

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Tuesday, 16 September 2014.

PRESENT

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

Mrs. R. Camamile CC
Mrs. J. A. Dickinson CC
Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC
Dr. S. Hill CC
Mr. Max Hunt CC

Mr. D. Jennings CC
Mr. P. G. Lewis CC
Mr. K. W. P. Lynch CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. L. Spence CC

124. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2014 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

125. Question Time.

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

126. 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).

127. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

128. 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.

No declarations were made.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

130. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

131. Response to Petitions for and against Badger Culling in Leicestershire.

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided a response to issues raised in petitions to the County Council for and against badger culling in Leicestershire. A copy of the report, marked 'item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Members noted that it would be appropriate for the County Council to consider requests for culling on its country parks and other owned land on a case by case basis. Should the Department for Farming and Rural affairs (DEFRA) extend its pilot culls to Leicestershire and/or nationwide in future, members were supportive that officers should take into account the consideration of scientific evidence at that time, Government advice, and the views of local stakeholders.

Whilst noting that there had been no such requests and that there were none expected for the foreseeable future, members discussed the merits for and against badger culling and the alternatives, including vaccination which was being piloted in Wales.

It was moved and seconded:

- a) That it be noted that the merits for and against badger culling as a means of reducing TB in cattle continue to be informed by expert scientific evidence and that any requests for culling on County Council owned land that may result in the future would be considered on a case by case basis;
- b) That the views set out in the two e-petitions be forwarded to DEFRA as the overall 'responsible body' for this matter, for its consideration.'

An amendment was moved and seconded:

That part b) of the motion be amended to read as follows:

'That the views set out in the two e-petitions be forwarded to DEFRA as the overall 'responsible body' for this matter, for its consideration alongside the view of the Commission that it favours vaccination rather than the culling of badgers.'

The amendment was put and carried, six members voting in favour and five against.

The substantive motion was then put and carried, nine members voting in favour, with two abstentions.

RESOLVED:

- a) That it be noted that the merits for and against badger culling as a means of reducing TB in cattle continue to be informed by expert scientific evidence and that any requests for culling on County Council owned land that may result in the future would be considered on a case by case basis;

- b) That the views set out in the two e-petitions be forwarded to DEFRA as the overall 'responsible body' for this matter, for its consideration alongside the view of the Commission that it favours vaccination rather than the culling of badgers.

132. Reduction in Funding and Support to Agencies - Outcome of Consultation and Proposed Reductions to Funding.

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 19 September 2014. The report set out the outcome of a Cabinet consultation on proposals to reduce funding and support to agencies and which would seek the Cabinet's approval to allocate savings of £590,000 as part of the County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy savings requirements. A copy of the report is filed with these papers, marked 'agenda item 9'.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:-

- i) The draft savings proposals had been amended in light of the representations made during the 12 week consultation which, if approved, would affect the phasing of the savings to be made but not change the overall savings target to be achieved;
- ii) The reduction in funding to the County Infrastructure Organisation, Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) – which provided support and guidance on behalf of the County Council to local voluntary and community groups in accordance with contractual arrangements – would remain at £300,000 but now be phased with half of the money taken from the current final year of the contract with VAL, and the remaining half to be reduced when the contract was re-tendered for the beginning of the 2016/17 year;
- iii) With regard to the services provided by VAL, the Chief Executive confirmed that the organisation was performing well against the performance indicators set by the County Council within its current contract. It was further noted the lead officer for VAL (as the largest voluntary and community sector provider) would be attending the next meeting of the Commission to present against its recent performance and, subject to the forthcoming decision of the Cabinet, to explore future delivery against County Council commitments under the terms of a revised funding settlement within its current contract;
- iv) Members queried whether contracts currently provided by voluntary organisations to provide County Council services were sufficiently effective enough. There was also specific concerns raised that the re-tender of the contract for a County Infrastructure Organisation in 2016/17 be as relevant as possible in delivering effective and productive partnership working, given the reduced levels of funding available going forward;
- v) As such, and whilst noting that the Chief Executive undertook quarterly monitoring of performance with VAL and other voluntary sector providers, it was considered that the undertaking of an audit into the adequacy and effectiveness of the County Council's current contract with Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) would be of value.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the views now expressed be reported to the Cabinet;
- b) That the Director of Corporate Resources be recommended to consider undertaking an audit into the adequacy and effectiveness of the County Council's current contract with Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL).

133. 2014/15 MTFS Monitoring Period 4.

The Scrutiny Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided members with an update on the 2014/15 revenue budget and capital programme monitoring position. A copy of the report, marked 'agenda item 10' is filed with these minutes.

The following points were noted:

- i) The Adult Social Care budget was forecast to overspend by between £3.5m and £5m during the year, largely due to increasing complexity in the provision of care placements;
- ii) Additional growth in 2015/18 of £2m - £3m was expected in the Adult Social Care budget due to increased demand and cost, which was likely to cause total growth required in that area to be in the region of £7m- £8m for 2015/16. Officers would continue to monitor the cost pressures closely;
- iii) Population growth in Leicestershire was expected to lead to an increase in waste growth of 1% and pressure on the waste budget from 2015/16 onwards;
- iv) The £6m contingency for inflation was expected to be fully allocated during the current financial year;
- v) Following a County and District Councils review of Council Tax Single Person Discount, the County Council was expected to gain £650,000 in council tax revenue, which would also flow through into the baseline budget in 2015/16 and should increase the collection fund surplus, thus generating a double benefit for the Authority;
- vi) The possibility of reforming the possibility of reforming the Leicester and Leicestershire Business Rates Pool in 2015/16 was under consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

134. 2014/15 Performance Report: Quarter 1.

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided an update on performance through to the end of the first quarter of 2014/15 (April to June). A copy of the report, marked 'item 11', is filed with these minutes.

The Chief Executive reported on a number of matters including an overview of performance against the Enabling Economic Growth theme area of the County Council Strategic Plan 2014-18 as well as highlighting Strategic Plan performance on corporate areas not covered by the other scrutiny committees, together with a summary of performance on other key Strategic Plan priorities.

Arising from discussion the following principal points were noted:

- i) Members were pleased to note the number of positive measures being put in place for economic development in Leicestershire;
- ii) The three year business survival target of 70% was recognised as a challenging target. In order to seek to achieve this there were plans to put in place arrangements through business support hubs to provide a co-ordinated and signposted service and to commission new activity, co-designed by the County Council and the private business sector;
- iii) The number of participants in the Talent Match Programme was queried. Officers undertook to inform members following the meeting;
- iv) The work between the County and City Council in promoting tourism was to be praised, particularly in respect of King Richard III, however members were concerned that the positive links between Bosworth Battlefield, Leicester Cathedral and the Richard III visitors centre should be maximised to help increase visitor numbers in the County;
- v) Performance reporting to the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership was under development. Officers undertook to take on board member comments that direction of travel indicators and a greater use of comparative information between local and national figures would be useful, such as in comparing business survival rates;
- vi) There was concern that the number of calls answered in within 60 seconds in the Customer Service Centre was at 58% against a target of 80%. Officers undertook to provide a breakdown of performance by service area following the meeting;
- vii) It was suggested that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Chairman and Spokesmen may wish to consider the difference in academic performance between all through schools as opposed to those where pupils' schooling was split between key stages 3 and 4.

RESOLVED:

That the significant performance issues now reported be noted.

135. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on 10 October at 10.30 am.

2.00 - 3.55 pm
16 September 2014

CHAIRMAN