



Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 22 April 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
Dr. S. Hill CC
Mr. Max Hunt CC

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

185. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

186. Question Time.

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

187. Questions asked by Members.

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

188. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

189. 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.

Dr. S. Hill CC declared a personal interest in respect of item 9 on the agenda as her husband was a trustee of the Rural Community Council (Minute 193 refers).

190. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

191. Presentation of Petitions.

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

192. Change to the Order of Business.

The Chairman sought and obtained the consent of the Commission to vary the order of business from that set out in the agenda.

193. Communities Strategy Action Plan.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the Draft Action Plan for the Communities Strategy which had been developed following a series of workshops held across the County. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 9", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from a discussion, the following points were noted:

- Some actions in the action plan were already underway. It would be important that actions were delivered quickly and the various toolkits made available to the public as soon as possible;
- The eight Local Area Co-ordinators had been appointed and would start in post in May across four Districts: Hinckley and Bosworth, Blaby, Charnwood and Melton. Conversations were also underway with Harborough and North West, who were keen to play an active role in the arrangements in the future;
- There was a good level of engagement in the workshops, with attendees from a range of sectors, including from communities and the voluntary sector. Though some of the suggestions put forward at the workshops would be unviable, officers felt that it was important that attendees steered the discussion rather than Council officers;
- A network of local Community Champions had been identified, though further discussions needed to be had before they could be formally announced to members. It was suggested that members would be able to add to the list if they were aware of additional champions in their local communities. A view was expressed that those seeking to become Community Champions should not see the role as a "stepping stone" to elected positions;
- There was not at present a consistent level of engagement with communities in regard to becoming actively involved in delivering services across the County. It was felt that those areas with a good level of engagement could perhaps play a role in assisting areas with less engagement;
- Given the good work that had already been carried out, members highlighted the importance of delivering key outcomes. It was suggested that this be the subject of a report to the Commission at the appropriate time;
- It was noted that if some of the proposals put forward by the public were to be implemented they could require a change in Council policy. It was therefore felt that corporate engagement would be required at an early stage;
- A focus would remain on the rural communities, given their needs were vastly different to those of communities in urban areas, to ensure that the needs of all communities in the County are taken into account.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the comments of the Commission be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration its meeting on 11 May;
- (b) That a report be submitted to the Commission at the appropriate time setting out some of the outcomes from the process.

194. Draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2015/16.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Children and Family Services concerning the Draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2015/16. The comments of the Commission were being sought ahead of its consideration at the Cabinet meeting on 11 May and prior to full approval at the County Council meeting on 8 July. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 8", is filed with these minutes.

Arising from a discussion, the following points were noted:

- The table set out at the bottom of page 6 of the Plan showed a large increase from -45.7% to 3.21 in first time entrants into the criminal justice system. This was largely as a result of a change in legislation and the way in which had been expected. Despite this increase, the County Council sat well when compared with the performance of other local authorities in this area of work;
- The re-offending rate was set at a national level by using a cohort of young people, which in Leicestershire this was around 60 to 70 per quarter. Two indexes were used to measure the progress of the cohort: the amount who commit an offence and the average re-offending rate. As the Plan was required to be approved in July, it was noted that the final time period on the table did not represent a full year. It was therefore expected that the reduction of re-offending rate was likely to be at around 1.06, slightly higher than the previous year's 1.04;
- The percentage of young people who receiving a conviction in court who were sentenced to custody stood at 3.9%, ahead of the 5% target that had been set. This was felt to be as a result of the Council's multi-agency approach which hoped to provide the courts with a greater amount of confidence in some of the alternative measures they could use as a means of rehabilitating offenders;
- The use of the key set out on page 29 was in line with the Children and Family Service's risk measuring system. Members asked that an explanatory note be circulated giving further detail as to why "Residual Likelihood" was set at 1 (high risk) and why "Residual Impact" was set at 2 (slightly lower);
- Given the complex nature of the Plan, it was felt that it would be helpful in future years to make a greater use of the covering report to provide greater context, an explanation of the key performance indicators and a national perspective on where Leicestershire's performance sat when compared with that of other authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the comments of the Commission be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 11 May.

195. East Midlands Shared Services Delivery and Performance.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning an update on the services provided by East Midlands Shared Services (EMSS) and its performance during 2014/15. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 10", is filed with these minutes.

The Director reported that the EMSS was a very ambitious project which had resulted in major changes to both Leicestershire's and Nottingham City Council's corporate systems. The Service had now been in operation for over two years and the first year had largely been one of stabilisation. The second phase of the project was underway and aimed to optimise the processes now in place.

Arising from a discussion, the following points were noted:

- The addition of other services to EMSS and trading would be considered when processes had been optimised. It was felt that at this stage the Council could be more optimistic about selling the benefits of the Service and the savings that could be made by potential customers;
- Staff morale had initially been a concern, though it was now felt that staff were more engaged in the Service and the benefits of ensuring its success. The £900k saving (roughly 50% of which would fall to Leicestershire) would largely be met through staffing reductions, though the opportunity to sell a successful service and bring additional business presented an opportunity to circumvent this to some extent;
- The £565k investment costs outlined in paragraph 32 of the report would be met by through the County Council's Transformation Fund (a similar amount would be met by Nottingham City Council). A note would be circulated to members on the capital costs incurred of establishing the project thus far;
- Debt collection figures were not included in paragraphs 23 and 24 of the report. It was suggested that this detail would be contained in a future Medium Term Financial Strategy Outturn report to the Commission;
- The importance of the payment of invoices in a timely fashion was stressed, particularly for smaller local businesses. It was suggested that further detail in this regard could be made available to members of the Commission following the meeting;
- The payroll functions of schools and academies was highlighted as an area which required improvement. The current processes were manually intensive, involving the re-keying of information. A project was underway to introduce a fully automated HR and payroll service, with associated benefits for the customer.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That a further update be submitted to the Commission in a year's time.

196. Date of next meeting.

It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on Wednesday 3 June 2015 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 3.30 pm
22 April 2015

CHAIRMAN

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