

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

8 DECEMBER 2011 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman  
Mr PAS Hall and Mr C Ladkin – Vice-Chairman

Mr RG Allen (In place of Mr K Morrell), Mr PR Batty, Mrs WA Hall, Mrs L Hodgkins, Mr DW Inman, Mr JS Moore (In place of Mrs S Sprason), Mr K Nichols and Miss DM Taylor

Officers in attendance: Steve Atkinson, Valerie Bunting, Bill Cullen, Rachel Dexter, Edwina Grant, Louisa Horton, Alison Ker, Sanjiv Kohli, Sally Smith, Sharon Stacey and Simon Wood

260 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Mr K Morrell and Mrs S Sprason, with the substitution of Mr Allen for Mr Morrell and Mr Moore for Mrs Sprason authorised in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.1.

261 MINUTES

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

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

262 MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

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

RESOLVED – the minutes of the Council Services Select Committee meeting on 28 April 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission.

263 ADDITIONAL URGENT BUSINESS BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Members were informed that the extraordinary meeting of the Commission scheduled for 15 December had been cancelled due to the developers not being ready to provide the presentation. It was expected that the presentation would be ready in January. Discussion ensued regarding the Barwell & Earl Shilton Scrutiny Group, and it was agreed that this would also be discussed in January.

264 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

265 GREEN WEDGE REVIEW

Members received a report which sought initial views on the Green Wedge Review before being considered by Council. An addendum was circulated following comments by the Executive and individual members.

Concern was expressed that planning policy comments on the Green Wedge were used in a recent planning appeal before the Review had been considered by Members, and that they had been used negatively by Developers. In addition Members also raised concern that the report did not contain detail on Burbage Common. In response it was noted that Burbage Common was included in the Hinckley / Barwell / Earl Shilton / Burbage designated Green Wedge. With regard to other potential sites for inclusion as Green Wedge designation this would be the subject of a separate report. Members wished to reiterate that the Burbage area of green wedge was a priority for the Hinckley & Burbage area and should be protected. It was requested that this be included in the document.

A Member asked why the methodology for reviewing the green wedge had been prepared in 2009 but had only just been put before Members. In response it was agreed that the Member would receive an answer outside of the meeting, and if not satisfied with the response the matter would be put on the agenda for the next meeting of the Commission.

RESOLVED –

- (i) Burbage Common be highlighted as being included in the document;
- (ii) the study be endorsed and RECOMMENDED to Council for approval.

266 AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY OPTIONS

The Commission received a report which informed Members of the alternative ways of increasing the supply of affordable housing in the Borough and potential opportunities for the Local Authority to increase its stock. This information had been requested at a previous meeting.

During discussion, points were raised regarding targeting empty homes and the possibility of an empty homes programme; the use of commuted sums in increasing affordable housing; the problem of developers agreeing to provide 40% affordable housing and then applying for a variation of the Section 106 Agreement on grounds of viability; and the need to use new terminology to promote affordable housing, ie 'Starter Homes'.

Members expressed the desire to negotiate with developers for the Authority to take ownership of a percentage of property.

A proposal to develop an Implementation Strategy for alternative approaches to delivering affordable homes was supported.

267 FUEL POVERTY REVIEW

In order to progress the Scrutiny Commission's review of Fuel Poverty, they received a report which provided information on the national and local position regarding fuel poverty and the obligations on energy suppliers to reduce fuel poverty, along with a suggested timetable for the review. The complexity of tariffs was highlighted as a problem and it was noted that energy providers provided special tariffs or discounts for those in fuel poverty.

It was reported that Hi4EM had been requested to undertake some research into fuel poverty specifically in Hinckley & Bosworth, and this report should soon be ready. In addition, Mosaic was being used to map areas of poverty. This data would then make it

possible to target those likely to be in fuel poverty and to run campaigns to educate them and raise awareness of help available from third parties. It was RECOMMENDED that officers also use this data to target households.

It was agreed that six energy companies would be invited to the Commission to discuss how we could work together to tackle fuel poverty. Questions to the companies, should they agree to attend, would be around assessing customers' needs; factoring in the 'Green deal' scheme; the number of pre-payment meters in use; the reason for the complexity of tariffs; and the number of customers who have had energy cut off due to non-payment.

RESOLVED –

- (i) the timetable for the review be agreed and energy providers be invited to the next meeting of the Commission;
- (ii) Officers be requested to use the Hi4em and Mosaic data to target households in fuel poverty.

268 SCRUTINY REVIEW: CARE FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM DEMENTIA

In order to commence the second Scrutiny Review of the year, Members received a proposed timetable for the review into care for people suffering from dementia. It was reported that the meeting on 19 January would provide information to assist Members in understanding the definition of dementia. The increasing number of people under 50 suffering from dementia was raised.

RESOLVED – the timetable be agreed.

269 RSL RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

Following the Scrutiny review of Registered Social Landlords which had concluded the previous year, the Commission was presented with a report which provided a progress update. In particular it was reported that communications with the RSLs had improved and that Orbit had been very proactive in supporting the Neighbourhood Action Teams, the Community Houses and the Credit Union. It was also noted that the partnership board with Orbit Housing was proving successful.

Members raised concerns that communication between the RSLs and themselves was still no better, and it was agreed that this would be taken up with RSLs again. Officers also suggested that RSLs should be asked about their contribution to alleviate fuel poverty.

Mr Batty left the meeting at this juncture.

270 PROGRESS REPORT FOLLOWING VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT SERVICES REVIEW

Following a presentation by Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) at the previous meeting, Members were provided with an update on the progress and impact of the delivery of voluntary and community sector infrastructure support services following the revision of arrangements for Hinckley and Bosworth in April 2011.

It was reported that VAL was working increasingly with the authority and actions had been agreed, including that VAL officers develop a greater presence in the community, in both rural and urban areas. Other actions which would be more difficult to achieve were noted, including reaching groups of which we were not currently aware.

Members looked forward to receiving further progress updates when available.

271 NEW HOMES BONUS

Members received a report which detailed the results of the consultation exercise in relation to the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and the allocation of funds. Whilst Members generally accepted the information in the report, they had concerns regarding the mechanism. It was also noted that the funding received by the Council under this scheme, before further distribution, would be significantly less than the previous central government funding streams, which would no longer be available.

272 CREDIT UNION UPDATE

Members received a progress report regarding the local credit union provision since its creation in March 2010. It was reported that more volunteers and Member Champions were needed, and Members agreed that they would welcome another session on this.

Members wished to thank all volunteers for their hard work.

273 SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2011-12

RESOLVED – the work programme be noted.

274 FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL DECISIONS

RESOLVED – the Forward Plan be noted.

275 MATTERS FROM WHICH THE PUBLIC MAY BE EXCLUDED

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

RESOLVED – in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remaining item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12A of that Act.

276 ALTERNATIVE DEPOT OPTIONS

Members received a report which advised them of the options available for relocation of the depot.

At this juncture, having reached 9.30pm, it was moved by Mr Lay, seconded by Mr Nichols and

RESOLVED – the meeting be permitted to continue in order to consider the remaining business.

It was reported that whilst the new site would be smaller, it would make more efficient and effective use of space. The report would be presented for approval to Council on 20 December 2011

RESOLVED – the recommendations contained within the report be supported.

(The Meeting closed at 9.32 pm)