

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 5 November 2008.

PRESENT

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

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
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. John Legrys CC
Mr. P. G. Lewis CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mrs. M. L. Sherwin CC

148. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2008 were taken as read, confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to Minute number 143 being amended to reflect that Mr Houseman CC did not declare a personal non prejudicial interest as a District Council member.

149. Question Time.

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

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

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

151. Urgent Business.

The Chairman reported that he had agreed to consider as an urgent item the possibility of establishing a Panel to look into issues relating to alcohol abuse.

152. Declarations of interests.

There were no declarations of interests.

153. 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.

154. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under

Standing Order 36.

155. HTWM Customer Service Centre and Customer First Programme Update.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources setting out the current performance of the HTWM Customer Service Centre and the planning for the next phases of the Customer First Programme. A copy of the report, marked 'B', is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions from members the Committee was advised as follows:-

- The Customer service Centre handled between 2500- 3000 calls per week;
- 80% of calls were answered within 10 seconds and between 80 -85% of enquires are dealt with on first contact. Where an enquiry required more detailed or technical answers these were referred to Departmental officers;
- Approximately 3% of calls were abandoned;
- Monday mornings were particularly busy and the staffing levels had been adjusted to reflect this;
- Members of the Council were able to contact officers direct and not via the Customer Service Centre. Any concerns from members on difficulties experienced would be looked at;
- Turnover of staff was very low and this had, in part, contributed to the improvement in service provision.
- There was close working with the Adult Social Care Service to obtain a better understand their service needs particularly in relation to the emerging personalisation of care agenda. Other authorities who had established a customer service centre to deal with Adult Social Care Services were being contacted to learn from their experiences;
- In the roll out of the next phase there would be an initial over allocation of staff so that any underestimation of demand could be dealt with. The Service was also undertaking additional staff training and development to ensure that there was a pool of well trained staff to deal with peaks and unplanned absences.

RESOLVED

- a) That the improvements made in response times be noted and the staff in the Customer Service Centre be commended on their efforts;
- b) That the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to monitor the development and implementation of a customer service solution for Adult Social Care.

156. Revenue Budget - Monitoring Report.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the revenue budget based on the pattern of income and expenditure for the first six months of the financial year. A copy of the report, marked 'C', is filed with these minutes.

The Director of Corporate Resources reported that, in consultation with the Council's financial advisers, he was reviewing the County Council's investment policy. The findings of this review would be reported to the Commission.

In response to questions, members were advised as follows:-

- The impact of the recent reduction in oil prices would not immediately feed through as the Council had a policy of forward purchasing of energy and fuel. Half of the predicted additional £6million cost forecast would need to be met by schools.
- The Council's contribution to the Pension Fund would be reviewed in 2010/11 when the 3 year valuation of the pension scheme was completed.
- The current position on the level of school balances was not yet known but details would be circulated to members when it was available.

RESOLVED

- a) That the position now reported on the 2008/09 revenue budget be noted;
- b) That the Director of Corporate Resources be asked to convey this Commission's appreciation to staff involved in management of the Council's investment strategy.

157. Second Review of 2008/09 Capital Programme

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 'D', is filed with these minutes.

Members were advised that work was currently in hand to consider the implications of the downturn in the property market. The impact of the reduction of capital receipts on the discretionary element of the 3 year capital programme and those projects reliant on earmarked capital receipts would need particular consideration as would the option of using prudential borrowing to fund such schemes. The outcome of this work would be reported as part of the roll forward of the capital programme in January.

In response to questions the Director advised as follows:-

- The Council had a target to pay invoices within 28 days and was currently achieving this in 93% of cases. It was unlikely, given the necessary verification processes, that payments could be made much

earlier.

- Discussions were on-going with the developer regarding the early release of Section 106 monies for the Birstall Park and Ride Scheme. However, given the difficulties in the housing market the outlook was not optimistic.

RESOLVED

- a) That the current position on the delivery of the capital programme be noted;
- b) That the County Council's £5 million capital investment in new library facilities and refurbishing existing libraries be welcomed;
- c) That the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Environment Scrutiny Committee be asked to look into the cost overruns on the Earl Shilton Bypass and how the 'Open Book tendering arrangements operated in this case.

158. Sustainable Communities Act.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the request from the County Council that a review panel be established to consider how best the Council can be involved in achieving the objectives of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007. A copy of the report, marked 'E', is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED

That the following members be nominated to attend the LGIU seminar on the requirements of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007:-

Mr D. R. Bown CC
Mr R. Fraser CC
Mrs S Hilll CC

159. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 17th December at 2pm.

160. Urgent Item - Possible Review Panel on Alcohol Abuse.

The Commission considered this matter, the Chairman having decided it was of an urgent nature, in view of concerns expressed about the impact of alcohol abuse on individuals and communities. He advised the Commission that his view was there would be merit in establishing a Panel to look at the responses of the County Council and other partners to this issue.

Some members of the Commission whilst noting the concerns raised were of the view that it would be necessary for the Commission to receive a briefing

paper on the work currently being undertaken, including the work by District Council's as part of their licensing role, prior to considering the merits or otherwise of establishing a Panel.

RESOLVED

That officers be asked to submit a report to the next meeting of the Commission outlining the role of and work undertaken by the various partners on this issue.

2.00 pm - 3.35 pm
05 November 2008

CHAIRMAN