

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 15th October 2013 at Retford Town Hall

Present:

Councillor J C Shephard (Chairman)

Councillors: R Carrington-Wilde, D Challinor, G Freeman, J W Ogle, R Leigh, D G Pidwell, D R Pressley, J M Sanger, A Simpson and T Taylor.

Officers: G Blenkinsop, L Dore, M Hill, M Ladyman, R Theakstone.

Others present: Councillor W Quigley – Lead Petitioner (Agenda Item No. 6 only)

(Meeting commenced at 6.30pm.)

(The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the Fire Alarm/Evacuation Procedure and also enquired as to whether any member of the public wished to film the meeting or any part thereof).

69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) **Members**

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

(b) **Officers**

There were no declarations of interest by officers.

71. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH SEPTEMBER 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2013 be approved.

72. MINUTES FOR ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

RESOLVED that the Minutes for Action and Implementation be received.

73. OUTSTANDING MINUTES LIST

RESOLVED that the Outstanding Minutes List be received.

74. PETITION SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

The Committee received a petition which, with approximately 1450 signatures, was an insufficient number for it to be debated at Council. The Lead Petitioner presented the petition on behalf of The Retford Business Forum which concerned the Tourist Information Centre in Retford. Petitioners had been asked to sign under the following statement: "This TIC will

possibly be closed by Bassetlaw District Council. If you disagree with the please sign the following Petition or if you would like to write to your local Councillor/MP please ask for further information.”

The Lead Petitioner summarised the concerns of those who had signed the petition which included: Would there still be a face to face service for Tourism advice? Would there be Saturday cover for tourism advice? Would there be a dedicated area within the Town Hall specifically for tourism advice/information (not just part of general reception)?

The Chairman advised that Members could discuss the issue at this point prior to the Committee resolution on the Cabinet report regarding the ‘Review of Tourist Services’ in the confidential part of the meeting later on the Agenda.

Members commented on: the relevance of encouraging tourism as discussed during the Scrutiny Panel review ‘Pride in Bassetlaw’; the historical aspects of Bassetlaw that tourists come to visit and the economic and commercial benefits of having a dedicated accessible facility where visitors can obtain information; the broad knowledge and helpfulness of the staff currently working in the TIC; the importance of petitions as they show public concern about resources they consider important.

The Chairman added that developing tourism is part of the strategy to develop Bassetlaw while acknowledging that people access tourism information in different ways.

RESOLVED that the petition regarding the Tourist Information Centre in Retford, together with the specific issues raised, be considered as supplementary information alongside the Cabinet decision on the matter later on the meeting Agenda.

75. FORWARD PLAN

In response to a query regarding the Fees and Charges 2014/15 report to be presented to the December meeting of Cabinet, the Head of Finance and Property advised that this is the annual report which proposes new rates for the following financial year. The charges are provided as guidance based on the RPI of 2.7%, however the final decision remains with the budget manager and portfolio holder.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

Key Decisions

76. KEY DECISIONS OF CABINET 1ST OCTOBER 2013

(a) Climate Change Strategy 2013/14 and Sustainability Strategy (Key Decision No. 423)

RESOLVED that Minute No. 66(a) of the Cabinet Meeting held on 1st October 2013 be endorsed.

(b) Housing Act 2004 – Charges for Enforcement Action (Key Decision No. 429)

RESOLVED that Minute No. 67(a) of the Cabinet Meeting held on 1st October 2013 be endorsed.

Other Decisions

77. WAIVE OF CALL-IN/DECISION TAKEN WITHOUT SUFFICIENT NOTICE

None.

78. REFERRAL(S) FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

None.

79. POSSIBLE CALL-IN OF DECISIONS MADE BY CABINET – 1ST OCTOBER 2013 OR BY CABINET MEMBERS

None.

SECTION A – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PUBLIC

Other Decisions

80. REPORT(S) OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

(a) Town Hall Bars Update

The Head of Finance and Property presented a report which provided an update on the recent re-tender of the Hospitality and Bars contract. Two potential suppliers had responded to the opportunity as advertised by the Council's Procurement Unit and both had been interviewed. Former contract holder Barnsley Premier Leisure (BPL) had not retendered for the contract.

