

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held in the Council Chamber, The Symington Building,

Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough

7th April 2016

commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor Dann, Chairman

Councillors: Mrs Ackerley, Bilbie, Bowles, Mrs Burrell, Champion, Elliott, Evans, Graves, Hadkiss, Johnson, Knowles, Nunn, Rickman, Mrs Simpson, Spendlove-Mason, Tomlin & Mrs Wood.

Officers: B. Jolly (until 7:40 p.m.), G. Keeping, B. Murgatroyd & S. Riley

541 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Beesley-Reynolds, Dunton, Galton, Hall, Dr Hill, Modha, Mrs Robinson and Rook.

542 MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMISSION

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held on 26th November 2015 be accepted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

543 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were made in respect of Members' Interests.

544 REPORT 1: BROADBAND PROVISION

Members received a presentation from the Head of Finance which covered progress since 2012, horizon scanning issues and challenges for the future. The Council originally contributed £530K against the following objectives for Superfast Broadband (SFBB):

- "Work with our partners to ensure that high-speed broadband is available to all our communities
- Developing strong working relationships with our top businesses to ensure that their business needs are met and their investment sustained
- The deployment of SFBB will also support the transformational move towards on-line resolutions to delivering public sector services"

In addition the Council has budgeted for a further £250K investment in the Superfast Extension Programme.

The current situation is that 90.4% of all premises within Harborough District will be able to receive broadband speeds in excess of 24Mbps by 2018. Approximately 2500 other properties can receive broadband speeds in excess of 15Mbps. Partnership with BT will increase superfast broadband coverage in Leicestershire to 95% of premises by the end of 2017. The Council promotes the Government's "Universal Offer" that all premises will be guaranteed a broadband speed of at least

2Mbps, but would like to exceed this target.

Issues that the Council will need to consider in the future include:

- HDC will need to apply a value for money test to further investment – how much can it afford to contribute to have a premise connected?
- Will new technologies allow slow speeds or ‘not spots’ to receive a service?
- How can the Council encourage residents and businesses to maximise the benefits of superfast broadband?
- How should ‘satisfaction’ with the Council’s investment be measured?

Questions and comments were invited and a summary of the subsequent discussion is set out below:

| Question/Comment | Response |
|---|---|
| <p><u>Cost:</u> It should be noted that the provision of fibre to a cabinet will not automatically increase speeds and customers will have to pay an additional amount for access to superfast broadband.</p> | |
| <p><u>Value for Money:</u> Was a value for money (VFM) approach taken in respect of the Council initial investment? Is any of this contribution left over?</p> | <p>There is no standard VFM test that can be applied, but expenditure on the initial investment has been monitored through reports to Council. The £250K additional contribution has not been committed yet.</p> |
| <p><u>Statutory Responsibilities:</u> In the light of budgetary pressures, is the Council’s involvement in improving broadband provision a statutory responsibility?</p> | <p>The improvement of broadband is not in itself a statutory responsibility of the Council.</p> |
| <p><u>Universal Offer</u> Is the Universal Offer worth pursuing, given that 2Mbps is such a low speed?</p> | <p>A year ago this was the only offer on the table. Today, a lot of people may not be satisfied with the original offer of 2Mbps. The current proposal to use the gain-share money from the BT contract and any new funding to target the areas that did not benefit from the earlier proposals is likely to make a difference.</p> |

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the presentation be noted;
- (ii) that a copy of the slides in the presentation be circulated to all Councillors for information; and
- (iii) that a full report on Broadband be included in the Scrutiny Workplan and presented to the next available Scrutiny Panel.

545 REPORT 2: THE SCRUTINY WORK-PLAN

Following discussion, the Scrutiny Commission RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Work-plan, attached as Appendix A to these Minutes, be approved.

546 REPORT 3: REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION

The Chairman introduced the report entitled "Review of the Scrutiny Function". The Council recognises the requirement to establish a Scrutiny function in its Constitution and provides that this will be comprised of a Scrutiny Commission, two Scrutiny Panels, a Scrutiny Steering Group (a working group consisting of the Scrutiny Commission Chairman and the Chairmen of the two Scrutiny Panels) and 'task and finish groups', as required. The Scrutiny Commission meets at least four times per year to agree its work. The two Scrutiny Panels currently meet a total of ten times per year. Task and finish groups are established when required, subject to there being a maximum of two groups in place at any one time. This structure dates from 2012, following a review of the Scrutiny function that culminated in a recommendation made by the Scrutiny Commission, which was adopted by Council on 30th July 2012. At its meeting on in September 2015 the Scrutiny Commission resolved to establish a Scrutiny Task Group to review the scrutiny function. The Task Group met in January 2016 and its conclusions were included in the report.

After consideration of the report, the Commission

RECOMMENDED that:

- a) the following arrangements for the Council's Scrutiny Function be adopted:**
 - (i) that the Scrutiny Commission be composed of ten members, with composition, function and frequency of meetings as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report;**
 - (ii) that two Scrutiny Panels, named "Performance Scrutiny Panel" and "Communities Scrutiny Panel" and each composed of ten members, be established, with composition, function and frequency of meetings as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report;**
 - (iii) that the function and composition of Scrutiny Task Groups remain unchanged; and**
 - (iv) that the planning, reporting and performance management arrangements for the Scrutiny Function follow the principles set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report.**
- b) the Constitutional Review Committee be asked to consider any changes needed to the Scrutiny Procedure Rules arising from a) above and to report back with recommendations for ratification at a future meeting of Council.**

The Meeting ended at 7:50 p.m.