

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 28 February 2007.

PRESENT

Dr. M. O'Callaghan CC (Chairman)

Mrs. J.A. Dickinson CC
Mr. D. W. Houseman CC
Mr. John Legrys CC
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. Mike Jones CC
Mr. J.S. Moore CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. R. M. Wilson CC

By Invitation.

Mr. E.F. White CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Community Services.

99. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2007 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

100. Question Time.

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

101. 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).

102. Urgent Item.

The Chairman reported that he had agreed to take one item of urgent business and he proposed to take it as the next item of business.

103. Officer Attendance at Scrutiny Meetings.

The Commission considered this matter, the Chairman having decided that it was of an urgent nature in view of the concerns expressed to him and to avoid a similar situation in the future.

The Chairman reported concerns by some members concerning officer attendance at the meeting of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee. Those concerns related to the Director leaving a public

meeting part way through to attend a private meeting with the Leader and Chief Executive. The Chairman was of the view that priority should have been given to the public scrutiny meeting.

104. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

There were no declarations made by members.

105. 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.

106. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

107. Environment Strategy.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Community Services concerning the County Council's current and planned response to the Environment agenda. A copy of the report marked 'A' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee was advised that since the report had been written additional funding had been agreed in the County Council's budget which would contribute further to improving the environment. This funding provide for:-

- a feasibility study to develop a Community Wood in Enderby;
- matched funding to support working with LeicesterShire Economic Partnership to develop an anaerobic digestion plant;
- Capital and Revenue resources to implement the findings of the Energy Review Panel.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:-

- i) climate change could not be addressed under the normal economic rules and it was necessary to recognise that in seeking to address climate change the Authority might be faced with additional costs e.g. paying a premium for green energy;
- ii) the aim to become carbon neutral was laudable but should be accompanied by a clear time frame for its achievement;
- iii) in considering the County Council's own activities there should be a corporate commitment to environmental cost and benefit considerations being embedded in the service planning process;

- iv) consideration should be given to reviewing, if possible, the current arrangements for travelling expenses which did not encourage the use of vehicles with a smaller engine size or those deemed to be more environmentally friendly;
- v) given the influence and spending power of the Authority there was a clear leadership role to be exercised not only in promoting good practice but also in terms of encouraging, through direct support and purchasing/contracting strategies, the development of green technologies and processes.

RESOLVED

- a) That it be noted:-
 - i) that a number of strategies are currently in place which seek, within their overall broad objectives, to address environmental issues;
 - ii) that the next review of the County Council's Environment Strategy to be undertaken in the coming year will focus on three key areas related to energy, waste and procurement, with the view to developing a core plan;
 - iii) that the recently agreed energy and water strategy provides a key set of actions and investment for the authority for coming years;
 - iv) that ENABLE has been commissioned by the Leicestershire Together Board (which is chaired by the Leader of the County Council) to prepare a Climate Change Action Plan to which the Board partners will be asked to sign up to.
- b) That the Cabinet be advised that it is the view of the Scrutiny Commission that:-
 - i) within the Environment Strategy and other relevant strategies greater emphasis needs to be given to the County Council's leadership and advocacy role in respect of the wider community;
 - ii) whilst the proposed production of a food and drink directory was a welcome development aimed at reducing food miles, the actions of Leicester City Council in enforcing the ancient market charter and thereby preventing neighbouring District Councils from setting up local markets adversely impacts on the ability of local farmers to sell their products;
 - iii) in order to further embed environmental considerations within the policies of the Council and to allow elected members and the public to assess the Council's resolve, for a period of one year, all reports to County Council bodies should include a section 'Environmental Implications';
 - iv) in order to progress this important issue those members who

served on the Scrutiny Panel on Energy and Water Management be asked to convene as a Panel to consider the Council's current and planned response to the Environment Agenda with a view to identifying the key areas of County Council activity that could be investigated further so as to deliver the Council's commitments to the environment and climate change.

108. Scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive asking it to reconsider its previous decision regarding the arrangements for scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) in the light of the establishment of the Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:-

That the Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee be asked to scrutinise of the 'Stronger Communities' block of the LAA.

109. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting be held on Wednesday 28 March 2007 at 2.00 p.m.

28 February 2007
2.00 p.m. – 3.25.p.m.

CHAIRMAN