Every Occasion Catering Ltd (EOC) had been selected on the basis of being able to offer the best overall package based on their experience, price structure and promotion ideas. The Company had taken over the catering and events provision on 1st August 2013 on a three year agreement with an option for a further two years, subject to agreement by both parties. The contract can be terminated by one month's notice if EOC fails to carry out the agreed duties or becomes bankrupt. It can also be terminated by mutual agreement of both parties.

Feedback so far has been good and there have been no complaints. EOC will pay the Council 10% commission on the Bars income. Both Bars have been re-stocked, drink dispensers changed and new glassware provided. The Company hopes to refurbish both Bars when funds allow.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Finance and Property advised: the event booking process will be streamlined with EOC taking responsibility in future for booking both event and catering aspects; Kilton Forest Golf Club is part of the Leisure Contract and therefore the management of this is currently with BPL; customers will still be able to provide their own catering/catering contractor for event bookings.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. An invitation to Occasion Catering Ltd to provide an update to a future meeting to be considered as part of a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

(b) Update of Action Plan Arising From Scrutiny Review – Review of Pride in Bassetlaw

The Committee was provided with a progress report on actions arising from the Scrutiny Review of Pride in Bassetlaw which had taken place between February and April 2012. The review had focussed on community pride, the identity of Bassetlaw, communication by the Council, the Leadership role of the Council, rural areas, tourism, economic activity, a quality environment, the role of the voluntary and community sectors and volunteers.

Thirteen of the fifteen recommendations from the review have been completed. Updates on the two recommendations not progressed advised:-

- a self-assessment of community engagement and participation in Bassetlaw which has been delayed due to workload pressures but is to be completed by March 2014.

- the establishing of a protocol for Member and officer representation at business events and meetings with a quarterly report to Cabinet as Economic Development officers already attend 95% of business club meetings/networks and key business events are reported in the Members Information Bulletin.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Officers continue to monitor the outstanding recommendations and to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if they are not achieved.

(c) Update of Action Plan Arising From Scrutiny Review – Review of Attracting New Business to Rural Areas

The Committee was provided with a progress report on actions arising from the Scrutiny Review of Attracting New Business to Rural Areas which had taken place between February and May 2012. The review had focussed on education and training, broadband connection, marketing and promotion of Bassetlaw's unique selling points, enterprise, support for businesses and the Localism Act.

Seven of the thirteen recommendations from the review have been completed. Updates on the six recommendations not progressed or not yet fully complete advised:-

- a rural ward councillor has not been invited to be part of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) as there have been changes to the LSP.

- a lead officer has not been appointed to co-ordinate broadband delivery as the delivery of broadband is a County function.

- business pages on the Council's website have been updated but the new Transactional website is being contracted and the information and style of this will emerge from the Invest in Bassetlaw project with an expected live date of February 2014.

- Council has promoted LEADER funding and all grants have been awarded with administration extended until March 2014. New LEADER funding is not available until January 2015, however, interim funding has been secured to cover the transitional period between March and December 2014 for consultation with businesses and production of a new development strategy.

- an enterprise event with academies, colleges and the business community to promote enterprise skills and an interest in business skills among local young people is scheduled to take place in January 2014.

- Thinking Places have been appointed to encourage the local business community to become part of the Ambassador Scheme to work with the Council with delivery expected in March 2014.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Officers continue to monitor the outstanding recommendations and to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if they are not achieved.

(Councillor Pressley left the meeting at this point).

(d) Review: Empty Homes

The Corporate Development and Policy Manager presented the new style short report following the Committee review of Empty Homes which had taken place at the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The report summarised the key findings of the review including details of the national and local position, the development of a successful approach to tackling the problem of empty homes, available funding and the incentives for owners of empty properties.

The summary report advised empty homes are located around the District with no specific concentration in any one area, however, there is a demand for two and three bedroomed properties and the owners of these empty properties will be targeted. The Empty Homes Officer is now in post and a proactive approach is being taken to reduce the number of empty homes in Bassetlaw but it will be a challenging and time consuming process.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(e) Overview and Scrutiny Committee Programme

The Committee was presented with the scheduled Overview and Scrutiny Committee Programme report. Given the anticipated workload, the Corporate Development and Policy Manager sought agreement to vary the delivery of the programme for 2013/14.

