

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 5 April 2004.

PRESENT

Mr. N. J. Brown CC (in the Chair)

Mr. B. Chapman AE, CC
Mr. P. A. Hyde CC
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC
Dr. D. Pollard CC
Mr. N. J. Rushton CC

Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. D. Jennings CC
Mr. M. B. Page CC
Prof. M. E. Preston CC
Mr. C. A. Stanley CC

By Invitation

Mr D R Parsons CC – Leader of the Council.

74. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held on 3rd March 2004, were taken as read, confirmed and signed as a correct record.

75. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been asked under Standing Order 35.

76. Questions asked by the members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been asked under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

77. Any other items the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

There were no other items of urgent business.

78. Declarations of interest.

Mr D R Parsons CC declared a non prejudicial personal interest in the item concerning the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership (LSEP) as he is a member of the board of the LSEP.

There were no other declarations of interest.

79. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations made under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

80. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

81. The Leicester Shire Economic Partnership.

At the invitation of the Commission, Mr Kishor Tailor, Chief Executive of the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership, gave a presentation on the role of the LSEP, the progress made by it and its achievements to date. A copy of the power point presentation slides used by Mr Tailor is attached to these minutes.

A number of points emerged from questions asked by Members and replies by Mr Tailor, as follows:

- Concern was expressed about apparent duplication between the work of the LSEP and the East Midlands Development Agency (Emda). Mr Tailor thought that the strength of the LSEP was in its partnership work. It was not just delivering Emda's agenda but was helping to bring about change of benefit to the Leicestershire area. As the role of the LSEP and the other sub-regional partnerships developed, Emda would have to re-consider its own role.
- There was also concern about the relationship between the LSEP and the Welland Partnership. It was acknowledged that whilst this did cause some difficulties at a strategic level, the Partnerships did try to work together on a practical basis to resolve these difficulties. On some issues, such as Tourism, Emda had decided that partnerships would work to county boundaries which meant that the LSEP was working with Melton and Harborough as well as with the rest of Leicestershire on tourism issues.
- It was suggested that there should be greater representation of private sector organisations on the LSEP Board as these were wealth-creating organisations. Mr Tailor said that it was important that the membership of the Board was not so big that it became unwieldy. There should be a place on it for public sector bodies because they were significant employers and exercised considerable economic influence. Arrangements were made to engage with key local companies that were not directly represented on the Board.
- The issues of graduate retention and the low skills level of the local workforce were raised. The LSEP had concluded that there was not enough suitable employment in the County to attract and retain graduates and that there had also been issues relating to the quality of life offered in the area, though this situation was improving. Most graduates who stayed in the County worked in the public sector. The local universities needed to strengthen their links with local employers and the LSEP was working to facilitate this. The deficiency in the local skills base was acknowledged. To some extent this was influenced by the decline of the County's former staple industries and the nature of the forms of employment that had replaced them. The LSEP was seeking to influence the Learning and Skills Council's policies to address the skills

shortage. It was also felt that companies could do more to provide training to raise the skills of their workforce, although it was noted that the development of Training Boards did not always encourage companies to provide training themselves.

- Members were keen to know how the LSEP's performance could be measured. The LSEP had discussed this issue and had concluded that some form of annual forum should be arranged so that interested organisations could question the LSEP's performance against the targets set out in its annual business plan. The first such forum had now been held. The LSEP was accountable to Emda for expenditure of its funding.
- It was suggested that the LSEP needed to do more to address local issues of concern, such as a perceived lack of leadership in economic regeneration, and that its action plan was more aimed at obtaining Emda's approval than at tackling issues of concern in Leicestershire. Mr Tailor said that the LSEP had consulted on its business plan in order to improve openness and transparency. This had prompted a large number of responses and the Board had decided that it should make decisions on the way forward. The LSEP could exercise a considerable degree of autonomy in implementing funding initiatives provided that its business plan reflected Emda's broad vision.
- The LSEP was keen to work to encourage more diversity into the local employment economy and wanted to see more scientific and biotech industries. It wanted to promote Leicestershire as a location for film, television and the media. It also wanted to strengthen the links with Europe and explore the potential for links with developing economies like China and India.
- It was noted that some companies had commented that they received less help from public authorities in Europe than in the USA when looking to relocate their business. Feedback to the LSEP suggested that there was a lack of understanding of the complexity of the public sector and a sense of frustration about identifying the correct contact points in large public sector organisations.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Mr Tailor be thanked for his informative presentation;
- (b) That the Scrutiny Reference Group be asked to consider how best to take this matter forward
- (c) That the Chief Executive of the LSEP be invited to report back to the Commission on the LSEP's progress in twelve month's time.

82. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 28 April 2004.

10am – 11.42am
5 April 2004.

CHAIRMAN

