

MINUTES of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, The Shirehall, Hereford on Wednesday 27 July 2011 at 1.30 pm

Present: Councillor H Bramer (Chairman)

Councillors: AM Atkinson, MJK Cooper, PGH Cutter, KS Guthrie, EPJ Harvey, MAF Hubbard, JLV Kenyon, JW Millar, R Preece, SJ Robertson, PJ Watts, Mr P Burbidge, E Lowenstein and Brig P Jones CBE

Statutory co-optees Mr P Burbidge and Miss E Lowenstein

In attendance: None

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors WLS Bowen, RC Hunt, P Rone and A Seldon and from Mr P Sell.

7. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Brigadier P Jones CBE substituted for Councillor P Rone.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- Page1 – That the Minute recording declarations of interest should record that, *“The Chairman challenged Councillor EPJ Harvey three times about her declaration of a personal rather than a prejudicial interest.”*
- Page 1 - That the Minute recording declarations of interest should be reviewed to ensure that all declarations had been recorded. Miss E Lowenstein reported that she had declared a personal interest as a Parent Governor at Bishop of Hereford Bluecoat School, Hereford.
- Page 2 paragraph 1 – the addition of the following: *She also asked whether briefings on the Destination Hereford project would be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in line with the implementation proposal, included in the application for sustainable transport funding to support the project, which had referred to briefings being made to the Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee.*
- Page 2 paragraph 2 – line 2 deletion of the words, “the Council’s report “Hereford Relief Road, a Study of Options” and their replacement by, “her report “A “Relief” Road for Hereford or Not”.

- Page 3 the addition of the following paragraph: *“The Head of Service responded to a question as to whether, as part of the staff consultation, consideration had been given to the introduction of group tuition which would not only produce additional income, but also increase both the availability and accessibility of lessons, by saying that, whilst schools were the customers, he had discussed the possibilities with staff, but they were not supportive of the idea at the present time.”*

10. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor A Seldon be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

11. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

Mrs Morawiecka reiterated her request that the Committee should include the whole Local Development Framework process and the viability of plans to date in its work programme and that this should be done as a matter of urgency in view of the publication of the Council’s Economic Viability Assessment. She outlined a number of concerns she had about that Assessment which she wished the Committee to consider.

12. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

Six topics had been proposed as the first subjects for scrutiny. Scoping statements had been circulated separately setting out the reason for each proposed enquiry, a summary of each topic and its terms of reference.

The Chairman of each Task and Finish Group was invited to present the scoping statement within their themed area.

The following principal points were made in discussion:

- Concern was expressed by some Members that the proposed topics had been hastily selected without sufficient consideration by the Committee of alternative subjects for scrutiny and without a thorough assessment of priorities.

It was acknowledged that some of the scoping statements that had been presented needed further work to complete them and that this would be undertaken if they were approved.

- It was questioned whether the proposed topic of Tourist Signing (Brown Signs) was the highest priority within the Highways, Transportation and Waste themed area. It was noted in response that the intention was to complete the review promptly.
- A number of Members suggested that consideration of the Local Development Framework (LDF), in particular the consultation arrangements and decision making process, should be a priority. It was suggested that it was important to undertake this work before a further round of consultation on the LDF commenced.

The Chairman commented that his intention was that the six proposed topics would not be undertaken to the exclusion of other work. He envisaged a number of one day reviews being undertaken in parallel with work on those topics. It was proposed to hold a workshop to give consideration to the full work programme. A programme would then be presented to the Committee for approval.

- The Chairman of the Income and Charging Task and Finish Group commented that in her view scrutiny of the LDF was the priority and that this could potentially have a bearing on the timing of the Income and Charging Review.
- Clarification was sought on the method of making appointments to the Task and Finish Groups and the selection of expert witnesses. It was noted that expressions of interest had been invited from all Members. Officers would provide advice on the selection of witnesses.
- Dissatisfaction was expressed by some Members with the way in which the new scrutiny model had been introduced and was being implemented. It was suggested that the way in which the proposed subjects for scrutiny had been submitted to the Committee had been unhelpful. It was requested that, in future, consideration should be given to holding informal discussions in advance of matters being presented formally to the Committee.

It was concluded that the proposed workshop to consider the work programme should involve only the 17 Members of the Committee. However, the views of all Councillors would be invited in advance of the workshop.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) a workshop be arranged for the members of the Committee to consider the work programme and a proposed programme then be reported to the Committee for approval; and**
 - (b) the subjects proposed for scrutiny listed at paragraph 10 of the report (Council Procurement Policy and Local Business and Local Employment, Income and Charging, Planning System Review – Development Control and the operation of the Constitution, Safeguarding Arrangements for Children in Herefordshire, Safeguarding Adults, and Tourist Signing (Brown Signs), and the associated scoping statements be approved; and**
 - (c) the scoping statements be developed further, as appropriate, by the Vice-Chairmen working with lead officers.**

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm

CHAIRMAN