

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 5 September 2001.

PRESENT

Mr. N. J. Brown CC (in the Chair)

Mr. P. D. Boulton TD, CC
Mr. B. Chapman AE, CC
Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. B. Garner CC
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC
Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC

Mrs. C. E. Brock CC
Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC
Mr. D. A. Gamble CC
Mr. P. A. Hyde CC
Mr. M. B. Page CC
Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC

1. Appointment of Deputy Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2002.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. Jones be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission for the period ending with the date of the annual meeting of the County Council in 2002.

2. Questions asked by electors under Standing Order 35.

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

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

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

4. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items for consideration.

5. Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in respect of items on this agenda.

There were no declarations of interest.

6. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations made under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

7. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that there were no petitions to be presented.

8. Best Value Review of Industrial Properties.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Property concerning the Cabinet response to the report of the Best Value Review of Industrial Properties. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

In reply to comments the Director of Property undertook to amend the report to indicate that the 2000/01 trading account surplus was now confirmed at £340,000 and that the recommendation 1 in respect of the financing options would indicate that the notional 6% return on asset value relates to the new Best Value Accounting Code of Practice.

The Director of Property also advised members of progress in relation to the two sites in North West Leicestershire to be sold for development.

RESOLVED:

The Cabinet be advised that the Scrutiny Commission.

- (a) endorses the approach adopted in respect of the Strategic, Management, Portfolio and Finance Options as set out on pages 21-25 of the report;
- (b) notes and supports the proposed Action Plan set out on Pages 26 and 27 of the report and in particular welcomes the proposal in Action Point 4 which would include identifying potential properties/buildings in the County Farms Estate for investment and possible incorporation into the Industrial Properties portfolio.

9. Children's Fund.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Education concerning the decision of the Cabinet to respond to an invitation from the Children and Young Persons Unit of the DfES to bid for Children's Fund monies for 2003-4. A copy of the report marked 'C' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the current objectives of the Fund be noted with the comment that it is the view of the Commission that
 - (i) there should be some recognition of the importance of housing needs;
 - (ii) the targets to be set to meet the objectives of the Fund should be challenging and it should be given the opportunity to comment on these before they are agreed;
- (b) That the Director of Education be requested to submit regular monitoring reports on the implementation and impact of the Children's Fund Initiative to the Commission;
- (c) That the concerns expressed by the Cabinet relating the lack of democratically elected representation on the Joint Strategic Planning Team (JSPT) be endorsed.
- (d) That the Cabinet be informed of the decisions set out in (a) - (c) above and be requested to give consideration to the appointment of one of the two elected representatives on the JSPT being made from the Overview and Scrutiny arm.

10. Action between meetings.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the handling of matters when it would not be practical to put them to a meeting of the Commission or an appropriate Scrutiny Committee. A copy of the report marked 'D' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Commission or appropriate Scrutiny Committee be authorised to take action between meetings on behalf of the body concerned in commenting on matters referred from the Cabinet which are of an urgent nature.

11. Membership of Best Value Review Panels.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning appointments made to the Best Value Review Panels. A copy of the report marked 'E' is filed with these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the arrangements made for undertaking the 2001/02 Review Programme and the appointments made to Panels through the political group processes be noted.

12. Scrutiny Commission - Work Programme

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning potential items for inclusion in its work programme. A copy of the report marked 'F' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission was advised that the Best Value Review Panel on Public Transport Support had completed its work and its report was to be considered by the Cabinet on 11th September. The Commission would need to consider and agree a timetable for consideration of the Panel's report. With regard to the Medium Term Strategy the Commission was advised that it was likely that this would be available in late September.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the potential issues for the Commission work programme arising from the Plans forming the Policy Framework, Forward Plan and Best Value Review Programme, be noted;
- (b) That a five member Panel be established to undertake an investigation of the difficulties experienced at the Records Office and to identify lessons to be learnt; the detailed terms of reference to be determined by the Chief Executive after consultation with the Scrutiny Reference Group;
- (c) That a five member Panel be established to monitor the development of the Community Plans/Strategies of the County Council and the District Councils, such Panel to be established following the approval by the County Council of the Medium Term Strategy;
- (d) That it be noted that the issue of 'e-government' will be addressed in the Best Value Review of Access to Services and Information;
- (e) That with regard to the Best Value Review of Public Transport:
 - (i) the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Commission be asked to agree a timetable for the scrutiny process;
 - (ii) the Cabinet be asked to indicate how it proposes to consult stakeholders, and in particular, the users of public transport.

13. Scrutiny Committees - Work Programme

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the outcome of their deliberations on the Work Programme. A copy of the report marked 'G' is filed with these minutes.

With regard to the decision of the Scrutiny Committees, the Commission was updated as follows:

- (i) The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee had identified adaptations to the Homes of Disabled People as an issue for scrutiny. An officer group was currently reviewing policy and operational issues in relation to this and would be reporting to the Committee on its findings.
- (ii) The Planning and Environment Committee had now received a report on the scope and operation of the Shire Grants Scheme. The Committee was satisfied with the current operation of the scheme and has indicated that it would wish to receive a further report in 12 months' time.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the decisions of the Scrutiny Committees regarding their work programme be approved;
- (b) That the decision of the Education and Heritage Scrutiny Committee to establish a five member panel to look into Recruitment and Retention of Teachers, be supported;
- (c) That Scrutiny Committees be advised of the need to set aside time in October and November to consider the Medium Term Plan and half yearly performance on the current Best Value Performance Plan;
- (d) That the Scrutiny Reference Group be asked to consult the Executive on the proposed scrutiny work programme so as to avoid any duplication of effort and ensure efficient use of resources.
- (e) That the issue of the production of an Annual Report to the Council be considered further at a future meeting.

14. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the date of the next meeting of the Commission be altered from 10th October to Wednesday, 17th October. 2001 at 2.30 p.m.

