

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 13 July 2006.

PRESENT

Dr. M. O'Callaghan CC (Chairman)

Mr. D. R. Bown CC
Mr. R. Fraser CC
Dr. S. Hill CC
Mr. Max Hunt CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

Mr. J. G. Coxon CC
Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. D. W. Houseman CC
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

14. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2006 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

15. Question Time.

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

16. 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).

17. Urgent Items.

There were no other items of urgent business.

18. Declarations of interest.

Mr Hunt declared a personal prejudicial interest in relation to any issues which might arise in relation to support to William Bradford School referred to in Appendix 2 to Paper B as his wife was a teacher at that School.

19. 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.

20. Presentation of petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

21. Performance of the Executive.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. D.R. Parsons CC, the Leader of the Council, who had kindly agreed to attend the meeting to answer questions on a range of issues including the performance of the Executive in the last municipal year.

The Commission considered the written questions to be put to the Leader which had been drafted by members of the Scrutiny Reference Group and Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees together with a written response thereto from the Leader. Copies of the questions and answers are filed with these minutes.

In response to questions and comments the Leader advised the Commission as follows:

- (i) Relationships with District Councils had reached a low ebb during the recent debates about the possibility of local government reorganisation. At that time he had made it clear that he was committed to the three tier structure of local government in Leicestershire. In the last few months relationships had improved and good progress had been made on issues such as the Community and Neighbourhood agenda, decriminalised parking enforcement and waste management. He hoped progress would be made on concessionary travel.
- (ii) Partnership working was key to delivering effective local services. To that end, he would wish to acknowledge the commitment of the statutory, voluntary and business sector to "Leicestershire Together". This had enabled the successful negotiation of the Local Area Agreement.
- (iii) The County Council would continue to pursue its campaign to get 'fair funding' for Leicestershire. He hoped that the Police Service would join the County Council in this campaign as they too were underfunded.
- (iv) The County Council faced a difficult financial situation in the coming financial year. The Medium Term Financial Plan listed low priority service areas and details of possible service reductions would be submitted to Scrutiny later in the year.
- (v) Whilst he welcomed the effort and commitment of staff in achieving CPA four stars, he was committed to continuous improvement and hence the decision to implement a Change Management Programme. He believed that the County Council was unique as the only authority with 'four stars' that had embarked on such a Change Management Programme.
- (vi) Cabinet Lead and Support Members had now been provided with job descriptions and targets. He would consider when and how to make that information available. Cabinet Lead Members did not exercise executive powers and it was his view that decisions should be taken in public by the Cabinet collectively and in a democratic manner.

- (vii) The role of Cabinet Support Members was to provide support to certain individual Cabinet members in achieving their aims and objectives. Responsibility for particular issues or projects are allocated to support members.
- (viii) He noted that some authorities had an arrangement where one or two opposition members are invited to attend all Cabinet meetings although he was not aware that this arrangement had worked successfully.
- (ix) He would give further thought to the question of all party working group on Waste Management.
- (x) He welcomed the work undertaken by scrutiny, particularly the work done by scrutiny review panels. He believed that the continued success of scrutiny would depend upon scrutiny members acting as 'critical friends' and not politicising the scrutiny process. It was also important that Scrutiny developed its practice in examining the work of external bodies.
- (xi) Proposals for engaging with communities would be available for consideration by scrutiny later in the year. The proposals had been published by Leicestershire Together and were available. He commended the commitment of all partner agencies. A Partnership working group had been set up to develop the proposals and identify some early pilots.

The Chairman and members of the Commission thanked the Leader for his attendance and the frankness of his answers.

22. Revenue Outturn 2005/06.

Mr Hunt declared a personal prejudicial interest in relation to the support given to William Bradford School – Appendix 2 refers. He remained in the room but took no part in the discussion on the grounds that the interest was not of a financial nature.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Resources concerning the Revenue Outturn for 2005/06. A copy of the report marked 'A' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the Revenue Outturn for 2004/05 including the carry forwards agreed by the Cabinet be noted.

23. Capital Payments and Receipts 2005/06.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Resources concerning the actual level of capital payments and receipts for 2005/06. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the actual level of capital payments and receipts for 2004/05 be noted.

24. Annual Treasury Management Report 2005/06.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Resources concerning the action taken and the performance achieved in respect of treasury management activities of the Council in 2005/06. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the action taken and the performance achieved in respect of treasury management activities in 2005/06 be noted;
- (b) That the officers in the Resources Department responsible for Treasury Management be congratulated on their performance over a period of years.

25. Revenue Budget 2006/07 Monitoring.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Resources which provided members with an early indication of issues on the 2006/07 Revenue budget. A copy of the report marked 'D' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the current position in relation to the Revenue Budget 2005/06 be noted.

26. Capital Programme 2006/07 - Monitoring Report.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Resources covering the delivery of the 2006/07 capital programme. A copy of the report marked 'E' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the current position in relation to the Capital Programme 2006/07 be noted.

27. Job Evaluation - Court of Appeal Decision.

The Commission considered the contents of a Members' Information Item relating to the outcome of a Court of Appeal hearing relating to the implementation of Job Evaluation. A copy of the Information Item marked 'F' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That in the light of the decision of the County Council the previous day, the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Commission be asked to consider what role, if any, the Scrutiny Commission would have in ensuring that the Authority learnt any lessons arising from this case.

28. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED

That the next meeting be held on Wednesday, 30 August 2006 at 2.00 pm.

13 July 2006.
9.30 am – 11.35 am

CHAIRMAN

