

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 2 March 2011.

PRESENT

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

Mr. R. Blunt CC	Mr. Max Hunt CC
Mr. G. A. Boulter CC	Mr. P. G. Lewis CC
Mrs. R. Camamile CC	Mrs. R. Page CC
Mrs. J. A. Dickinson CC	Mr. B. L. Pain CC
Dr. R. K. A Feltham CC	Mrs. P. Posnett CC
Dr. S. Hill CC	Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC

In Attendance:

Mrs. L. A. S. Pendleton CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and Transport (for Minute 170)

Mr. J. Catt, Co-opted Parent Governor Representative of the Children and Young People's Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for Minute 172)

162. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2011 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

163. Question Time.

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

164. Questions asked by members.

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

165. Urgent Items

The Chairman advised the Committee that he had agreed to consider as an urgent item on the impending sale of paintings by Brooksby College.

166. 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 declared an interest in the Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) item as members of district/borough councils (minute 170 refers):

Mr. R. Blunt CC
 Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
 Mrs. R. Camamile CC
 Mrs. J. A. Dickinson CC
 Mr. S. J. Galton CC
 Dr. S. Hill CC
 Mr. Max Hunt CC
 Mr. P. G. Lewis CC*
 Mr. B. L. Pain CC
 Mrs. P. Posnett CC
 Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC*

* Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC, together with those members highlighted above, each declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of any discussions on the LTP3 item that concerned concessionary travel as holders of bus passes.

167. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

168. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

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

169. Urgent Item: Art Collection at Brooksby College.

The Commission considered this matter, the Chairman having decided that it was of an urgent nature due to the imminent sale of paintings by Brooksby College. Mr. Max Hunt CC had requested that an item be placed on the agenda in order to allow the Commission to fully debate the matter with a view to halting the sale, if this was proven to be necessary.

The Director of Adults and Communities reported that Brooksby College had placed two paintings on the market which had a high expected value. The paintings were attributed to John Boulton and had a strong Leicestershire provenance, as they depicted Robert Bakewell, a local farmer who was responsible for pioneering work at Dishley Grange, near Loughborough.

It was suggested that, as the County Council had worked with the College in the past on a Robert Bakewell exhibition, there was a possibility that the paintings may have at one stage been loaned to the College from the Council's collection. However, following investigatory work into the ownership of the paintings, there was clear evidence that the paintings were not in County Council ownership. The Chief Executive of Brooksby College had agreed to work with the County Council in future if other paintings of significant Leicestershire provenance were intended to be sold.

Members commented on the need to be vigilant on this issue in future, as it was possible that some schools might wish to sell pieces of art that formed part of the Council's collection.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the position with respect to the impending sale of artwork at Brooksby College be noted;
- (b) That the need to continue to monitor the sale of artwork that had a Leicestershire provenance be recognised.

170. Final Draft Local Transport Plan 3 Proposals.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning the final draft version of the Local Transport Plan 3. A copy of the report, marked 'B', is filed with these minutes.

The Director reported that the latest version of the Strategy was being considered by the Commission, prior to submission to the Cabinet on 8 March and then the full County Council meeting on 23 March. An up-to-date version of the Strategy, which included the latest amendments following consultation, was circulated to members at the meeting. A copy of this document is filed with these minutes. A briefing had been held for members on 1 March to explain the purpose of the Strategy and where funding would be allocated.

The Director highlighted the following key points:

- The Strategy would have to be in place by 1 April 2011 in order to meet the Coalition Government's deadline;
- The principal drivers for the Strategy were the need to support the local economy in light of:
 - The present economic conditions and reduced levels of funding;
 - The forecast level of population (housing) growth;
 - Climate change;
 - Accessibility; and
 - Health and obesity levels.
- The Strategy would feed into the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and other key activities of the Council, such as the new Local Economic Partnership;
- The Implementation Plan would be taken forward on a three yearly basis, with a yearly refresh. It was suggested that the incremental basis of implementation would enable the Council's Strategy to evolve and respond to threats and opportunities as they emerged;
- The emphasis of the Strategy was based around ensuring the reliability of the network. £9 million of capital funding had been allocated to highway maintenance;

- Though Government was discouraging large capital schemes prior to 2015, the externally funded Birstall Park and Ride and the Loughborough Eastern Gateway remained in the 2011/12 Capital Programme.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and Transport, Mrs. L. A. S. Pendleton CC, who was present to respond to any questions the Commission had on the Strategy.

Arising from discussion, Mrs. Pendleton and the Director made the following key points:

- There was some concern amongst the bus companies about the changes in the way the concessionary scheme was now being run and what they perceived to be reduced funding. It remained a priority to work effectively with bus companies to ensure that services were provided commercially;
- There was a clear identified need for journey times to be “predictable”. It was felt that any aims to speed up the network would only produce marginal benefits;
- The Council’s commitment to delivering a network of Monday to Saturday daytime bus services operating to an hourly or better timetable within 800m of 95% of County residents was no longer viewed as a target which was affordable;
- It was recognised that there was only one Park and Ride scheme proposed in the Strategy, despite a desire to encourage public transport use. A Glenfield Park and Ride had previously been considered and could once again become part of the Strategy in the future, as and when a case could be made and when the economic situation started to improve;
- The Department would continue to be alert to the potential for funding through the new Community Infrastructure Levy and the new borrowing powers available to local authorities through the Tax Increment Financing measures, recently announced by the Coalition Government;
- Education remained a priority in respect of efforts to ensure road safety. Evidence suggested that ‘Speed Awareness’ courses were more effective than ‘Reducing the Impact of Traffic’ (RIOT) Schemes which were more resource intensive. Given the intended move away from RIOT Schemes, members stressed the need for an appropriate response mechanism to requests from members of the public;
- Work was ongoing to ensure that developers were well briefed on the issues the Council faced in maintaining an efficient transport network. Given the economic position the Council now faced, it was now a key requirement for developers to put forward appropriate proposals/funding to mitigate the potential impact on the network;

