

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held in the Congregational Church, Bowden Lane, Market Harborough

30<sup>th</sup> May 2013

commencing at 6.30p.m.

Present:

Councillor Mrs. Ackerley, Chair

Councillors: Bannister, Beaty (until 7.30p.m.), Brodrick, Dewes, Elliott, Evans, Galton, Graves, Holyoak, Johnson, Knowles, Liquorish (until 7.15p.m.), McHugo, Robinson, Rook, Mrs. Simpson, Smith and Spendlove-Mason.

Officers: B. Jolly, B. Murgatroyd, E. O'Neill, N. Proudfoot and S. Riley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beesley-Reynolds, Dunton, Golding, Mrs. Burrell, Everett, Hall, Dr. S. Hill, Tomlin and Page.

22 MINUTES

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

23 NOTES OF SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

RESOLVED that: the notes of the following Scrutiny Task Groups be taken as read and appended to these Minutes.

- Scrutiny Task Group: Council Operating Model and Commissioning and Procurement Strategy, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 (Appendix A).
- Scrutiny Task Group: Council Operating Model and Commissioning and Procurement Strategy, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2013 (Appendix B).
- Section 106 and New Homes Bonus Grants, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2013 (Appendix C).

24 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None received.

25 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Members received a report from the outgoing Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission, Councillor Dr. Bremner, as set out below:

"I would like to thank all Commission members (all members not on Executive) for their input into the task groups and the two standing panels over the year. The work of the task groups has been particularly rewarding, with members being prepared and engaging in debate, creating reports and putting recommendations to the Executive.

We need to develop a more outward-facing approach and focus on big ideas for Scrutiny agendas. This has begun and I look forward to the next year with anticipation of what members, as community leaders, may bring to the Scrutiny Commission meetings.

Thank you all for the last year and looking forward to the next.

Cllr Dr Paul Bremner

Chair of Scrutiny”

## 26 EXECUTVE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' END-OF-YEAR REPORTS

Members received reports on the performance of each of the Executive Portfolio for the 2012/13 year.

Portfolio Holders' reports contain the following categories: Key Achievements, Key Challenges, Key Areas of Work in Progress and Key Performance Indicators.

A summary of the discussion on each Portfolio is included below:

### Business Growth Portfolio

The Scrutiny Commission noted that:

- (i) the recruitment and appointment of a Business Support Manager had improved the efficiency of the Portfolio. This post's duties include running the Spark Initiative at the Harborough Innovation Centre.
- (ii) the budget progress of the Harborough Innovation Centre is ahead of schedule. It was expected that the building would make a loss in its first few years. Less of a loss than was expected is being experience. The Innovation Centre is due to break even in the next couple of years.
- (iii) the Council had invested £580k to assist the County-wide broadband improvement plan. At the time of the Meeting it was unknown when Harborough District's broadband assistance would be delivered as a result of this project.
- (iv) The Spark Programme, designed to support start-up businesses, was being run by Oxford Innovation on behalf on Harborough District Council.

### Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio

No comments received.

### Finance, Efficiency and Assets Portfolio

The Scrutiny Commission noted that:

- (i) the Council had had a challenging year in that is was still having to react to the 41% reduction in central government funding; the Council's Transformation Programme had delivered significant savings to help meet the resulting funding gap.
- (ii) the Council's finance team had recently been restructured to improve its efficiency.
- (iii) the Council's financial arrangements had received a 'Sound' audit rating for the 2011/12 year.
- (iv) the Council was now receiving greater interest on its invested funds since it had made changes to the financial products that it used.
- (v) as a result of the Transformation process, several manual financial processes had been removed. This had resulted in savings.

### Health and Community Portfolio

The Scrutiny Commission noted that:

- (i) a Harborough Proposal and Governance Structure were approved by the Executive in March 2013 for the Supporting Leicestershire Families service. This is a countywide

service that involves District Council leadership and accountability for local delivery of services to our most 'troubled' and 'at risk' families. Learning from this experience around locality accountability for a countywide service will feed into the review of the Council's Partnership Strategy to be completed in Quarter 1 of 2013/14.

- (ii) Arts Fresco's grant to Art England has been declined, which means that the festival will not go ahead in 2013 as this was the substantive amount of funding. Arts Fresco Board are working to progress and submit a funding application for the festival in 2014, as well as seeking additional commercial sponsorship to support the festival.
- (iii) A review of S106 and New Homes Bonus Grant Funding has commenced this quarter. This review aims to improve the accessibility of S106 funding held by the council and strengthen community and parish applications. The review will also suggest a process for distributing the £250k NHB money which Executive resolved should be used on a locality investment fund (80%) and district investment fund (20%) basis.

(iv)

The Scrutiny Commission REQUESTED that:

- (i) it be provided with details of how much of the Council's resources were used to assist in the Olympic Torch's visit to the District. S. Riley, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer, agreed to provide this information to Members.
- (ii) it be provided with detailed figures of how Supporting Leicestershire Families funds had been distributed throughout the District. N. Proudfoot, Assistant Director for Community Services, agreed to provide this information to Members.

#### Planning, Environment and Conservation Portfolio

The Scrutiny Commission noted that:

- (i) there has been a positive response from the public to the recent changes to the Waste and Recycling collections. The changes have resulted in a 40% (weight) increase in recycling collections.
- (ii) the Council's Development Control team has determined a high number of applications within the statutory time. The public had reported a high level of satisfaction with this service.

The Scrutiny Commission REQUESTED that it be provided with details of the most up-to-date five-year housing supply figures.

#### Regulatory and Safety Portfolio

The Scrutiny Commission RECOMMENDED that

- (i) the 'Major Corporate Risks' document be improved to include more details. It was hoped that this would improve Members' ability to scrutinise the Council's corporate risks.
- (ii) in future, when percentages are included in reports to the Scrutiny Commission, these should be accompanied by the

The Scrutiny Commission RESOLVED to note the activity of each of the Executive Portfolios for the 2012/13 year.

#### 27 THE SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

Members RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Workplan for June 2013 to September 2013, attached at Appendix D to these Minutes, be approved.

The Meeting ended at 8.40p.m.

Appendices to these Minutes not included with this despatch.