

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 20 April 2011.

PRESENT

Mr. S. J. Galton CC (in the Chair)

Mr. R. Blunt CC	Mr. P. G. Lewis CC
Mr. G. A. Boulter CC	Mr. M. B. Page CC
Mrs. R. Camamile CC	Mrs. R. Page CC
Dr. R. K. A Feltham CC	Mrs. P. Posnett CC
Dr. S. Hill CC	Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. Max Hunt CC	Mr. D. Slater CC

In Attendance:

Mr. J. T. Orson JP, CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Safer Communities (for Minutes 181 and 182)

174. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2011 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

175. Question Time.

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

176. Questions asked by members.

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

177. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

178. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

Dr. S. Hill CC and Mr. M. B. Page CC each declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of items 8, 9 and 11 as members of the Police Authority (minutes 181, 182 and 184 refer).

Mr. J. T. Orson JP, CC declared a personal, prejudicial interest in respect of item 9 as he had been present at the Cabinet meeting where the matter had been considered prior to consideration by the Commission (minute 182 refers).

179. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

180. Presentation of Petitions.

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

181. Youth Justice Plan 2011/12.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the Draft Youth Strategic Justice Plan 2011/12. A copy of the report, marked "B", is filed with these minutes.

The Chief Executive reported that there had been an unexpectedly large reduction in Youth Justice Grant which amounted to a 21% cut in funding to the Service. The County Council had agreed to provide £500,000 of transition funding over two years to help lessen the impact of these cuts.

With the permission of the Chairman, the Lead Member for Safer Communities, Mr. J. T. Orson CC addressed the Commission and commended the Plan and the important work that was carried out by the Youth Offending Service. In particular, he felt that the Plan clearly identified the Service's priority areas within the context of a reduced budget.

Arising from discussion, the following key points were noted:

- The Service had managed to maintain a high number of volunteers, who were focused principally on early intervention work. They were viewed as being key to the success of the Service;
- The Impact Team had achieved significant successes with 71% of service users questioned having rated the Team as "10 out of 10" in surveys;
- The Service was having to make difficult decisions in light of reductions in formula grant. The Basic Skills Team, which had been successful in helping youths improve their literacy, placing them in a better position for training for employment, was being cut by £155,585 in 2011/12 and would cease in 2012/13. Opportunities for training and education would however continue to be available through Connexions and other educational providers. It was suggested that some charities were also able to provide a similar 'basic skills' service to youths;
- Transition funding would cease beyond 2013. A phased reduction in some lower priority service areas would take place through 2012/13, though there was a commitment to ensuring that, so far as possible, core frontline services would remain unaffected by any further service

reductions.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Plan be commended to the Cabinet and that the £500,000 transition funding over two years to mitigate the impact of the 21% reduction in external grant funding be welcomed;
- (b) That concerns remain about the future of some elements of the Service given the expected further reductions in funding.

182. Home Office Consultation Paper: "More Effective Responses to Anti-Social Behaviour".

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning a draft consultation response to the Home Office Consultation Paper entitled "More Effective Responses to Anti-Social Behaviour". A copy of the report, marked C, is filed with these minutes.

Mr. J. T. Orson CC, the Lead Member for Safer Communities, who was present for the discussion, welcomed the Consultation Paper as it would ensure a more streamlined approach to anti-social behaviour. He commended the response to the Commission.

Detailed guidance on the arrangements had yet to emerge, though it was recognised that a clear structure of responsibilities would be needed to ensure that all parties including the public were aware of where responsibility lay.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed response to the Home Office Consultation Paper be supported.

183. Communications Strategy 2011/12.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Draft Corporate Communications Strategy. A copy of the report, marked "D", is filed with these minutes.

The Commission welcomed the moves to centralise the Communications function at the County Council and to integrate the work previously undertaken in different departments and noted the opportunities for savings, as a consequence of the re-organisation.

The Commission considered that it was important that in view of the emphasis on Big Society and Shared Services and the need to encourage inward investment, marketing should be directed to Leicestershire as a place which offered positive opportunities for business development, rather than a rural or "dormitory" area.

With regard to Leicestershire Matters the view was that the emphasis should be on Leicestershire as a whole rather than the work of the County Council and, in particular, the Cabinet.

The Communications Strategy should be directed to supporting the work of all members of the Council and the Commission welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the further development of the Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the Strategy be supported as a means for the Council to maximise the effectiveness of its communications function.

184. A Community Budget for Families with Complex Needs in Leicestershire.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the inclusion of Leicestershire within the national Community Budgets programme which had been submitted to the Cabinet on 5 April seeking the Cabinet's approval for Leicestershire's proposals for a Community Budget for families with complex needs. A copy of the report, marked "E", is filed with these minutes.

The Chief Executive reported the following key issues associated with the proposals:

- The criteria for families that were deemed to have "complex needs" was still being developed. It was likely that families that experienced at least five of a number of problems would be included. Typical problems were:
 - No parent in the family was in work;
 - Family lived in poor quality or overcrowded housing;
 - No parent had any qualifications;
 - Mother had mental health problems;
 - At least one parent had a long standing limiting illness, disability or infirmity;
 - Family had low income (below 60% of the median);
 - Family could not afford a number of food or clothing items.
- Early intervention with families with or likely to develop complex needs which prevented the high costs associated with residential care, hospital care, prison and the criminal justice system would enable the Council and other public service organisations to make a significant financial savings;
- The proposals would be developed by working with a small number of families in order to identify the right levels and type of support that was required to help them overcome these problems. This would commence in September 2011. The intention was to then evaluate and, if appropriate, extend the model to all relevant families. It was suggested that this would be an opportunity for further scrutiny involvement.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the opportunity to scrutinise the outcomes of the pilot exercise later in the year be welcomed.

185. Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the arrangements for delivering infrastructure support services to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). A copy of the report, marked "F", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- Significant progress had been made with district based Voluntary Actions to establish an effective way forward which had largely clarified the roles to be played by the community hubs and local resource centres. All requests for transitional funding were likely to be met;
- It would be necessary to review the outcomes required of the infrastructure provided (currently by Voluntary Action Leicestershire) and re-tender the contract in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

186. Matters Arising from the Meeting of the Scrutiny Commissioners.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning issues discussed at the Scrutiny Commissioners' meeting on 16 March and to seek approval for the terms of reference for two scrutiny reviews. A copy of the report, marked "G", is filed with these minutes.

In relation to the terms of reference for the Big Society Review, the following suggestions were put forward as additions to the meeting schedule:

- Ms. Dorothy Francis, Chief Executive Officer of the Co-operative and Social Enterprise Development Agency and a recent winner of Leicestershire Business Woman of the Year, should be invited to address members on how the Big Society could be supported by business;
- That the Review Panel should also consider and contribute to the criteria being developed for allocating the £850,000 set aside in the budget for Big Society initiatives.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the establishment of a 'Light Touch' review of Transportation Schemes and Member Engagement be agreed with the terms of reference outlined in Appendix A to the report and that Mr. Blunt and Mr. Bray be nominated to serve on the review;
- (b) That, subject to inclusion of the above additions, the terms of reference for the second part of the review of the Big Society, as outlined in Appendix B to the report, be agreed and that the membership of the Panel remain unchanged from the first part of the review.

187. Date of next meeting.

It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on 8 June 2011 at 2.00pm.

2.00 pm - 4.15 pm
20 April 2011

CHAIRMAN