

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 7 September 2011.

PRESENT

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

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mrs. R. Camamile CC
Mr. J. G. Coxon CC
Mr. T. Gillard CC
Dr. S. Hill CC

Mr. A. M. Kershaw CC
Mrs. R. Page CC
Mrs. P. Posnett CC
Mr. P. A. Roffey CC
Mr. D. Slater CC

In Attendance:

Mr. R. Blunt CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Waste Management (for minute 209)

Mr. P. C. Osborne CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Climate Change (for minute 210)

Mr. D. Sprason CC, Local member for Desford, Markfield and Thornton (for minute 208)

202. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2011 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

203. Question Time.

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

204. Questions asked by members.

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

205. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

206. 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.

Mr. A. M. Kershaw CC told the meeting that he had been advised to declare a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of item 8 as a former Cabinet Lead Member for Waste Management and having been present at the Cabinet meeting where the matter had been previously discussed (minute 209 refers).

207. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

208. Petition: Request for reversal of cuts to the bus services covering the Barlestone and Newbold Verdon areas.

A petition submitted signed by 951 local residents was presented to the Commission by Michael Mullaney, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Councillor, requesting that the Council revisit the recent changes to the and 153 bus service through (from Market Bosworth to Leicester) and the withdrawal of the 152 service (from Coalville to Leicester).

A briefing note of the Director of Environment and Transport summarising the situation relating to the petition was considered by the Commission. A copy of this report, marked 'B', is filed with these minutes.

With the consent of the Chairman, Cllr Mullaney addressed the Commission and explained that, as Market Bosworth was one of the County's tourist areas, it would be adversely affected by the withdrawal of a Sunday service. He hoped that a reasonable solution could be reached with Arriva to continue to provide a service.

The Director made the following points:

- Arriva's depot in Coalville had been downgraded to an outstation in Ellistown, which would operate from Monday to Saturday only. Buses would now have to be brought from other depots in order to operate a Sunday service. It was Arriva's view that the "dead mileage" in bringing buses from other stations would make a Sunday service cost prohibitive to operate;
- A Scrutiny Panel had recently commenced a review of bus service policy. It would be looking at whether the Council should subsidise services such as those affected. The Panel would be formulating a new policy for the network which was expected to emerge in the New Year;
- The Department for Transport had decided that the concessionary travel reimbursement paid to bus operators would be reduced by 10-20%. There was concern that bus operators would be unable to absorb such losses and this would have a further impact on services;
- The issue had been discussed with other bus companies operating in the area. However, there were a limited number of providers of services;
- The County Council had agreed to make a saving of £500,000 on the supported bus network in 2012/13 and a further saving of £500,000 in 2013/14.

With the consent of the Chairman, the local member for Desford, Markfield and Thornton, Mr. D. A. Sprason CC addressed the Commission and raised the following principal points:

- It was felt that the petitioners could have done more to work with the Desford Parish Council, who had previously been in contact with Arriva about the reduction in service;
- The financial position of the County Council was recognised, though it was felt that there may be other avenues that could be investigated in order to subsidise the services to the level needed, including engagement with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council;
- He was happy for the petition to be submitted to the Review Panel for consideration as part of its Review.

The Commission expressed concern that the County Council might be seen as responsible for Arriva's withdrawal of services. Furthermore, it was becoming apparent that Arriva and other companies might have become reliant on the Council's concessionary travel reimbursement in order to support services. It was recognised that there was significant level of local feeling, particularly in respect of the withdrawal of the Sunday service.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the information in the report be noted;
- (b) That it be noted that the policy for support of Local Bus Services is to be the subject of a forthcoming Scrutiny Review Panel and that the financial support for the provision of evening and Sunday services will be considered as part of that Review;
- (c) That it be noted that the specific issue of the reduction of the 152 and 153 services will be assessed against the policy that emerges from the Scrutiny Review;
- (d) That the Director of Environment and Transport be asked to write to Arriva, with copies to the affected Parish Councils, reflecting the strength of feeling of the petitioners in regard to the loss of a Sunday service.

209. Procurement of Long-Term Waste Treatment Facilities.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which had been submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 26 July concerning the termination of the long-term waste treatment project following a decision by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in October 2010. A copy of the report, marked 'C', is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the Cabinet Lead Member for Waste Management, Mr. R. Blunt CC who was attending to respond to questions from the Commission regarding the report..

