

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 18 June 2008.

PRESENT

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

Mr. A. D. Bailey CC	Mr. John Legrys CC
Mr. D. R. Bown CC	Mr. P. G. Lewis CC
Mr. R. Fraser CC	Mr. J. S. Moore CC
Mr. S. J. Galton CC	Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. D. W. Houseman CC	Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

99. Appointment of Deputy Chairman.

It was moved, seconded and carried:-

That Mr D R Bown CC be appointed Deputy Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2008.

100. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2008 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

101. Question Time.

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

102. 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).

103. Urgent Items.

There were no other items of urgent business.

104. Declarations of interest.

The following members declared personal non prejudicial interests as members of District Councils in relation to any issues arising from consideration of the End of year performance report for 2007/08:-

Messrs Galton, Snartt, Legrys, Shepherd and Lewis.

Mr Galton declared a personal non prejudicial interest in relation to the report on the 'Eco-Town' as a member of the Campaign against the Stoughton Eco Town (CASSET).

105. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

106. Presentation of Petitions.

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

107. Strategic Change Programme.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the achievements and lessons learnt from the second year of the Council's Strategic Change Programme. A copy of the report marked 'A' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission also received a powerpoint presentation on the key highlights within the second annual report. A copy of the slides used the presentation are also filed with these minutes.

In response to questions the Commission was advised as follows:

- i) The difficulties experienced with the Customer Service Centre were recognised. An action plan had been put in place to address a range of issues which were currently affecting the service. The concerns about member access were also noted and members were reminded that arrangements had already been put in place to enable members to contact local offices direct. Lessons learnt would be taken on board in the future roll out of the service.
- ii) The Strategic Change Programme was not only about achieving cashable efficiency savings; it is also delivering service improvements. Over the coming months the Strategic Change Programme would be focussing on service transformation through the establishment of new programmes, for example in Adult Social Care service and on environmental issues.
- iii) Good progress had been made in building and developing project management and business analysis capacity within the County Council.

## RESOLVED:

- a) That this Commission notes the Annual Report and welcomes the progress made particularly in relation to capacity building and the achievement, ahead of target, of procurement efficiencies of £4.4 million;
- b) That the Cabinet be advised accordingly and that the Commission:-
  - (i) has concerns about the implementation of the elements of the Customer Services Centre for Highways, Transportation and Waste and the procurement of external services within Highways which has seen a deterioration in service;
  - (ii) whilst noting the assurances given, remains concerned about the proposed roll out of the Customer First programme particularly in the case of Adult Social Care;
  - iii) requests that a further progress report be submitted to a future meeting of the Commission on the Strategic Change Programme, and in particular, plans put in place to recover the position on the Customer Service Centre and proposals for the roll out of the next phase, and that the appropriate Cabinet Lead Member be invited to attend the meeting for consideration of that report.

108. Procurement and the Environment - Progress Report.

The Commission considered a report on progress in implementing the Environmental Purchasing Plan. The Plan sought to ensure that environmental considerations were built into the Council's future procurement policies and decisions so that it could demonstrate and promote good environmental practice in its role as a community leader. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission was advised:-

- i) that an Environmental Purchasing policy was being developed which would be submitted to the Corporate Management Team for approval. This Strategy would focus on those areas of the Council's activities that carry the greatest risk of causing environmental harm.
- ii) That in undertaking purchasing decisions the 'whole life cost' was taken into account. This recognised that there may be initial additional costs associated with environmental purchasing but this needed to be balanced against possible savings over the longer term together with reduced harm to the environment.

## RESOLVED:

That the report and progress being made be welcomed.

109. Equality and Diversity Strategy.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the County Council's draft Equality and Diversity Strategy. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions the Commission was advised as follows:

- i) It was recognised that this area of work had previously been under resourced. As a result of a recent review this activity was now an integral part of the policy and performance function and additional resources had been provided.
- ii) The achievement of Level 3 would be particularly challenging as it required consistency of practice and the embedding of equality and diversity within mainstream programmes. The County Council would be externally assessed in relation to Level 3 in March 2009.
- iii) A detailed Action Plan had been prepared for the achievement of Level 3 and would be made available to members.
- iv) The need to ensure the Citizens' Panel reflected the population of Leicestershire was recognised. Attempts had been made to ensure previously under-represented groups, particularly BME groups and young people were encouraged to join the panel. A briefing paper on the make-up of the panel and the recruitment process would be made available to members.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the draft Equality and Diversity Strategy be welcomed
- b) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Commission on progress of implementing the Strategy and the outcome of the external assessment in relation to the achievement of Level 3.

