

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

13 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman  
Miss DM Taylor – Vice-Chairman

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

Officers in attendance: Steve Atkinson, Bill Cullen, Julie Kenny, Lisa Kirby, Sanjiv Kohli, Darren Moore, Rebecca Owen and Jacqueline Puffett

262 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ladkin and Mayne.

263 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Moore, seconded by Councillor Taylor and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

264 ADDITIONAL URGENT BUSINESS BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Chairman reported that he had agreed to accept an urgent item of business on Members' Allowances to allow for scrutiny of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel prior to consideration by Council.

265 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Batty asked for advice on whether members had a pecuniary interest in the item on Members' Allowances. In response it was noted that a decision was not being made at this meeting.

266 CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS STRATEGY

The Scrutiny Commission was updated on the delivery of the Clean Neighbourhood Strategy. Progress with regard to dog fouling and littering cases was reported, and members requested that prosecutions be well publicised as this had proven to be a deterrent. Discussion ensued regarding:

- Recent considerations by Leicestershire County Council with regard to allowing parishes and districts to take on care of verges which had now concluded and the decision had been made by LCC to continue providing the service
- The mess left behind by the County Council following grass cutting
- The need to keep on top of leaf blowing in the autumn
- The litter picking volunteer scheme which had been popular in the urban area and was now being promoted in the rural parishes. It was requested that this be taken to the Parishes Forum.

Councillor Bessant arrived at 6.43pm.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The report be noted and work of the Clean Neighbourhood Service be endorsed;
- (ii) The litter picking volunteer scheme be presented to the next Parishes Forum.

267 INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES FOR GREEN WASTE COLLECTION

Members received a report on the introduction of charges for green waste collection that had been referred by Council for consideration and agreement of the consultation questions. It was reported that the proposed closing date for the consultation would be 31 December and that there would be an article in the Borough Bulletin. In addition, it would be advertised via the website and social media. It was reported that the anticipated take-up for the service was around 50% and that concessions would be available.

Some members expressed concern about the costs of changing the service so people had to 'opt in' and pay the £30 charge, as there would be costs associated with administration, billing and collecting unused bins. It was also suggested that the cost of providing the service would not reduce proportionately to the reduction in the number of customers, as the collection lorries would still need to follow the same routes as customers would be spread across the Borough.

As an alternative to the suggested £30 charge per year for collection of green waste, a member asked about the additional charge that would need to be placed on Council Tax to enable continuation of the provision of green waste collection for every household. In response it was reported that there would need to be a 10% increase on the Borough precept, which would mean an additional £10.08 per year for the average band D property. This would enable the universal recycling service to be maintained, without the need for a separate charge. Members were reminded, however, that in order to increase the Council Tax by 10%, a referendum would be required at three different levels of costs ranging from £45,000 to £110,000, depending on the timing of the referendum. Should the referendum be successful, there would then be costs for re-billing which would cost around £66,000. It was also reiterated that the authority would not then be eligible for any freeze grant that the Government may offer.

The risk of needing to go through the same process in future, should the County Council withdraw the dry recycling credits, was highlighted by some members. Others felt that the increase in the Council Tax base at this stage would avoid the need to do so by an amount exceeding 2.0% again in the near future.

Concern was expressed by some members that, if a third option of increasing Council Tax by 10% was added to the consultation options, residents who would have opted for the £30 charge would opt for the Council Tax increase, or no increase at all, as it would seem a preferable increase, and as such it would not give a clear steer. Other members felt that the option should be given. It was moved by Councillor Lay and seconded by Councillor Bessant that a third option be included in the consultation: for a 10% increase in Council Tax. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was LOST. It was therefore

RESOLVED – the consultation as recommended with two options be endorsed.

268 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Scrutiny Commission gave consideration to the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel who had recommended the same increase in allowances and decrease in mileage rate payable that had been rejected by Council the previous year. The Panel had felt that HBBC Councillors received far lower remuneration than other Councillors from all other neighbouring authorities and were now no longer receiving a level of remuneration which would be considered fair for the work undertaken and responsibilities held.

Members acknowledged the reasoning behind the recommendations of the Panel and reiterated that their responsibilities and powers had increased enormously, yet no increase in allowances had been agreed since 2005. In relation to the mileage, they felt that the rate currently paid was still appropriate and necessary and did not support the reduction in line with the HMRC rate.

With regard to future reviews of members' allowances, it was noted that the Independent Remuneration Panel would meet annually. Members asked that future assessments bring HBBC in line with other local authorities. It was moved by Councillor Batty, seconded by Councillor Nichols and

RECOMMENDED to Council –

- (i) The recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances be approved;
- (ii) The recommendation of the Panel in relation to the decrease in mileage allowance be rejected;
- (iii) The Panel be recommended to bring the HBBC members' allowances in line with other authorities in future reviews.

(The Meeting closed at 7.58 pm)

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CHAIRMAN