She suggested that Barnsley Premier Leisure could be invited to provide an update annually rather than twice per year and that perhaps the Equalities Annual Report, which is being intensively monitored, could be left with Cabinet for consideration. Members discussed both proposals.

RESOLVED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The programme be amended to invite Barnsley Premier Leisure to provide an update to the June 2014 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
3. The Equalities Annual report be removed from the programme.

(f) Preparation for the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Monitoring Officer, currently Chair of the Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood Community Safety Partnership (BNSCSP), provided an insight into her role and the role of the partnership. She commented on the challenges facing such partnerships, the need for all partners to work together effectively and how the work they do impacts on each other.

She stressed that there has to be a clear strategy for the partnership which must consider what the benefit will be for our communities while being mindful that resources need to be managed effectively. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has control over the budget that funds the partnership which in turn has to focus on the area(s) of greatest need and demonstrate added value. Partnership success is measured on solutions developed to deal with specific problems and in her current role as Chair of the BNSCSP, the Monitoring Officer is working on programs to assist in the medium to longer term to create a positive result in future.

The next meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the BNSCSP is to take place on Tuesday 12th November 2013 and a copy of the invitation letter and proposed presentation for the meeting by the Community Safety Co-ordinator and Chair of the

Partnership had been included in the Agenda papers. The presentation explained what the partnership is, who the partnership members are along with its aim, structure for 2013/14 and links to County. It will also highlight the work that has been done, the priorities for 2013/14, lessons learned and challenges being faced. Members were reminded that they needed to consider what questions they wish to ask at the meeting at which the PCC will be present.

Members suggested questions should be raised concerning: Worksop Custody Suite, the future of Safer Neighbourhood Groups, funding for the Partnership, concerns over the increasingly predominant role of Police Community Support Officers, the potential impact of future changes to probation services, the impact of changes to welfare reform, the strategy to tackle emerging issues, concerns over targets and 'spiking' figures, the involvement of young people in decision-making processes, the involvement of the Health and Wellbeing Board, priority setting by the Police, the reduction in neighbourhood policing.

RESOLVED that:

1. Information about the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 12th November 2013 be received.
2. Suggested questions to be posed at the meeting to be circulated by the Corporate Development and Policy Manager.

(Councillor Carrington-Wilde left the meeting during discussion of this Agenda item).

(g) Update from Health and Public Services Sub-Committee

The Chair of the Health and Public Services Sub-Committee advised the Sub-Committee had not met since the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, however the Chair and Vice-Chair had recently had a useful meeting with POhWER Nottinghamshire which is currently working on an action plan of how it is going to work in Bassetlaw.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

81. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and after considering the public interest test as set out by the officer in the body of the report, Members agreed that the following items of business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 2 and 3, and therefore, in accordance with Section 100A of the Act, the press and public be excluded from the meeting:

Agenda Item No. 13(a) – Provision of Insurance Services 2013/14 (Key Decision No. 392) – Paragraph 3

Agenda Item No. 13(b) – Review of Tourist Services (Key Decision No. 416) – Paragraph 2

SECTION B - ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE

Key Decisions

82. KEY DECISIONS OF CABINET – 1ST OCTOBER 2013

(a) Provision of Insurance Services 2013/14 (Key Decision No. 392)

RESOLVED that:

1. Minute No. 73(a) of the Cabinet Meeting held on 1st October 2013 be endorsed.

2. Thanks be recorded to the Head of Finance and Property and his team for their work in achieving budget savings in the procurement of insurance services.

(b) Review of Tourist Services (Key Decision No. 416)

RESOLVED that:

1. Minute No. 74(a) of the Cabinet Meeting held on 1st October 2013 be endorsed.
2. Cabinet be asked to consider the petition presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 15th October 2013, together with the specific issues raised by the lead petitioner, as part of the consultation process regarding the proposed changes to the delivery of tourism services as being considered in the Review of Tourist Services.

Other Decisions

83. WAIVE OF CALL IN/DECISION TAKEN WITHOUT SUFFICIENT NOTICE

None.

84. POSSIBLE CALL IN OF DECISIONS MADE BY CABINET OR BY CABINET MEMBERS

None.

85. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

As there was no other business to be discussed, the Chairman closed the meeting.

(Meeting closed at 8.45pm).