

RESOLVED – the strategy be endorsed and RECOMMENDED to Council for adoption.

135 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Members received the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel which had considered Members' Allowances. It was explained that following a comparison with similar authorities, HBBC councillors received comparatively low allowances, that Members had been rejecting recommended increases since 2005 and also that the Deputy Mayor did not receive adequate financial recompense in line with the requirements of the role.

It was suggested that, if the allowances were higher, more young people may stand for election. The difficulty of undertaking council duties whilst in full time employment was highlighted.

During discussion, reference was made to the pay freezes in the private sector, no or low pay increases in the public sector, along with redundancies and other budget cuts, the economic climate nationally and the increasing financial hardships predicted due to the welfare reforms.

The enormous time and financial commitment of the roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor were acknowledged and it was generally felt that they should receive the recommended increase in allowances. However, with regard to an increase in the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances, members felt that, whilst they supported the findings in the report and agreed that an increase in the allowances was justified, they would not be happy to accept an increase at this time. It was suggested that this position be recommended to the Council, that the findings of the Panel and the council decision be widely publicised and that the position be re-considered if staff received a pay increase in future. It was therefore

RESOLVED –

- (i) the findings within the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be supported;
- (ii) COUNCIL be RECOMMENDED to

- (a) acknowledge and support the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel;
- (b) publicise the contents of the report;
- (c) approve an increase in allowances for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in accordance with the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel;
- (d) reject an increase in the basic and special responsibility allowances for all other positions.

136 BUS STATION FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Members received a copy of the report which had been presented to Council on 16 July 2013 regarding the position on the Development Agreement for the bus station site. It was reported that since the Council meeting there had been further dialogue and activity with the Tin Hat Partnership regarding detailed planning arrangements and action taken to determine non-material changes to the outline application to accommodate the TA building, and to prepare for submissions of reserve matter applications. Tenders for the construction were due to be sent out soon, with work to commence in March 2014 and the comprehensive scheme to be finished in summer 2015. Sainsbury's had been actively involved in progressing the detailed specifications.

Concern was expressed regarding the possible lifespan of a cinema, considering the increasing ability to stream movies at home, and the likelihood that the restaurants would remain in the development in the event that the cinema closed. It was noted that a 15 year lease would be provided for the cinema operator. Whilst the scheme as a whole was considered a risk, this would need to be highlighted as a particular risk.

The financial arrangements were discussed, including the agreement of the council to lend to Tin Hat at 7.5%, the foregoing of a capital receipt of £2.75m in order to secure £1.2m and the security of the funding. It was noted that the loan to the Tin Hat Partnership was underwritten by Wilson Bowden and Barratts as parent companies. The reason for a 30-year loan was queried, and officers agreed to revisit this.

Councillor Ladkin left the meeting at 9.14pm.

The importance of linking the bus station development with the town centre was reiterated, including the possibility of a public transport link. It was also suggested that public transport links with other parts of the Borough be improved, particularly with the Leisure Centre also potentially moving to the town centre.

Officers addressed the questions and comments made by Members and it was

RESOLVED – regular (at least quarterly) updates be brought to the Commission.

137 SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2013-2015

Members received the draft work programme for 2013-15 along with a list of items for prioritisation. Of the items for prioritisation, it was noted that the LTP3 and rural bus services reviews would commence at the meeting on 21 November with attendance of representatives from Leicestershire County Council. The remaining four reviews would be programmed in due course.

In addition to the items in the work programme and for programming, it was also requested that the following items be added:

- Opportunity to ask questions of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council (October meeting – members were asked to send questions to the Democratic Services Officer in advance of the meeting);
- Housing allocations – process of verifying medical information;
- Regular Housing Repairs updates;
- Planning enforcement update (November meeting);
- Continue six months planning appeals updates.

138 MINUTES OF FINANCE, AUDIT & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE ON 4 MARCH

The minutes of the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee on 4 March were noted.

139 MINUTES OF FINANCE, AUDIT & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE ON 3 JUNE 2013

The minutes of the Finance, Audit and Performance Committee on 3 June 2013 were noted.

(The Meeting closed at 9.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN