



Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 17 October 2001.

PRESENT

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

Mrs. V. P. Bill CC	Mr. B. Chapman AE, CC
Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC	Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. D. A. Gamble CC	Mr. P. A. Hyde CC
Mr. Mike Jones CC	Mr. P. C. Osborne CC
Mr. M. B. Page CC	Mrs. A. C. M. Pullen CC
Mr. J. B. Rhodes CC	Lt. Col. P. A. Roffey DL, CC
Mr. N. J. Rushton CC	Mr. S. D. Sheahan CC

By Invitation

Mr. H. Barber CC – Leader of the Council.
Prof. M.E. Preston CC – Deputy Leader of the Council.

29. Minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 3 October, 2001.

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October, 2001 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

30. Questions asked by electors under Standing Order 35.

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

31. 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).

32. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no declarations made under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure

Rule 16.

35. Presentations of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

36. The Medium Term Corporate Strategy 2001-2005.

The Commission considered the draft Medium Term Corporate Strategy for 2001-2005. A copy of the draft Strategy is attached to these minutes.

The Commission also considered the views of the following Scrutiny Committees on the Medium Term Strategy, copies of which are also filed with these minutes:

Education and Heritage	(marked 1)
Health and Social Care	(marked 2)
Planning and Environment	(marked 3)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting, Mr. H. Barber, CC, the Leader of the Council and Professor M.E. Preston CC the Deputy Leader of the Council, who had kindly agreed to attend the meeting during the consideration of the draft strategy.

It was moved by Mr. Rhodes and seconded by Mr. Osborne:

‘That the Cabinet be advised that this Commission supports the draft Medium Term Strategy and considers it will be a comprehensive and useful guide for the County Council for the next four years.’

It was moved by Mr. Rushton and seconded:

“That the proposition under discussion be now put.”

The Chairman indicated that in accordance with Standing Order 25(2) he was of the view that the proposition to which Mr. Rushton sought to apply the closure had not been sufficiently discussed. Accordingly he declined to put the matter to the vote.

During the ensuing debate on the Strategy various points were made by individual members of the Commission to which the Leader and Deputy Leader responded. The details are summarised below:

General

- The Strategy was a statement of where the Administration hoped to be achieved within four years. The document did not contain detailed implementation proposals and targets as these would need to be developed, following the Council’s agreement to the Strategy. Specific proposals would be brought to the Cabinet/Council for approval.
- The Strategy did not set out in detail all the previous policies agreed by the Council, as it was assumed that these would continue to apply i.e. existing

Council policies and strategies within the policy framework. The Strategy should be seen in this context, though it was recognised that there might have been some benefit in including in the draft specific references to existing commitments to Agenda 21 and equal opportunities.

Working Together to Deliver Quality Services

- The discussions with Leicester City Council, emda and other partners regarding the LeicesterShire Strategic Sub-Regional Partnership were progressing well and it was hoped that the details of the proposed Partnership Board could be announced soon. The concerns expressed by members of the Commission regarding the limited elected member representation on the Partnership were noted and endorsed.

Achieving Excellence in Education and Learning

- With regard to anti-bullying, the intention was to seek to ensure that the current policy was being implemented across the County. Following this, if it was considered necessary to amend the policy, a report would be made to the Cabinet and/or County Council;
- With regard to Youth and Community Education provision, the Cabinet would need to have regard to the policies adopted by the Learning and Skills Council and the impact of these on existing service provision so as to ensure that, at the very least, the current level of service was not reduced. The comments from members about the need to clarify and define the term 'Youth and Community' and the role of the Council in relation to such provision, was noted as was the suggestion that in the preamble, the word 'develop' rather than 'maintain' should be used;
- The concerns now expressed regarding comprehensive community education special educational needs and mobile classrooms, which mirrored the views of the Education and Heritage Scrutiny Committee were noted;
- Consideration would be given to the use of the word 'appropriate' in the preamble in relation to the role of libraries and museums in the achievement of lifelong learning;
- In the event that the Fair Funding campaign was successful and the County Council were to obtain additional resources, there would need to be a decision as to the distribution of these funds, having regard to budgetary pressures across the whole of the Council's services and Central Government requirements as to delegation;
- The Administration remained committed to the objective of introducing a common first time admissions policy, but, again this would be dependent upon the availability of resources and Government restrictions as to their use.

Meeting Health and Care Needs

- The reference to the Blaby Unit and the views expressed by the Cabinet

Lead Members at the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee should be seen in the context of the general trend away from large residential care establishments to smaller units. The comments from members that there should be alternative provision in place prior to any proposal to close the Unit were noted;

- A review of residential care for older people was currently underway and it was hoped that a strategy would be put forward for consideration in the near future;
- The comments made by the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee concerning recognition of the role of the voluntary sector were noted.

Improving the Transport System

- The County Council was committed to and recognised the need for close working with District Councils. However, it was considered inappropriate to include reference to highway agency arrangements in the document at this stage given that a best value review was presently being undertaken into the management of the Highways Network as a whole.

Supporting Culture and Leisure

- The proposal to support the development of theatre and arts in the County's market towns might result in reduced level of funding for the Haymarket. The Haymarket Board had been advised by the previous Joint Administration of its concerns about the lack of theatre and arts provision in the county areas. The Board had indicated that it was developing outreach proposals but, as yet, no details had been provided. Any such outreach proposals would be taken into consideration in progressing this objective;
- The proposals for Bosworth Battlefield should be seen in the context of linking it to other attractions such as the Space Centre, Conkers and Snibston, and the joint marketing of these attractions.

Improving Economic Well Being

- In response to a general comment that the objectives for economic well-being appeared to be over ambitious given the limited budget available to the County Council and the desire to limit the amount of development on new greenfield sites, it was pointed out that the Strategy emphasised that these objectives could only be realised by working with local and regional partners. The proposal to limit development of greenfield sites was in line with current Government thinking and the need to encourage regeneration in urban centres, including market towns.
- The concerns expressed by some members for strategies to focus on dealing with the impact of the decline in the textile and engineering sectors was noted. It was pointed out that in trying to achieve the fourth bullet point – “Work to help maintain the unemployment rate for the county significantly below the region's average” it would be necessary to focus on industry/sectors experiencing difficulties. However, it was considered inappropriate to identify specific sectors in a medium term strategy given

that changing demands were likely to present themselves over the period covered by the Strategy.

Making Communities Safer

- The view was expressed by some members that this section of the Strategy needed strengthening and that it should contain some commitment that the Council would support and encourage initiatives and assist groups in accessing external funding to reduce crime and the fear of crime. It was suggested that this issue was best dealt through the local crime and disorder partnerships, although it was noted that there were concerns about the effectiveness of such partnerships.

Managing Waste Effectively

- The difficulty of meeting Government targets in relation to recycling and reduction in landfill was recognised. District Councils would play a key role in helping to achieving these targets;
- The implementation of an integrated waste management strategy would require substantial capital investment which would necessitate the exploration of partnership funding possibly through a PFI.

An amendment was moved by Mr. Jones and seconded:

“That the following be added at the end of the motion:

- ‘(b) That the resolutions and notes of the discussions at the Education and Heritage, Health and Social Care and the Planning and Environment Committees be noted and forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration.’ ”

The mover of the motion, with the concurrence of his seconder and the consent of the Commission, accepted the amendment.

A further amendment was moved by Mr. Jones and seconded:

“That the following be added at the end of the motion as amended:

- ‘(c) That the comments now made by individual members of the Commission and the note of the discussion be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration.’ ”

The mover of the motion, with the concurrence of his seconder and the consent of the Commission, accepted the further amendment.

The motion as amended was put and carried as follows:

- (a) That the Cabinet be advised that this Commission supports the draft Medium Term Strategy and considers it will be a comprehensive and useful guide for the County Council for the next four years;
- (b) That the resolution and notes of the discussions at the Education and Heritage, Health and Social Care and the Planning and Environment

Committees be noted and forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration;

- (c) That the comments now made by individual members of the Commission and the note of the discussion be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration

37. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Commission be held at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 31st October, 2001.

3.00 p.m. – 5.45 p.m.
17 October 2001

CHAIRMAN