

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 28 March 2012.

PRESENT

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

Mr. G. A. Boulter CC
Mrs. R. Camamile CC
Mr. J. G. Coxon CC
Dr. R. K. A Feltham CC
Dr. S. Hill CC

Mr. A. M. Kershaw CC
Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mrs. P. Posnett CC
Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. D. Slater CC

In Attendance:

Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Safer Communities (for minute 250)

Mr. R. M. Wilson CC, Local Member for Birstall (for minute 252)

240. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2012 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

241. Question Time.

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

242. Questions asked by members.

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

243. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

244. 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 Chairman, Dr. S. Hill CC and Mrs. R. Page CC each declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of the item relating to co-location as members of Harborough District Council (minute 251 refers).

245. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

246. Presentation of Petitions.

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

247. Leicestershire Municipal Waste Management Strategy Update.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning an update to the Leicestershire Municipal Waste Management Strategy. A copy of the report, marked 'B', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Department for Communities and Local Government had recently announced a challenge fund of £250 million, which was open to bids from local authorities to support a weekly bin collection. It was understood that this was a two stage bidding process and would be of particular interest to district councils who could access this funding to support the introduction of new food waste collections. It was hoped that this may see a further increase in recycling performance as a result of more food waste recycling schemes in future;
- Local traders were currently excluded from disposing of any waste at the Recycling and Household Waste Sites. However, the Council was investigating the possibility of accepting trade waste at some of these sites in the future, as it was expected that this would provide a service for small businesses;
- Whetstone Recycling and Household Waste Site was the only site that currently accepted paint for reuse. There was a scheme in operation in Blaby, whereby any usable waste paint was recycled by being passed on to council tenants. However, it was noted that in many cases the paint being left for recycling was rarely of a usable condition and the process for disposing of unusable paint was costly;
- The process for procurement of a waste treatment facility in Leicestershire continued to be on hold. As recycling rates had seen an increase in the County, there was significantly less waste that would require treatment. More waste than ever before was being moved away from landfill;
- The Strategy would be reviewed again in five year's time and would be annually updated.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be advised that the Commission:

- (a) fully supports the Leicestershire Municipal Waste Strategy Update 2011; and
- (b) notes that:
 - (i) a challenge fund of £250 million to support weekly waste collections has been announced by the Department for Communities and Local Government and this will provide an opportunity for district councils to obtain financial support for various initiatives including food waste collections.
 - (ii) the Environment and Transport Department is investigating the possibility of accommodating waste from small businesses at household waste sites and that a further report to the Commission on the progress of any change in policy for household waste sites would be welcomed.

248. Final Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on the 95% Bus Policy.

The Commission considered a Final Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel on the Council's 95% bus policy. A copy of the Report is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman invited Mr. Slater CC, the Chairman of the Panel, to introduce the report to the Commission. Mr. Slater commented that the Review had been a challenging process, the Panel having met on 10 occasions. The Final Report presented to the Commission would, subject to approval, be used as the basis for the Council's consultation exercise starting on 16 April.

The Director of Environment and Transport reported that the Panel had been given a remit to look at a policy that originated in 2002 which committed the Council to provide, in conjunction with the commercial bus network, a day time (Monday to Saturday) bus service of an hourly frequency or better, within an 800 metre walk, for 95% of the residents of the County. It was felt that this policy was no longer affordable or appropriate and that any new policy had to be more flexible to meet more adequately the demands of users.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- There might be a perception amongst the public that a 'Demand Responsive Transport' service would be available at any time on demand. The Environment and Transport Department was aware of the need to manage the message of the consultation exercise carefully in order that members of the public were adequately informed of the new services on offer. A route specific consultation exercise would be carried out, including some work on buses to ensure that those without access to the internet or leaflets were also consulted;

- The consultation provided an opportunity to respond to the needs of users and any changes to services would be fully communicated to them. Usage of services would be continually monitored to ensure they were fit for purpose. New services would be given time to embed within communities;
- Routes marked in green on maps in the appendices to the report were those that would be supported by the County Council as conventional bus services under the proposed new policy. Some would be unchanged from that presently offered, whilst others might include some changes as and when required for reasons such as providing drivers with breaks, which would significantly reduce costs;
- The Council was interested in providing a Real Time Information service that had previously existed through the “Star Trak” scheme, though this had been abandoned following the withdrawal of City Council funding;
- The consultation exercise would end on 8 July, following which the results would be reported to the Commission.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Review Panel be thanked for its work on this matter and the recommendations of the Panel as set out in the report be noted;
- (b) That the Cabinet be asked to agree that the proposed new policy recommended by the Panel be approved for consultation;
- (c) That the Panel be requested to reconvene to consider the outcome of the consultation and make final recommendations regarding a new policy which would guide the Council’s approach to supporting the bus network.

