

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

20 DECEMBER 2012 AT 6.00 PM

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

Mr JG Bannister (for Mrs L Hodgkins), Mrs WA Hall, Mr MS Hulbert, Mr DW Inman, Mr JS Moore (for Mr PR Batty), Mr K Morrell and Mr K Nichols

Also in attendance: Councillor DC Bill MBE

Officers in attendance: Katherine Bennett, Valerie Bunting, Rachel Burgess, Bill Cullen, Edwina Grant, Louisa Horton, Rebecca Owen, Sally Smith and Sharon Stacey

317 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Batty, Bessant, Hodgkins and Sprason, with the following substitutions authorised in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4.3:

Councillor Bannister for Councillor Hodgkins
Councillor Moore for Councillor Batty.

It was also noted that Councillor Nichols would be arriving late.

318 MINUTES

It was

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

319 ADDITIONAL URGENT BUSINESS BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Chairman reported that he had agreed to accept an urgent item of business on the Council Tax base for local precepting authorities.

320 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

321 LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS REPORT

Members were informed of the progress and achievements of the Hinckley & Bosworth Local Strategic Partnership by the lead Borough councillor on the partnership, officers and partners. Many activities and schemes were presented including the work in the community houses and neighbourhoods, summer activities, the Youth Café, adult education, support groups and community day trips.

Councillor Nichols arrived at 6.15pm.

Members were pleased to see the improvement in the partnership since the early days and congratulated all staff involved on the successes.

322 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - UPDATE

Members received a presentation from Inspector Marc Simons and the Chief Officer (Housing, Community Safety & Partnerships) which updated on crime statistics and plans for restructuring within the local police. With regard to the statistics it was noted that targets for reduction of crime had been exceeded for most crimes, however theft from vehicles had increased. It was reported that the majority of thefts from vehicles were due to carelessness and people leaving valuable items, such as satellite navigation equipment, on view. Members were informed that the current challenges and threats were travelling criminals and the impact of reduced funding and resources.

Officers reported that Hinckley & Bosworth and Blaby District Community Safety Partnerships had informally merged which had reduced the number of meetings and assisted with providing continuous support to those who need it. The merged Partnership had received a good independent evaluation and was working well.

Inspector Simons reported that the move to a new policing structure would commence on 7 January and would revolve around ensuring that the number of officers available corresponded to the times of high demand. It was also intended that the same officer would continue to deal with a particular case until its conclusion to ensure continuity. A Police response unit would be based at the response hub in Braunstone. It was reported that there would be no change to the public facing service and that Hinckley Police Station would continue to be open from 9am to 9pm, and that there would be no decrease in visibility of officers on the beat – and in many areas the local officers would remain the same due to the good relationship they have already built with the community.

Concern was expressed regarding comments made by the new Police & Crime Commissioner in the press in relation to anti-social behaviour in Barwell. Inspector Simons confirmed that he had expressed the same concerns, but had no input into the statements of the Police & Crime Commissioner – it was, however, noted that he had been invited to visit Barwell Community House to view the work there and the improvements within the community.

Members endorsed the good work of the partnership and congratulated everyone involved.

323 COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR LOCAL PRECEPTING AUTHORITIES

The Scrutiny Commission was informed of financial arrangements for local precepting authorities in 2013/14. It was reported that parish councils would be able to raise their precept above 2% without the need for a referendum. Members were concerned with the new council tax system and that parish councils had been informed so late in the process. It was agreed that a full debate would be held at the next meeting of the Commission and that it would also be considered at the Parish Forum on 23 January.

324 AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTIONS

Members were informed of the targets and thresholds for affordable housing across the Borough, the projected maximum delivery figure for affordable housing and the constraints around delivering this level of affordable housing such as the sites which fall below the threshold for delivery which would not contribute to the target. Officers reported that a projected shortfall of 3% was likely, resulting in a potential shortfall of 128 affordable properties in rural areas over the local plan period to 2026. It was, however, acknowledged that actions would be taken to minimise any shortfall over the plan period.

In discussing the Commuted Sums, there was concern that if developers were contributing the funding rather than providing the properties there could be a time limit on spending the funds which would be a time consuming process. There was also concern that the contribution would not be sufficient to provide the same number of properties as would be provided on site and would have to be provided within a reasonable distance of the development site to meet the needs of that neighbourhood.

It was suggested that updates on progress towards delivery of affordable housing be brought to the Commission.

325 SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2011-12

The work programme was noted, however it was reported that at the previous meeting of the Barwell & Earl Shilton Scrutiny Group officers had been asked to invite representatives of Leicestershire County Council's Highways Team to the next meeting and it was acknowledged that there was now an official route for doing so via the County Council's Chief Executive.

A Member also suggested including an item in the work programme about safety regarding children cycling to school and what could be done to encourage the schools to promote the wearing of cycle helmets by pupils.

(The Meeting closed at 7.44 pm)

CHAIRMAN