

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 4 March 2015.

PRESENT

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

Mrs. R. Camamile CC
Mrs. J. A. Dickinson CC
Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC
Mr. Max Hunt CC
Mr. D. Jennings CC

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

In Attendance:

Mr. P. C. Osborne CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport and Mr. B. L. Pain CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Economic Development (for Minute 180)

Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Safer Communities and Policing Relations and Chairman of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel (for Minute 182)

Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Corporate Resources (for Minute 183)

173. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2015 were taken as read, confirmed and signed subject to Mr. Shepherd being included in the list of declarations under Minute 164.

174. Question Time.

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

175. Questions asked by Members.

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

176. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

177. 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.

The following members each declared a personal interest in respect of all substantive items as a District/Borough Council member:

Mrs. R. Camamile CC
 Mrs. J. A. Dickinson CC
 Mr. S. J. Galton CC
 Mr. M. J. Hunt CC
 Mr. J. Kaufman CC
 Mr. D. Jennings CC
 Mr. K. W. P. Lynch CC
 Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
 Mr. L. Spence CC

The following members each declared a personal interest in respect of the Item 11 as holders of Concessionary Travel Passes (Minute 180 refers):

Mr. M. J. Hunt CC
 Mr. D. Jennings CC
 Mr. J. Kaufman CC
 Mr. K. W. P. Lynch CC
 Mr. P. G. Lewis CC
 Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

178. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

179. Presentation of Petitions.

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

180. Enabling Growth Plan.

The Commission considered a Cabinet report and presentation of the Chief Executive concerning the Council's Enabling Growth Plan. The report was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16 March. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 8", and the slides forming the presentation is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr. B. L. Pain CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Economic Development and Mr. P. C. Osborne CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport who were present to introduce the report and respond to any questions from members of the Commission. It was noted that Mr. Osborne had been invited to take part in the discussion given the high number of projects in the Plan which were linked to transport. Accordingly, it was noted that the Plan was aligned to the activities of the Environment and Transport Department that were included in the Local Transport Plan 3. Funding would in future be allocated through the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership (LLEP) for these projects rather than directly by Central Government.

Arising from the presentation and discussion, the following points were noted:

- Commission members generally welcomed the Plan for clearly setting out how the Council would invest in economic projects and support the work of the LLEP;
- The £38 million of funding as part of the Plan did not include other investment by the Council which had a positive impact on economic growth. The funding would not only be used for capital projects but also enable further funding to be leveraged from the private sector;
- There were some positive messages coming from the Plan, such as an increase in employment of 4.4% and a number of successful jobs fairs held across the County. The LLEP's long term vision to create 45,000 jobs was praised for its ambition;
- There were reservations expressed in regard to the City and adjoining settlements being labelled as the "Leicester Urban Area". It was suggested that the title could be revised as part of a refresh of the Strategic Economic Plan;
- Concern was expressed in regard to the lack of profile being given to environmental features and the reduction of carbon emissions. It was felt that whilst this was not currently viewed as a national priority due in some part to the financial crisis, it would again become a primary focus within the lifetime of the Plan. It was noted that the proposed use of anticipated European and Structural Investment funds would include a focus on low carbon investment;
- In response to concern expressed that communities located deep in rural areas could continue to suffer poor broadband connections even after the Council's superfast broadband rollout, it was noted that work was afoot to develop community based solutions to these issues;
- It would remain a challenge for the Authority to ensure that improvements were built into agreements with housing developers. The Authority had little power to insist on improvements;
- The Rail Strategy included £60,000 from partners including the City Council and the LLEP. It would look at a number of options for improvements to the rail network in Leicestershire and Leicester, including services between Leicester and Coventry, Mountsorrel sidings and the Wigston flyover to address issues of freight trains crossing the Midland Main Line. Passenger services on the Ivanhoe Line (Burton to Leicester) would be a consideration as part a number of options within the Strategy.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Enabling Growth Plan be commended for consideration at the Cabinet's meeting on 16 March alongside the comments of the Commission;
- (b) That an update be provided to the Commission on delivery of the Enabling Growth Plan in 18 months' time.