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Since the project to procure a long-term waste treatment facility had commenced in 2007 there had been a reduction in the amount of waste produced in the County and an increase in the rate of recycling in Leicestershire, resulting in less than 42% of the County's waste going to landfill. The efforts made by Leicestershire residents had resulted in the County having one of the best recycling performances in the country. The Assistant Director (Environment) was congratulated on this performance;
- Although the County's recycling performance was excellent, more work could be done to encourage residents to reduce, re-use and recycle their waste;
- Concerns were raised in relation to the life expectancy of the waste facility in Coventry and the long-term effect of transporting waste. It was highlighted that works had been carried out at the facility to extend its life;
- The Leicestershire Municipal Waste Strategy was in the process of being reviewed and would incorporate the outcomes of the Government's review of waste policy, which was published in June 2011. The Strategy had been originally adopted by the County Council and seven district councils in 2006;
- Harborough District Council was the only district council thus far to have provided a separate weekly collection of food waste. However, those arrangements had been terminated by reason of cost, although discussions were continuing. Other district councils in the County had not yet introduced a collection of food waste, due in the most part to the high cost of providing the service;
- There was a perception that the reason for moving away from landfill as a means of disposal was the shortage of suitable sites. This was not necessarily the case, although obtaining planning permission for new sites would inevitably become increasingly more difficult. The primary drivers for diverting waste away from landfill were environmental and economic benefits together with the increasing cost of landfill tax;
- The Council benefited from a strong relationship with the district councils on waste management. The Cabinet Lead Member acknowledged that more could be done to further strengthen this relationship;
- The Government would be consulting local authorities on a number of materials which they were proposing to ban from landfill, such as wood. A new national plan for waste would hopefully emerge in spring 2012, at which time it was expected that there would be further consultation with the Scrutiny Commission.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the comments of the Commission, as outlined above, be reported to the Cabinet at its meeting on 13 September;
- (b) That the Cabinet Lead Member be asked to write to Mr. Boulter CC providing further details on the life expectancy of the waste facility in Coventry.

210. Environment Strategy Review.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning the review of the Environment Strategy. A copy of the report, marked 'D', is filed with these minutes.

The Director explained that the Strategy had been submitted to the Commission in order that its views could be fed into the Cabinet meeting on 13 September, prior to approval by the full County Council at its meeting on 28 September.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the Cabinet Lead Member for Climate Change, Mr. P. C. Osborne CC, who was attending to respond to any questions the Commission had on the Strategy.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- There was some crossover between the Strategy and the Carbon Management Plan, which was expected to be debated by the Commission in November. The proposed revised strategy set a target of 10% of energy use from renewable energy sources;
- The Government was currently consulting on how the Carbon Reduction Commitment should apply to schools and academies. It was hoped, as the school system moved toward an academy model, that the Council's obligation to pay the Carbon Reduction Commitment would not extend to academies;
- Reduction in street lighting was expected to make a significant impact in achieving the 30% carbon saving target, despite the increase in adopted streets. In considering the reduction in the use of street lighting, it was of crucial importance to work with local communities and to identify their needs;
- The Office Accommodation Strategy would ensure a significant improvement in the overall energy efficiency of the Council's corporate accommodation;
- There were currently 160 "Green Champions" in the Council. These were members of staff who had volunteered to assist in the move towards ensuring greener working practices;
- Energy efficiency remained the highest priority for the Council in the present economic climate. It was hoped that, as the economic climate

improved, there would be a move toward procuring effective renewable energy generation measures as well, such as photovoltaic and solar panels at County Council building, including County Hall;

- It was highlighted that the Council's recycling and Household Waste site at Melton was lit through the night for security reasons, though it was questioned whether use of motion sensor infrared lighting would assist in improving energy efficiency;

RESOLVED:

That the progress made in reviewing the Environment Strategy be noted and that comments of the Commission, as outlined above, be reported to the Cabinet at its meeting on 13 September.

211. Community Budget for Families with Complex Needs Programme.

The Commission considered a report and presentation of the Chief Executive concerning an update in respect of the Community Budget for Families with Complex Needs. A copy of the report and the slides forming the presentation is filed with these minutes, marked 'E' and 'EE' respectively.

In response to the presentation, the Commission made the following points:

- The importance of working with families with complex needs at the earliest opportunity was recognised. It was clear that families did wish to improve outcomes, though at present there were barriers which sometimes prevented this happening. Sharing information between agencies and the creation of a hub approach was seen as a significant step forward, which would redesign the provision of key services to ensure they met the needs of users;
- Though there would not be any additional resources from Government toward this project, the Council's Community Budget Programme would bring together the inter-related programmes for Families with Complex Needs, Substance Misuse and Access to Services. The agreed Medium Term Financial Strategy made provision for £4 million to fund the programme;
- It was anticipated that there would be a further opportunity for the Commission to look at the progress made with the Programme in December.

RESOLVED:

That the report and presentation be noted.

212. Date of next meeting.

It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on Wednesday 9 November 2011 at 2.00pm.

2.00 pm - 4.30 pm
07 September 2011

CHAIRMAN