

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

14 APRIL 2016 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Mr MR Lay - Chairman
Mrs R Camamile – Vice-Chairman

Mr DC Bill MBE, Mr WJ Crooks, Mr E Hollick (for Mr SL Bray), Mr KWP Lynch, Mr BE Sutton, Mr R Ward and Mr HG Williams

Also in attendance: Councillor C Ladkin and Councillor A Wright

Officers in attendance: Steve Atkinson, Ilyas Bham, Valerie Bunting, Richard Crosthwaite, Bill Cullen, Julie Kenny, Rebecca Owen and Caroline Roffey

484 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Bray, with the substitution of Councillor Hollick authorised in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4. It was also noted that Councillor Williams would arrive slightly late and had apologised for this.

485 MINUTES

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

486 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Camamile & Hollick stated that they were parish councillors for authorities that had applied for grants under the Parish & Community Initiative Fund.

487 HINCKLEY HOSPITAL REVIEW

Caroline Trevithick, Toby Sanders and Nick Wilmott were in attendance to present consultation options for the review of health services in Hinckley.

Councillor Williams entered the meeting at 7pm.

The future of the Mount Road and Sunnyside hospitals was discussed, and the need to consider provision of services, as well as investment in buildings, was highlighted. Members expressed the importance of a clear vision for the delivery of improved services in dialogue with stakeholders, including the potential for a walk in facility at Sunnyside or Mount Road.

Members were reassured that the information pack, as part of the consultation exercise, would contain a thorough vision for service provision as well as clarity over what service would be retained, improved and/or lost. It was also confirmed that parishes would be fully consulted.

488 DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS UPDATE

The Scrutiny Commission received a report on the discretionary housing payments scheme, following a request for an update at a previous meeting. It was explained that

the scheme provided help to claimants who received housing benefit, but who needed further financial assistance with housing costs and was funded by a government grant.

In response to a member's question about how much of the funding had been unused and returned to the DWP since the start of the scheme, it was reported that, following a change in the criteria, all monies had been allocated and, for 2015-16, approval had been sought to use some of the HRA budget that had been ringfenced for supporting tenants to fund further awards. A member asked whether the scheme for further awards would be continuing, as the report seemed to suggest it would not, and officers agreed to confirm its continuation to members.

Members noted the report and the valuable work to support tenants.

489 PARISH & COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FUND

Members received a report which proposed grant allocations through the Parish and Community Initiative Fund 2016/17. It was noted that over £1million had now been allocated under the scheme since it commenced and that the fund had been increased by the Council for this year.

It was reported that eight schemes would be rejected under the current criteria, but that if the criteria was amended, as recommended, for this year only, five of these would be supported, which would make the best use of the funding available. Members expressed concern about amending the criteria to fund schemes such as fencing and car park improvements, but supported the amendment for this year only.

RESOLVED –

- (i) The funding allocations recommended in the report be endorsed and recommended for approval by the Strategic Leadership Board;
- (ii) SLB be recommended to amend the scheme conditions for this year only to allow a further five schemes to be supported;
- (iii) The carry forward request of £2,263 as detailed in the report, allowing the previous years' schemes to be completed, be endorsed.

490 AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY

Further to a request at a previous meeting, the Commission received a report on the cumulative impact of viability assessments submitted through the development management process on the delivery of affordable housing. During discussion, the following points were raised:

- The threshold for provision of affordable housing being four units in rural areas
- The site of the current leisure centre, which would soon be subject of competition for a development partner
- The potential allocation of the former depot site to the wholly owned company
- The importance of commuted sums for off-site provision of housing.

491 EQUALITIES MONITORING REPORT

Members were provided with the employment and equality statistics for 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 along with the Equality Policy which was currently out for consultation. Members congratulated officers on the quality and content of the report. It was noted that some of the targets were out of the control of the authority, for example

numbers of employees with a disability. It was further noted that it was possible there were employees who had not declared a disability, and, in response to a member's question, the Commission was reassured that the council had no liability where disabilities had not been disclosed.

492 INSURANCE CLAIMS PROCESS

In response to a request of the Commission, a report was presented which informed members of the insurance claims handling process and claims history. Members suggested that examples would have been helpful.

493 CAR PARKS IN HINCKLEY TOWN CENTRE

Following a request of the member of the Scrutiny Commission, consideration was given to a report on the Hinckley town centre car parks. The Executive member with responsibility for car parking was in attendance and outlined the work currently being undertaken on town centre issues, including car parks and residents' parking, in consultation with one of the ward councillors for the town centre.

A member reminded the Commission that, when short stay tariffs in the town centre had been reduced a few years previously, the Hinckley Area Committee had agreed to subsidise this from the special expenses budget, with an equivalent contribution from the BID. He asked whether, in light of the high level of usage and therefore income from the car parks and the fact that the BID had not contributed, the subsidy was still required. It was agreed that a view would be sought from the Car Parking Working Group.

It was noted that Leicestershire County Council was undertaking a study on town centre parking. The Executive member asked those members who were also County Councillors to support and encourage residents' parking schemes.

It was agreed that a further report would be brought to the Commission when an update on any aspect of Hinckley town centre parking was available.

494 DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

Following deferral of this item at Council, the Scrutiny Commission considered the proposed decision making structure. It was reported that the objective of the review was to raise the profile of audit and create a clear decision making process, but would not preclude an overview & scrutiny body receiving a report on a particular audit or viewing the audit plan if they wished. A discussion had taken place immediately before the meeting, involving the Chair of the Commission, the Council Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The conclusions of that constructive discussion were put before the Commission.

Members felt that a standalone Audit Committee would be more effective than merging the audit function with the Ethical Governance & Personnel Committee and that the chairman of the Scrutiny Commission and the Finance & Performance Committee should be members of the Audit Committee. It was also noted that members of the Executive should not normally be members of the Audit Committee, and that the Audit Committee would have a set cycle and a work programme.

RESOLVED – Council be RECOMMENDED to approve a revised structure with a separate Audit Committee.

495 SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16

The following items were requested for future meetings:

- Major projects update (next meeting)
- Update on the sustainable urban extensions (July meeting)
- Update on the Credit Union
- Progress report on garden waste.

(The Meeting closed at 8.50 pm)

CHAIRMAN