

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 2 April 2008.

PRESENT

Dr. M. O'Callaghan CC (in the Chair)

Mr. D. R. Bown CC
Mr. R. Fraser CC
Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. G. A. Hart CC
Mr. D. W. Houseman CC

Mr. P. G. Lewis CC
Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC
Mr. R. M. Wilson CC

Attendance under the Sensitive Issues Procedure.

Mr Max Hunt CC for item on the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy. (minute number 96).

By Invitation.

Mr D R Parsons CC – Leader of the Council (for minute number 94)
Mrs M L Sherwin CC – Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Panel on the County Council's Environment Policies and Programmes (for minute number 95)

87. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2008 were taken as read, confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Dr O'Callaghan in the list of members declaring personal non prejudicial interests (minute 82 refers).

88. Question Time.

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

89. 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).

90. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

91. Declarations of interest.

The following members declared personal non prejudicial interests as members of District Councils in relation to the reports on the CPA Corporate Assessment and the Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy:-

Mr Galton, Mr Hart, Mr Lewis, Mr Shepherd, Mr Snartt and Dr O'Callaghan.

92. 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.

93. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

94. CPA Corporate Assessment - Final Report and Corporate Improvement Plan.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive on the results of the corporate assessment of the Council by the Audit Commission; the report sought the Commission's comments on the draft CPA Corporate Improvement Plan to be considered by the Cabinet on 8th April. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions, the Commission was advised as follows:-

- i) the recent decision by all District Councils to participate in the new LAA efficiency target was to be welcomed. Nevertheless, overall progress on the shared services agenda with Districts was slower than desired. The County Council had identified for the benefit of all District Councils those areas of activity/service where it considered joint working could lead to efficiencies and/or better service provision. To date, the only Councils to have responded positively to specific proposals were Melton and Blaby Councils. It was, however, noted that some District Councils were exploring opportunities for shared services without involving the County Council;
- ii) the County Council was working closely with neighbouring top tier authorities, particularly Nottinghamshire, on the shared services agenda;
- iii) the Council had recognised that progress towards achieving Level 3 of the Equality Standard had been slower than expected and the revised Action Plan target dates recognised this. The problem had been, in part, a resource issue;

- iv) whilst it was recognised that the performance management framework and reporting arrangements had improved significantly, there still remained challenges particularly in relation to the new requirements of LAA2 and the CAA and in the context of partnership working;
- v) the low take-up by members of training opportunities was an issue of concern and all political groups would need to address this.

RESOLVED:

That the positive inspection report which highlighted the excellent performance and achievements of the County Council and its partners be welcomed.

95. Draft Final Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on the County Council's Environment Policies and Programmes - Leadership and the Environment.

The Commission considered a report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on the County Council's Environment Policies and Programme. The report outlined the Panel's recommendations arising from its second block of work on 'Leadership and the Environment' A copy of the report, marked 'C', is filed with these minutes.

Members noted the actions taken by the Panel to seek the views of interested groups and outside witnesses.

In response to comments regarding paragraph 13 of the report, members were advised that the Environmental Strategy Action Plan would provide a more comprehensive list of investment and activities undertaken by the County Council. Members were also advised that the County Council had obtained resources from the Carbon Trust to measure the carbon footprint of the County Council and measures that could be taken. The issue of reducing business travel by officers would be addressed as part of this initiative.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report of the Review Panel be welcomed and commended;
- b) That this report and future reports of the Panel be submitted to the Environment Scrutiny Committee.

96. Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), Second Local Area Agreement (LAA2) and Multi-Area Agreement for Leicester and Leicestershire.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive on the draft Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2008 – 2013, which set out the high level outcomes that partners wished to achieve in Leicestershire and the second Local Area Agreement (LAA 2) 2008 – 11 which provided the delivery framework for the most important of these outcomes. Alongside the LAA developments, agreement had been reached with partners in Leicester City on a Multi Area Agreement (MAA) covering Leicester and Leicestershire. This currently focussed on economic issues because this element of the LAA was considered to be best suited to a sub regional focus. A copy of the report,

marked 'D', is filed with these minutes.

The Commission also considered written comments that had been received from Mr M. Hunt CC which expressed concern at how the issue of access to services was being addressed within the strategy and that the Strategy as currently drafted failed to have proper regard to the role of the internet in enhancing access to services. A copy of the comments is also filed with these minutes.

In the ensuing discussion the following suggestions were put forward by members as issues that needed to be addressed before the Strategy was finalised:-

- i) the name of the Thurmaston, Syston and Wreake Villages Forum should be changed back to 'South Charnwood Forum' in accordance with the wishes of that Forum ;
- ii) the role of the internet in enabling people to access services should be strengthened in the Access to Services chapter;
- iii) the findings of the Review Panel on the Arts should be reflected. This demonstrated how the arts and cultural activities could contribute to a number of the themes in the SCS and LAA;
- iv) inclusion of a reference to rail transport in the transport section;

With regard to the section on Children and Young People and priority outcome 2.8.1, Mr Galton advised the Commission that his Group would be preparing a paper for circulation to the Cabinet setting out their views on how this might be addressed. (A copy of the paper which was received following the meeting of the Commission is attached to these minutes for information).

Members were advised that many of the issues raised by Mr Hunt had been recognised and taken into account in redrafting the Strategy. Members were advised that detailed delivery plans for each of the themes of the SCS would be prepared and the issues now identified would be addressed within those plans. With regard to 'pump priming' funds, the Commission was advised that whilst some reward funding should be available this would be significantly less than that received in LAA1.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the comments now made be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet;
- b) That the officers responsible for the producing the draft Sustainable Community Strategy be commended and thanked for their work.

97. Fourth Review of the Capital Programme 2007/08.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning progress on the delivery of the Annual Capital Programme. A copy of the report marked 'E' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the overall position, showing 95% of programmed expenditure is forecast to be completed by the year end, be noted.

98. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee be held on Wednesday 18th June 2008 at 2.00 pm.

2.00 pm - 3.25 pm
02 April 2008

CHAIRMAN