249. Change to the Order of Business.

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

250. Draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2012/13.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the Draft Youth Justice Plan 2012/13. A copy of the report, marked ‘F’, is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Lead Member for Safer Communities, Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC, to the meeting. Mr. Orson reported that he had attended a recent meeting of the Police Authority at which it had been agreed to passport back to the Youth Offending Service the Home Office Grant of £39,845 to support prevention and substance misuse activities. Despite this news, he expressed concern that the Council would see a reduced Youth Justice Formula Grant which placed the Service at a significant financial risk.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- It was noted that poor educational attainment was a key risk factor and the work of the Basic Skills Team in supporting young people back into employment had been very effective. However, funding of the Team could no longer be maintained and a Basic Skills exit strategy based on mainstream education services such as further education colleges providing the service was essential. In the meantime, the Service had accessed funding from the European Social Fund which would enable a minimal service to be provided for up to a further two years whilst the exit strategy was taken forward.
- The work of the IMPACT Project was commended for effecting a significant reduction in instances of anti-social behaviour across the County.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Cabinet be advised that the Commission:
- (i) notes and supports the draft Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2012/13;
 - (ii) welcomes the decision of the Leicestershire Police Authority to passport back to the Youth Offending Service the Home Office Grant of £39,845 to support prevention and substance misuse activities;
 - (iii) is concerned about the significant financial risk facing the service as a consequence of proposed changes in the Youth Justice Grant Formula and transfer of existing Home Office funding to the Police and Crime Commissioner;
- (b) That the Commission's appreciation be conveyed to the managers and staff of the IMPACT Team for their work in tackling antisocial behaviour.

251. Co-location of Accommodation - Harborough District Council.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning the Council's intention to enter into a long-term agreement with Harborough District Council for the provision of a co-located accommodation solution in Market Harborough. A copy of the report, marked 'C', together with a copy of the report on the matter as submitted to the Cabinet, is filed with these minutes.

The Commission expressed its full support for the approach taken by the Council which would give one-point access to Council services for residents in the area. It was noted that the Cabinet report was inaccurate stating that Harborough District Council's Cabinet was responsible for the final decision on the matter when in fact it was actually the District Council's Full Council meeting which would be taking this decision.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Cabinet be advised that the Commission welcomes the work being carried out to enter into a long-term agreement with Harborough District Council for the provision of a co-located accommodation solution in Market Harborough;
- (b) That the Director of Corporate Resources be congratulated for his work on the Office Accommodation Strategy, which would generate significant ongoing efficiency savings for the County Council.

252. Leicester City Council Consultation on Gypsy and Traveller Sites.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources concerning consultations being undertaken by Leicester City Council on the possibility of establishing authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites in the north west of the City. A copy of the report, marked 'D', together with a report on the matter to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 3 April are filed with these minutes.

The Local Members for Birstall and Bradgate, Mr. R. M. Wilson CC and Mr. E. D. Snartt CC respectively, had submitted comments on the Commission report. The comments of both members are filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Wilson CC to the meeting to outline his concerns about the identification of the sites. Mr. Wilson reported his concerns about developing sites on greenbelt, which was contrary to the new National Planning Policy Framework. He had asked the Council to organise a community meeting to discuss the proposals and give residents an opportunity to outline their concerns and this meeting had been attended by over 400 local residents. It was his concern that there had been a lack of consultation on behalf of the City Council, though he welcomed an invitation which he had since received from the Chair of the City's Economic Development, Culture & Tourism Scrutiny Commission to be a part of a review of the matter.

Arising from a debate on the matter, the following comments were noted:

- Prior to arriving at the three sites in question, over 350 sites had been assessed and rejected by the City Council. A view was expressed that the location of these sites and the reasons for their rejection should be made publicly available;
- The process had exposed some weaknesses in the consultation process and the need for the City and County Councils to work more closely on cross border issues;
- The City Mayor's announcement of a full review of the process was welcomed. It was hoped that this would lead to greater local member involvement in the process;
- The 2007 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment was due to be refreshed. Members expressed a wish to be kept informed of the outcome of this process.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Cabinet be advised that the Commission:
 - (i) supports the comments set out in paragraphs 14 to 16 and 23 to 29 of the report of the Director of Corporate Resources as the formal comments of the County Council;
 - (ii) notes and supports the comments now submitted by Messrs Wilson and Snartt and requests that they be submitted alongside the formal County Council response;
 - (iii) requests that clarification be sought from Leicester City Council on the current status of the consultation, given that:
 - (a) the press statement and letter from Sir Peter Soulsby to the Chair of the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Committee would seem to imply that additional sites may be identified following the Scrutiny Review;
 - (b) the City Council consultation webpage still refers to the three sites previously identified and only extends the consultation time period to 13 July;
 - (iv) requests that Leicester City Council be asked to make available details of all areas that were identified and assessed as potential sites;
- (b) That the offer from Leicester City Council Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Committee to receive evidence and comments be welcomed and that the Chairman of the Commission be requested to write to draw attention to the decision outlined above.
- (c) That it be noted that in the light of the new National Planning Framework and other developments a refresh of the 2007 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) will be undertaken.

253. Integrated Commissioning in Leicestershire.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive concerning the Council's progress in embedding a culture of integrated commissioning in Leicestershire. A copy of the report, marked 'E', is filed with these minutes.

The Chief Executive reported that the Council was at the forefront of a process to integrate commissioning between service providers to plan jointly, and in some cases fund, the required activity. The process was aimed solely around providing more effective services, though this made benchmarking the performance of services difficult. It remained a challenge to convince district councils with difficult financial situations of the benefits of pooled budgeting, though progress was being made.

It was noted that some advanced notice of work programmes for each of the Commissioning Hubs would be beneficial to enable more strategic planning to take place. This would also enable district leads represented on Hubs to gain a steer from their authorities in advance of meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that the approach taken to embed a culture of integrated commissioning in Leicestershire be fully supported.

254. Date of next meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on Wednesday 2 May 2012 at the earlier than usual start time of 10.00am.

2.00 pm - 5.00 pm
28 March 2012

CHAIRMAN