

## HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL – PEOPLE

held in the Council Chamber

24<sup>th</sup> November 2011

commencing at 6.30p.m.

Present:

Councillor Graves (Chairman)

Councillors: Beesley-Reynolds, Dr. Bremner (Ex Officio), Mrs. Burrell, Everett,  
Mrs. Robinson and McHugo.

Former Chairmen of the Council: Councillors Dunton, Liquorish, Mrs. Page and Mrs. Tooley.

Officers: M. Bradford, T. Day, R. Ellis, B. Murgatroyd,  
E. O'Neill, N. Proudfoot and P. Rowbotham

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Birch.

#### 316 MINUTES

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Panel – People held on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

#### 317 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None were noted.

#### 318 THE ROLE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL

R. Ellis, Corporate Services Manager, and B. Murgatroyd, Democratic Services Manager, introduced this report to the Panel. The purpose of the report was to examine the role of, and resources allocated to, the Chairman of Council.

The Panel was joined by four former Chairmen of the Council and the Chairman of the Panel invited each of these to comment on their experiences of holding the office of Chairman. A summary of the views of the former Chairmen of Council are set out below:

- (i) it is useful if an incoming Chairman has had experience of attending and chairing other Council committees/ panels before taking office. This helps the incoming Chairman to gather the necessary skills and experience of Council operations.
- (ii) the role can be difficult to fulfil if the Chairman also has a full-time job.
- (iii) the Chairman expects protocols and conventions of the Council, such as standing when addressing the Council, to be observed at Meetings of Council.
- (iv) the financial resources allocated to the role are insufficient.
- (v) the financial resources allocated to the role should take into account the role of the Chairman's consort.
- (vi) the Chairman can often feel financial pressure at social events to reciprocate the generosity and hospitality of others.
- (vii) if the Chairman is involved with events connected with the Council being twinned with another organisation, the cost of these events should not be met by the Chairman's allowance.
- (viii) the role is apolitical and the Chairman, by convention, abstains from voting at Meetings of Council.

- (ix) the role of the Chairman should be maintained at the Council. If it is ever suggested that the role of the Chairman should be removed the public should be fully consulted.
- (x) when attending events alone, the Chairman's safety should be taken into account.
- (xi) the chairman's budget should not be used for petty expenses such as event ticket purchase, Christmas cards, postage, maintenance of the Chain of Office etc.

Having listened to the debate the Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the role of the Chairman of Council should continue.
- (ii) this subject should be revisited in one year's time to see if any progress has been made and where any remaining deficiencies are.
- (iii) when the subject is revisited, further work should be brought before the Panel examining the adequacy of the staff resources allocated to the role (currently ten hours per week).
- (iv) the Chairman's two allowances (civic events budget and travelling allowance) should be combined into one 'pot' of money to allow greater flexibility in how the allowances are used. The Council's Constitution should be reworded to state that the Chairman of Council be allowed to spend their allowance "as they see fit."
- (v) the Chairman of Council should be privy to greater transparency of their financial records. This should enable them to have an understanding of how much has been spent, and how much is left, within their budget at any given moment.
- (vi) the Chairman's allowance should fall under the purview of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

### 319 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' HALF-YEAR REPORTS

Three Portfolio Holders report to the Scrutiny Panel – People. These are: Community Engagement, Cohesion and Wellbeing (Councillor Pain), Community Safety and Enforcement (Councillor Golding) and Corporate and Customer Services (Councillor Dann). Each of these Portfolio Holders presented their Half-Year Performance Reports for the year 2011/12 and invited questions from the Panel.

The Portfolio Holders' reports contained the following categories: Achievements, Current Work in Progress, Areas of Concern, Key Performance Indicators and Topical Issues.

A summary of the discussions of each Portfolio is provided below.

#### i)Community Engagement, Cohesion and Wellbeing

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the Children's Centre Programme continues to be delivered in line with the full core offer standard. The programme supports 13 projects delivering targeted services to families. Services are delivered through Children's Centre Buildings, in homes and in other settings throughout the district.
- (ii) the current Active Together programme was due to finish in September 2011 due to the funding coming to an end. Leicestershire and Rutland Sport have negotiated an additional contribution of funding from Leicestershire and Rutland NHS PCT to support the project until 31 March 2011 (to tie in with the new Commissioning arrangements). At a local level this has meant a reduction in the delivery plan budget so that the Physical Activity Development Officer posts can be extended until March. Targets have been realigned to reflect the reduction in delivery plan budget and now have to have 25 % targeted activity to reduce health inequalities with underrepresented groups. The targeted work is proving successful, specifically working with the travelling community, mental health users and disabled people.
- (iii) Re. the District's Leisure Centres: Dryside patronage across both sites is below target and is included within the marketing plan for the next quarter to promote, additionally due to the seasonal nature of wetside bookings this should increase. Health and fitness patronage is ahead of target.
- (iv) on 7<sup>th</sup> November it was announced that the Olympic Torch Relay will be passing through the District on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012. The locations that the torch will travel through

are Market Harborough, Lubenham, Foxton and Kibworth. Work will begin with local communities in order that people can get involved and that the opportunity to showcase the district is acted upon.

The Panel RESOLVED to the note the contents of the report.

#### ii)Community Safety and Enforcement

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the street trading policy was approved by Executive on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2011 and Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2011. In accordance with the legislation a public notice was issued on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011 and all existing traders have been notified of the changes. A period of 28 days for comments must now elapse before a final implementation date is set. It is anticipated that all traders shall be appropriately licensed by the end of February 2012.
- (ii) the number of annual noise complaints at Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground has decreased from around 400 in 2008 to just over 100 in 2011.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that: the Development Control and Planning Enforcement teams continue to work closely together to avoid duplication of work and misunderstandings where both teams have a common customer.

The Panel RESOLVED to the note the contents of the report.

#### iii)Corporate and Customer Services

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) during 2010/2011 Harborough District Council decided to enter into the Leicestershire Partnership for Revenues and Benefits. Phase one of the project is complete and all partners are able to utilise the document management and other associated systems. Hinckley and Bosworth Council staff moved into the shared Revenues and Benefits accommodation in the Atkins Building in Hinckley in September 2010. HDC moved in May 2011 and NWL joined at the end of July 2011.
- (ii) following the District elections in May 2011, the induction programme for Members is now complete.
- (iii) a new ICT user group has been established. This group is examining how it can improve Members' access and use of I.T. facilities.

Councillor Dann expressed his thanks to all of the staff who helped organise and run the Freedom of the District for the Royal Anglian Regiment earlier in the year.

The Panel RESOLVED to the note the contents of the report.

#### 320 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

T. Day, Community Partnership Manager, introduced this report to the Panel.

The Scrutiny Commission resolved on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2010 to examine, comment and make recommendations on existing and future partnership working arrangements. It was agreed that this report be brought in two parts, and that Part One be concerned with existing arrangements and Part Two with developing a more consistent approach to partnerships.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the Council adopts the working protocol for Partnerships, as set out in the report.
- (ii) the Council adopt a log/register, to include all of the Council's existing Partnership arrangements, as set out in the report. This log/register should be made available via the Council's website for public consumption.

The Meeting ended at 8.42p.m.