

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 15 November 2006.

PRESENT

Dr. M. O'Callaghan CC (Chairman)

Mr. J. G. Coxon CC  
Dr. S. Hill CC  
Mr. Mike Jones CC  
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC  
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

Mr. S. J. Galton CC  
Mr. D. W. Houseman CC  
Mr. John Legrys CC  
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

By Invitation.

Mr. D.R. Parsons CC – Leader of the Council.  
Dr. R.K.A. Feltham CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Resources, including Finance and Performance Management.  
Mr. M.B. Page – Cabinet Support Member for Efficiency Gains and Capital Programme Monitoring.

56. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2006 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

57. Question Time.

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

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

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

59. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items.

60. Declarations of interest in respect of items on this agenda.

There were no declarations of interests.

61. 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.

62. Presentation of petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

63. Budget Process Update.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive and Director of Resources concerning the budget process including comments made by the various scrutiny committees. A copy of the report marked 'A' is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions the Commission was advised as follows:

- i) public consultation on the broad implications of the Medium Term Financial Strategy would commence at the end of this week and run for a period of three weeks;
- ii) half of the total efficiency savings would be achieved through the Corporate Change Management Programme;
- iii) the levels of efficiency and low priority savings allocated to Departments were guideline figures and were not based simply on a pro rata calculation;
- (iv) consideration would be given to ensuring consistency between the information contained in reports to members and press releases.

RESOLVED

That early sight of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the pressures facing the County Council be welcomed.

64. Medium Term Financial Strategy - Chief Executives Department.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive and Director of Resources concerning the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the broad implications for the Chief Executive's Department budget. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

With regard to the proposed efficiency savings and lower priority services, the Commission was advised as follows:

- i) the Department was exploring greater use of Leicestershire Matters as a vehicle for publishing statutory notices and for recruitment advertising, thereby reducing dependence on commercial media.

- ii) The Youth Work budget (not in the Chief Executive's Department budget) amounted to £3.8million and it was envisaged that by better targeting of existing services savings and efficiencies could be achieved. Consideration would be given to using the resources more flexibly with a view to increasing the provision of Youth Work in the summer holidays. The current small subsidy of the Youth Work budget from the Chief Executive's departmental budget might therefore not be required.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- (i) when the authority did make use of local newspapers for publication of statutory notices, efforts should be made to ensure that this is done in the most cost effective manner;
- (ii) in identifying lower priority services for the purposes of savings, careful consideration should be given to the impact and cost-effectiveness of discretionary or 'non-statutory' services.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

65. Medium Term Financial Strategy - Resources Department.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Resources concerning the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the broad implications for his Department's budget. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions the Director of Resources advised that:-

- i) by bringing together the various elements of facilities management it was hoped to generate significant savings;
- ii) the findings of the Scrutiny Review Panel looking at Energy Efficiency had not been taken into consideration at this point, though it was hoped that the outcome would yield efficiency savings.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

66. Establishment of Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the terms of reference for the Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee and the establishment of Community Forums. A copy of the report marked 'D' is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions the Commission was advised that:-

- the Leicestershire Together Board together with the District Local Strategic Partnerships would have a performance management role in relation to the community forums;
- discussions were taking place with District Councils and other partners concerning the resourcing of officer support for the Panels.

In the ensuing discussion the following comments were made:-

- (i) the terms of reference of the committee should be amended to include consideration of:
  - the County Council's relationship with District Councils;
  - how public access to members and to the decision-making processes could be improved.
- (ii) there was a need to ensure meetings of community forums were advertised and that members of the public should be allowed to raise any issues they considered appropriate at such meetings.
- (iii) the success of the Community Forums would depend on how they addressed issues of local concern. In relation to this, when the annual review of the forums was undertaken consideration should be given to:-
  - including the functions of the existing highways forums within the remit of community forums;
  - the merit of delegating some functions, e.g. Shire Grants.
- (iv) further consideration would be given to effective ways of scrutinising partnerships between the County Council and external bodies.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposals for the establishment of Community Forums and the Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee be welcomed;
- (b) That the Constitution Committee be asked to recommend to the County Council that the terms of reference for the new Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee be as follows:-
  - “(i) To provide a point of reference for considering the role of the elected member as champion of the local community and make recommendations as to good practice;
  - (ii) To review and scrutinise the development of the neighbourhood engagement policy;
  - (iii) To review and scrutinise the implementation and operation of community forums and other proposals for empowering local communities, including the County Council's relationship with district, parish and town councils;

- (iv) To review and scrutinise the development of policies and procedures to ensure a flexible response to local needs of citizens and communities, including improved access for citizens to the County Council's decision making and scrutiny processes".

67. Draft Regional Plan.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the programme for responding to the consultation Draft Regional Plan and the current position on issues that will be taken into account in preparing the County Council's response. A copy of the report marked 'E' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission also considered the preliminary outcome of the transport assessment of the draft proposals. A copy of the preliminary assessment is also filed with these minutes.

The Committee also considered written comments which had been received from Mr M. Hunt CC, a copy of which is filed with these minutes.

The Committee was advised of the following amendments which were required to the report and transport assessment:-

- Page 10 - Appendix 3 Main report – Under Long Term, Charnwood, the word 'Thurmaston' be substituted for 'Thurcaston';
- Page 24 - Transport Assessment – Paragraph 4.33 – after location 2, the words 'east and south of Burbage' be substituted for 'north of Hinckley Northern Perimeter Road'.

The Commission was advised that:-

- i) the five large sustainable urban extensions (SUE) sites referred to in the report were chosen as sample sites for the purposes of modelling the transport impacts and were not necessarily the sites proposed for development; that would be a matter for District Councils' Local Development Frameworks;
- ii) the findings of the transport assessment were preliminary and therefore should be treated with some caution.

The following points were made by members during the discussion:-

- concerns remained about the short timescale for making comments, effectively set by the Government, and the lack of opportunities for members and the public to be involved in the proper consideration of all options at an appropriately early stage;
- the option for a new settlement should not be ruled out particularly if the option of a SUE in Loughborough and possibly elsewhere proved to be inappropriate;

- given the current levels of traffic congestion in Syston, and should the potential developments in the area proceed, Option T1 should be pursued in relation to the Syston Eastern Link Road;
- the importance of ensuring strategic employment sites were well-located in relation to future large housing developments.

RESOLVED

- a) That the comments now made be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet;
- b) That a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Commission on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

68. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Commission be held at 10.00 am on Thursday 14 December 2006.

2.30 – 4.20 pm  
15.11.06.

CHAIRMAN

