

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

On 6 February 2024 commencing at 6.45pm.

Present: Councillors Bateman, Burrell, Dann, Elliott, Forman, Gair, Hallam (Chair),
James, Rickman and Whitmore.

Officers Present- L.Elliott, Deputy Chief Executive and S.Hamilton – Senior
Democratic Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Finan who was substituted
by Councillor Whitmore and Councillor Mrs Page.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

3. DRAFT MINUTES SCRUTINY COMMISSION 3RD NOVEMBER 2022

The Committee considered the previous meetings draft minutes and;

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Commission
held on the 28 September 2024, as updated, be accepted and signed by
the Chairman as a true record.

4. VERBAL UPDATE RELATING TO SCRUTINY PANELS

The Chair invited the Deputy Chief Executive to provide update relating to the Scrutiny Panels to the Commission. She explained that it was decided in the last Constitutional Review Meeting that the Scrutiny Commission function would be removed from any future versions of the Constitution. She went on to detail how the Constitutional Review Task and Finish Group have reviewed some articles of the Constitution, one key article being that with the abandonment of the Scrutiny Commission there has been a degree of flexibility included for the Scrutiny Panels. This means that there can now be between one and three panels held a year as required with the potential of up to 6 meetings to be held with seven members on each Panel.

The Deputy Chief Executive went on to explain that the current Constitution Task and Finish Group will continue through February and March and part of this will be the consideration of Part 4 of the Constitution concerning procedure rules in relation to Scrutiny arrangements.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that at 7th March Scrutiny Commission meeting she will guide the Members through the continuation of the Constitutional Review Task and Finish Group work by which time an update will be given as to whether the proposed changes have been accepted.

The Constitutional Review Committee will meet on 4th April to review the Constitution which will then be proposed to Annual Council as the new Constitution at which time the proposal for Committees to be adopted for the municipal year of 2024/25 will be put forward. The review will propose that only Scrutiny Panels will be in place going forward, and that the two Panel's remit be an internal corporate focus and an external service and communities focus respectively. The new Director of Communities and the Director of Planning would feed into the "Service Delivery and Communities Panel", and matters relating the Director of Finance would report into the Corporate Focus Panel. Reports considered by the Cabinet relating to proposals considering strategies or policies, would be brought to the relevant Panel. It was further suggested that both Panels have the same remit and focus on strategies, policy development and performance with one focussing on corporate issues such proposals or performance strategies and the other focussing on the service delivery in communities. Any Planning policies or Licensing and Regulatory policies concerning these service areas would be considered by the Services and Communities Panel if it requires scrutiny.

In conclusion to the proposal, the Deputy Chief Executive suggested that each of the two panels has four meetings per year with one joint budget scrutiny plan and one reserved date meeting should it be needed to consider productivity planning or productivity services in an instance where it would be of benefit to bring the two panels together after the budget has been set.

Cllr James highlighted that he feels it is important to reach out, listen to and involve the community regarding issues of concern and a positive way to do this would be to invite other officers from other agencies to meetings to understand what their actions are regarding these issues. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the 2025 workplan would not be considered tonight however she highlighted that each panel should develop their work plan within their terms of reference, and highlighted that the scrutiny function is to scrutinise an action or problem, not to gather information.

The Commission questioned the Deputy Chief Executive on various details of the Panels including the Task and Finish Groups. She confirmed that there is no limit to how many task and finish groups may be convened per year, and the details of this would be clear in the Constitution.

The Commission received the proposal and therefore;

RESOLVED that, there will be 2 panels with 7 members per panel, 10 meetings in total, 4 discrete meetings, 2 joint meetings and 1 reserved date for a shared meeting if required, per year.

5. SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Commission considered the Scrutiny Workplan as found in Appendix A to the report and made the following comments.

With regard to the Housing Strategy Report, the consultation was currently out for consultation, and Members were encouraged to respond.

In regards to the number of strategies to be considered per Panel meeting and in particular with regards to the Workforce Strategy, the Deputy Chief Executive would take advice as to whether the April 11th deadline was feasible or whether this strategy should be moved to the new panel in May as this. This would be confirmed at the March Scrutiny Commission meeting.

The Commission therefore;

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Workplan for the remainder of the municipal year be agreed. (As detailed at Appendix A to the minutes).

6. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT ITEMS (TO BE DECIDED BY THE CHAIRMAN)

Councillor Gair requested that the decision to remove the Lutterworth Allotments be scrutinised. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that no scrutiny held to this matter could reverse the planning decision that had already been made as Planning is a stand-alone body, and that this is a matter that falls outside of the Scrutiny remit.

The meeting ended at 19.25pm.

DRAFT