

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

held remotely via MS Teams

on 16th December 2021

Commencing at 6.30pm.

Present:

Councillors: Ackerley, Critchley, Fosker, Nunn (Chairman), Mrs Page (ex officio), Mrs Robinson and Mrs Simpson

Councillor (guest): Knowles

Apologies: Councillor Hollick

Officers: T. Day, J. Evans, S. Green, N. Kwasa, N. Proudfoot

1.APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTIONS

An apology was received from Councillor Hollick.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

3. MINUTES

It was noted that at the previous meeting a recommendation had been agreed that the draft Voluntary Sector Strategy would be included in the Scrutiny Workplan for consideration at the Panel's meeting in December 2021, prior to consideration at Cabinet. As the strategy was not on the agenda for this meeting, there were concerns that there wasn't a clear picture on the next steps or the dates that this action would be moved forward. The Senior Democratic Officer confirmed that at its most recent meeting on 25th November 2021, the Scrutiny Commission had removed the draft strategy from the agenda for this evening's meeting due to the fact it was not yet ready to be presented to the Panel and that a further date had yet to be agreed. It was AGREED that an additional note would be added to the minutes of the previous meeting to reflect this. It was confirmed that the Panel would have the opportunity to scrutinise the draft Strategy before it was agreed. It was, therefore,

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel held on 30th September 2021 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

The Chairman then MOVED to change the order of business on the agenda to consider Item 5. Any Urgent Business before Item 4. Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Report 2021.

5. ANY URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman noted that in accordance with the Scrutiny Commission's Workplan, the Communities Scrutiny Panel had received an update on the Section 106 Planning Obligations, in relation to Health and the Police. This had been circulated via email to the Panel ahead of its due date in March 2022. The Panel AGREED to note the update, and requested that, in discussion with the Scrutiny Commissioner and Chairman of the Panel, that the item be added to the Workplan for further consideration at a future meeting. It was therefore,

RESOLVED that the Chairman and Scrutiny Commissioner review the Workplan to discuss whether the S106 Planning Agreement Contributions, regarding Health and the Police, be considered at a future meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

It was also noted that the Annual Review of Partnership Register which was due to be circulated via email to the Panel is not yet ready and will be sent to Members in due course.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Knowles to speak, having joined the meeting as a guest. Councillor Knowles queried why the decision had been taken to hold the Panel's meeting this evening remotely, and how that would affect the six-month rule in relation to Member's attendance at meetings. The Chief Executive confirmed that the ability to hold remote meetings had fallen away from Local Authorities in May 2021 and the view at that point was all meetings had to be held in person. He noted that the regulations weren't particularly clear and there had been some trial and practice on how meetings could be held across different Local Authorities, including challenging the Government's position and at least two High Court hearings on the matter.

Harborough District Council chose initially to go down the route of face-to-face meetings to avoid any challenge, however since May a number of authorities have chosen to move their scrutiny functions online, the rationale being that scrutiny is not a decision-making function, but rather makes recommendations. He confirmed that the six-month rule won't apply to remote meetings at the moment but this is something

that the government is looking at. He noted that the rationale for holding this evening's meeting remotely was because last week Harborough had the highest rate of infections that the County has recorded since the start of the pandemic, and that, in discussion with the Chairman and the Scrutiny Commissioner, the agenda allowed for this to keep everyone as safe as possible in this period of very high infection rates.

He confirmed that in the New Year, officers will be further reviewing the potential for remote meetings.

4. HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY SCRUTINY REPORT 2021

The Chairman MOVED to DEFER the consideration of the draft Strategy to a future meeting of the Panel as the content has not yet been produced. The Community Partnerships Service Manager confirmed that this is partly because the draft strategy is under a period of public engagement, and it should be ready for April 2022. It was therefore,

RESOLVED that the Health & Wellbeing Strategy Scrutiny Report 2021 be DEFERRED for consideration at a future meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

The meeting finished at 18.58