

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 17 November 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
Mr. N. J. Rushton CC
Mr. R. M. Wilson CC

Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. Mike Jones CC
Prof. M. E. Preston CC
Mrs. M. L. Sherwin CC

129. Minutes.

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 September and 8 September 2004 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

130. Question Time.

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

131. Questions asked by 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).

132. Urgent Items.

There were no items of urgent business.

133. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

134. 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.

135. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

136. Integrated Tourism, Promotion and Inward Investment Services.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the delivery of tourism, promotion and inward investment services in

Leicestershire, through the not-for-profit company, Leicester Shire Promotions. A copy of the report marked 'A' is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting, Mr. Martin Peters, the Chief Executive of Leicester Shire Promotions.

Mr. Peters outlined the background to the transfer of responsibility of tourism, promotion and inward investment activity to Leicester Shire Promotions. He advised the Commission that in relation to the two key areas of activity, tourism and inward investment, the key objectives were:

(a) Tourism

(i) Better return on resources:

This had been achieved by realising economies of scale as a result of the tourism functions previously supplied to Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership being bought together. Less was now being spent on administrative and support services and those resources had been deployed to frontline operational services. The rationalisation of printing arrangements and development of a comprehensive combined website had assisted in this aim.

(ii) Better co-ordination and Marketing of the Brand:

It was hoped to conclude a single service level agreement with the three partners within the next few months. In addition, all district councils were committed to work with Leicester Shire Promotions to deliver tourism services on their behalf.

The aim was to promote the identity of Leicestershire whilst at the same time identifying and promoting the distinctiveness of the districts with Leicestershire. The publicity material now being produced aimed to do that.

(iii) Lever-in additional funding:

One of the main reasons for establishing a not-for profit company to deliver the tourism function was the potential the company would have to attract external funding. To date the Company has managed to attract an additional £350,000 much of which would be directed towards promotion and publicity.

(b) Inward Investment

The primary aim was to re-energise the service and to be more proactive in efforts to attract and protect employment. The company had exceeded the targets set for 'jobs created' and was greatly increasing the number of enquiries. The private sector was also encouraged to play a greater role in promoting the City and County as an area for investment.

In response to questions, Mr. Peters advised the Commission as follows:

- an inevitable consequence of the decision to externalise the tourism and inward investment function was some loss of direct democratic control. The company had recognised this and a member of the Council, Mr. H. Barber CC, had been appointed to serve on the Board of Directors. In addition, the Company had sought to ensure that an officer and member were represented on each of the District Partnerships.
- in some district councils there was now an increased recognition of the importance of investment in tourism and promotion and new budgetary provision had been made available;
- the development of the single service agreement and the key performance targets therein would reinforce accountability and enable members to monitor performance. In addition, the Head of Public Relations and Tourism at the County Council held regular meetings with him and his management team to discuss issues and undertake more detailed performance monitoring. The Company expected the local authorities to set robust performance targets for forthcoming year.
- there was some difficulty in establishing a single brand name for the area which would be acceptable to all stakeholders. There remained considerable difficulties in promoting and branding Leicestershire as a tourist destination, as it did not have a particular distinctive identity. Much work needed to be done and the regeneration of Leicester City would be the key to improving the attractiveness of Leicestershire as a tourist destination. Work was also in hand to promote certain distinctive aspects of the County such as food tourism in Melton and to provide information to encourage visitors to stay overnight in the County.
- that he acknowledged that greater play could be made in inward investment promotion packs about the existence of three good quality universities in the area.
- other County areas in the East Midlands had not made such progress towards an effective co-ordinated approach.
- the Company was increasingly developing a body of expertise and helping statutory bodies to identify barriers to investment which ranged from planning and land use issues to particular skill gaps.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Peters for his helpful presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress made by Leicester Shire Promotion Ltd in the areas of tourism, promotion and inward investment be noted;
- (b) That a further report on progress be made in twelve months' time.

137. Draft Consultation Standards.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive covering a draft set of consultation standards for the County Council which were published for public consultation on 20 September 2004. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission was also advised of the comments that had been received. A copy of the paper summarising these comments was circulated to members and a copy is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the draft consultation standards and in particular Standard 7, which refers to providing feedback to people and explaining how the consultation had been used to inform Council services and policies, be welcomed.

138. Section 106 Agreement with Developers.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the processes and policy involved in securing financial contribution from new developments. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission was advised that the consultation paper referred to in paragraph 18 had now been issued. The Government did not propose for the time being to proceed with making regulations to set planning obligations on a new statutory basis, using the powers established by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. However, it had indicated that these powers may be used in response to the Chancellor's decision at the end of 2005 on the Government's response to the Barker Review of Housing Supply.

In response to questions members were advised as follows:-

- (i) any proposal to move away from the provisions of DoE Circular 1/97 would carry the risk that developers would object and refuse contributions;
- (ii) the formula for calculating the level of education contribution sought was based on work undertaken by the Department in 1999;
- (iii) the County Council had a good working relationship with District Councils and officers were satisfied with the arrangements in place for negotiating and agreeing Section 106 agreements;
- (iv) the concerns relating to the use of Section 106 for the benefit of parishes would normally be best directed to the District Councils in the light of the statutory responsibilities.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the current processes and policy involved in securing financial contributions for new developments, be endorsed.

- (b) That consideration be given to reviewing the policy when the Government's response to the Barker Review of Housing Supply is available.

139. Adoption of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the next steps in the adoption of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan. A copy of the report is filed with these minutes.

The Commission was advised that the County Council was still awaiting a decision from the First Secretary of State regarding the withdrawal of the Directive.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be advised that, subject to the receipt of formal notification, the Directive has been withdrawn, the County Council be recommended to:

- (a) approve the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan, comprising the Written Statement and Key Diagram, set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (b) authorise the Chief Executive to publish a Statement of Decisions and Reasons on Objections to the Further Proposed Modification, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, and a revised Technical Paper on Housing;
- (c) subject to Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council District Council also agreeing the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan, to authorise the Chief Executive to:-
 - (i) give notice of the Council's intention to adopt the Structure Plan after a period of 28 days and subsequently adopt the Structure Plan;
 - (ii) to agree the date of adoption and undertake all actions necessary to give effect to the adoption of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan.

140. Dates of Future Meetings.

RESOLVED:

The following meetings programme covering the period January to June 2005 be agreed:

Wednesday, 12 January 2005 at 2.00 pm
Wednesday, 2 February 2005 at 2.00 pm (Budget Meeting)
Wednesday 2 March 2005 at 2.00 pm
Wednesday 20 April 2005 at 2.00 pm (if required)
Wednesday 15 June 2005 at 2.00 pm (provisional)

17 November 2004
2.00 pm – 4.10 pm

CHAIRMAN