181. Quarter 3 2014/15 Performance Report.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the Quarter 3 2014/15 Performance and an overview of performance against the 'Enabling Economic Growth' and 'Safer Communities' themes of the County Council Strategic Plan 2014-18. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 9", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from a discussion, the following points were noted:

- The increase in young people reoffending was a concern, though it was felt that this might be attributable to the court process. Some young people were coming away from court proceedings without an order, which the Council's Youth Offending Services was hoping to tackle with the courts through some joint working;
- The number of people killed or seriously injured on the County's roads had risen following a period of four years of reductions. This would continue to be monitored by the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee, though it was known that this appeared to be a trend nationally;
- The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ACOSC) was monitoring the position with regard to delayed transfers from care. It was known that a surge in discharges following efforts to tackle length of hospital stay had led to some difficulties amongst local agencies. The ACOSC had raised some concerns about the value of the targets that had been set at a period of significant change;
- A reduction in those attending programmes to aid them to quit smoking was felt to be attributable to the increased use of eCigarettes. The Council's Public Health department had recently re-commissioned this service and the contract with the new provider starts in April.;
- The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee would monitor the increased percentage of those children who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second time. The figure currently stood at 16.6%, which was above the national average;
- The Cabinet Lead Member for Rural Broadband had written to isolated rural communities to inviting them to develop "community-based" solutions which would enable them to experience better broadband speeds. Use of other technologies, such as 3G or satellite systems were also being considered;
- Sickness absence remained higher than the target. Members were assured that the Employment Committee received regular updates on sickness absence and the ways in which management were tackling this issue;
- Members were pleased that, despite a change in the way employers were assessed, the Council remained the top rated County Council in the Stonewall Top 100 employers list;

RESOLVED:

That the Quarter 3 Performance Report be noted.

182. Police and Crime Panel - Update.

The Commission welcomed to the meeting Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC who had been invited to report an update on the progress made on the Police and Crime Panel and the way in which the Police and Crime Panel (the "PCP") had challenged the Police and Crime Commissioner (the "PCC") on the upward trend in reported incidents of theft from motor vehicles, anti-social behaviour, violence and domestic burglary. A copy of a letter sent

from the Chairman to Mr. Orson CC on 6 November 2014, marked "Agenda Item 10", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from a discussion with Mr. Orson, the following points were noted:

- The PCC was questioned at every meeting of the PCP on the performance of the Force. It was known that the PCC met regularly with the Chief Constable in order to challenge him on his performance. The PCC had taken account of some feedback from the Panel suggesting that he set aside a financial contingency to enable him to respond to any spikes in high priority crime areas. Trends in crime were regularly analysed by Community Safety Partnerships. It was known that theft from motor vehicles was a primary concern in this regard. The Police had issued a number of pro-active marketing materials in order to increase awareness amongst the public for this type of crime;
- The Leicestershire Safer Communities Strategy Board had commissioned a report to investigate any possible link between domestic burglary and the County Council's programme of switching off street lights at various locations in the County (report available [here](#)). Whilst the report had found no direct link between the two issues, it was noted that whenever there was any suspicion by a community of a link in a localised area, this could be discussed with the Police and consideration then given to turning the street lights back on;
- The Force had recently effected a reorganisation of neighbourhood policing. The early signs from the Force were that there had been a positive effect on crime. A new focus of the Force Change Programme was to bolster efforts to tackle child sexual exploitation and grooming and online crime, such as cyber bullying.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC be thanked for his attendance at the meeting and that he be invited to report back to the Commission in six months' time on progress made by the PCC on the Force Change Programme.

183. 2014/15 Medium Term Financial Strategy Monitoring - Period 10.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the 2014/15 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Monitoring for Period 10. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 11", is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Corporate Resources. In introducing the report, Mr. Rhodes stated that the budget had been very well managed and any underspends enabled the Authority to be flexible and direct these funds to areas where it was required most.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

Revenue Budget

- It was important that the MTFS was managed tightly, though it was recognised that some flexibility needed to be built in to enable it to respond to demand. It was noted that many County Councils were suffering significant overspends, and for this reason, the Council's budget position with underspends in nearly all departments

was as stable as could be hoped for given the significant financial challenges faced;

- Much of the underspend in Environment and Transport was as a result of the £400,000 due to be spent in the coming financial year on highways issues, including drainage works. Further ongoing pressures would be faced as a result of the increasing requirements for solo transport for SEN pupils with high needs;
- The Corporate Resources and Chief Executive's Departments (which provided in-house services to other Council departments) both faced savings targets of roughly a third;
- Inflation was accounted for and allocated into the Council's contingency fund. An update on this position would be provided in the MTFS Outturn report;
- The Council's continued recruitment drive for in-house foster carers would hopefully result in a long-term saving as a result of a reduced need to hire foster carers from agencies;
- A number of risks existed around the Adults and Communities budget, such as the requirements of the Care Act (from 2016) and added costs around commissioning and the minimum wage. The overspend, whilst not overly concerning at this stage, would require ongoing tight management.

Capital Programme

- The underspend in the Transportation Programme was due in the most part to delays around the requirement for a bridge over the M1 in relation to the New Lubbethorpe development in Blaby. Agreements had now been signed for the bridge, though the underspend would carry forward into the new financial year.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

184. Date of next meeting.

It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on 1 June 2015 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 4.45 pm
04 March 2015

CHAIRMAN