- A joint Strategy had been pursued with the City Council, however it became clear that the City Council wished to devise its own Strategy. Good transport links with the City were viewed as essential and constructive dialogue continued with City Council colleagues;
- The Department was not committing to congestion charging as it was felt that there would hopefully be more suitable options that would emerge as the Strategy evolved. Workplace charging was not being pursued;
- Due to the work required to establish a broader range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (to seek to reflect the wider issues that LTP3 embraced), the complete framework would continue to be developed following approval of the Strategy. The Department's new Integrated Transport Model would assist in the setting of relevant targets. It was stressed that there would be opportunities for scrutiny of the Department's performance against KPIs.

Members expressed a wish to scrutinise progress with elements of the Strategy, though it was recognised that detailed analysis of the effects of implementation would have to be carried out in order for effective scrutiny to take place.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Local Transport Plan 3 be broadly welcomed and that officers from the Environment and Transport Department be thanked for their hard work in producing the Strategy in time for the Coalition Government's 1 April deadline;
- (b) That it be noted that the Strategy had been devised with reduced resources in mind and that the Department's commitment to providing both value for money and a reliable network be supported;
- (c) That the Commission has concerns about future development and the extent to which the Council can ensure that adequate consideration and funding is committed by developers to mitigating the impact of development on the transport network;
- (d) That it be noted that there will be a continued expectation from members of the public that RIOT Schemes are a suitable option and that therefore consideration should be given to devising an efficient and appropriate mechanism through which to respond to future requests in the context of democratic processes;
- (e) That it be noted that officers will continue to work with officers at Leicester City Council to ensure tangible benefits and outcomes;
- (f) That the Scrutiny Commissioners be asked to identify potential issues arising from the Plan which merit more detailed consideration through the Scrutiny process.

171. Licences for Street Cafes - Update.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning the Policy for charging for licences for Street Cafes as a result of a recommendation by the Commission to establish a 'Light Touch' Review of the Policy. A copy of the report, marked 'C', is filed with these minutes.

The Director reported that the intention was to proceed with the reduction in charging from £300 to £150. The annual renewal fee would be £100. The Policy had been developed in accordance with national guidance. The matter required the approval of the Cabinet at its meeting on 8 March in order to implement new charges in the new financial year.

Mrs. Page and Mrs. Posnett had been appointed by the Commission to look at the Licencing Policy and, further to the conclusions outlined in the report, highlighted the following issues:

- It was felt necessary to stress in the Policy that it covered the whole of the County, rather than just the County's market towns;
- The extent to which the Policy should cover other premises that traded or provided services on the street, such as pubs and green grocers.

The Director clarified that the Policy should only relate to street cafes, as licensing laws for certain premises, particularly those that sold alcohol, were administered by district/borough councils and the issues would have to be considered within that context.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Mrs. Page and Mrs. Posnett be thanked for their work on the 'Light Touch' review of the Street Café Policy and that the Policy be forwarded to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 8 March;
- (b) That the Scrutiny Commissioners be asked to consider with officers whether there is merit in scrutiny considering the question as to whether the street café licencing policy could be extended to cover other premises that trade or provide services on the street.

172. Light Touch Scrutiny Review on Forced Marriages.

The Commission considered a report of the 'Light Touch' Scrutiny Review Panel setting out the conclusions of the Review of Forced Marriages. A copy of the report, marked 'D', is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman invited Mr. Lewis and Mr. Catt, who had both served on the Review, to introduce the report. Mr. Lewis and Mr. Catt hoped that the report dealt with the matter sensitively and that the County Council could take the lead on this issue. They thanked Beverley Ireland in Committee Services and officers in the Children and Young People's Service for their assistance in producing the report.

Members were in agreement that 'the law of the land' should take priority on issues of this nature and that the conclusions reached by Mr. Lewis and Mr. Catt were important. The report had received some positive press in the Leicester Mercury and it was felt to be important that the report was stimulating some debate. However, the extent to which the Council was in a position to progress some of the issues raised in the report was unknown, given that many of the recommendations were to be taken forward directly by schools and other agencies. For this reason, it was felt appropriate for the Scrutiny Commissioners to discuss the issue with the Director of Children and Young People's Service.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Mr. Lewis and Mr. Catt be thanked for producing a comprehensive report;
- (b) That the Scrutiny Commissioners be asked to discuss the report with the Director of Children and Young People's Service with a view to establishing the extent to which the Council can actively take the conclusions of the Review forward.

173. Date of next meeting.

It was NOTED that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on Wednesday 20 April 2011 at 2.00pm.

2.00 pm - 4.15 pm
02 March 2011

CHAIRMAN