110. County Council End of Year Performance Report for 2007/08.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning:

- details of the Medium Term Corporate Strategy, Performance Indicators and Local Area Agreement (LAA) performance at the end of the financial year 2007/08;
- the contents of the Annual Performance Report which will be used as the basis of the Council's Annual Performance Plan;
- proposals for performance monitoring and reporting for 2008/09 onwards.

A copy of the report marked 'D' is filed with these minutes.

In the discussion on the report members noted that:

- i) The Children and Young Peoples Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee was considering areas of underperformance which had also been identified in the Joint Area Review;
- ii) The Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be considering the Action Plan put in place to address underperformance on the LAA indicators 5.9 and 5.10 concerning the number of Older People claiming Attendance and Housing Benefit;
- iii) The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be looking at road accidents as part of its monitoring of the LTP.
- iv) Whilst progress had been made in making buildings accessible further work was needed. A rolling investment programme was in place to address this and the issue would also be considered in the context of the Asset Management and Office Accommodation Reviews.

Discussions then took place on the targets within the Safer Communities block. The reduction in crime, particularly in vehicle crime, was particularly welcomed. Concern was expressed about the level of Anti Social Behaviour and the impact this had on people's perception about crime levels. In this regard, members commented on the key role PCSO's could play. Members also indicated it would be useful to invite the Chief Constable to a future meeting to discuss amongst other things the role of PCSO's and the impact of the investment by the County Council in funding 50 PCSO's.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the positive end of year performance report be noted.
- b) That the Chairman and the Spokesmen of the Commission be requested to consider the new Performance Management Framework and the future arrangements for reporting and scrutiny of performance.

111. Eco-Towns - County Council Response to Pennbury.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the County Council's response to the Government's first (end of June) consultation deadline for comments on its 'eco-town' proposals and consideration of how scrutiny might wish to contribute to the assessment of the proposals in detail. A copy of the report marked 'E' is filed with these minutes.

Mr. Galton CC having declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in this matter as a member of the Campaign Against the Stoughton Eco Town (CASSET) did not take part in the discussion but remained to observe the meeting from the public gallery.

Messrs Bown CC, Legrys CC, Fraser CC, and Snartt CC, who were members of the Development Control and Regulatory Board withdrew from the meeting.

The Chairman, Dr. O'Callaghan CC, advised that he would not be commenting on the matter until more detailed information on the proposals became available.

In the course of the discussion members of the Commission:-

- a) expressed concerns about the 'eco-town process' particularly its total disregard for established planning procedures and, in particular, that the identification of sites at a national level has failed to recognise the key role local authorities and local communities have in identifying the most appropriate locations within their areas.
- b) Supported the call to the Government to extend the October deadline by at least 6 months to allow the Co-op to develop its proposals further and for the County Council and other stakeholders to complete their assessments.
- c) Expressed their support for the proposed response outlined in the report but were of the view that it should also to draw attention to the fact that the proposals would also have an impact on adjoining areas within the County and City, something could not presently be determined due to the paucity of information. A view was also expressed that the response should include reference to the potential implication on other services not listed in paragraph 30 in particular, youth services and post 16 education and training provision.

#### RESOLVED

That the Cabinet be advised that the Commission intends to establish a five member panel to consider in detail the proposals being put forward for the development of an 'eco-town' with a view to obtaining a better understanding of the issues and impact of the proposal both in terms of the impact on the immediate area and those areas adjacent to the proposed development.

#### 112. Annual Report from Scrutiny Bodies.

The Commission considered a draft report to be submitted to the County Council appending the Annual Report on behalf of Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2007/08. A copy of the report marked 'F' is filed with these minutes.

#### RESOLVED:

That the reports submitted by the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be approved for submission to the County Council.

113. Date of Next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Commission be held on Wednesday 23 July 2008 at 2.00pm.

2.00 pm - 5.10 pm  
18 June 2008

CHAIRMAN