

Time commenced - 6.00 pm
Time finished - 8.30 pm

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
26 JUNE 2007

Present: Councillor Higginbottom (in the Chair)
Councillors Bayliss, Carr, Dhindsa, Ingall, Jones, Poulter and Webb

17/07 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

18/07 Late items introduced by the Chair

In accordance with Section 100(B) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to admit an item relating to Overview and Scrutiny Work Planning on the grounds that it could not wait until the next meeting.

19/07 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

20/07 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21/07 Call – In

There were no items called in.

Items for Discussion

22/02 Overview and Scrutiny Commissions – Work Planning and Resources 2007/08

The Commission considered a report which stated that Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 14 made it clear that individual commissions set their work programme but that it was subject to approval by the Scrutiny Management Commission in its co-ordinating role. The logic behind the rule is to ensure that two or more commissions do not choose duplicate or overlapping issues or subject areas which may lead to disproportionate burden on one department.

The reduction to five scheduled meetings of the commissions meant that the proposed work programmes from other commissions may take longer to finalise and would have

to wait until 18 September 2007 for approval. This would prevent reviews from being started until a substantial way through the municipal year. It was therefore proposed to delegate authority to the Chair, Vice Chair and Liberal Democrat member of each of the other Commissions to formally consider and approve their work programme items in the period up to 18 September 2007.

Resolved

- 1. That for the period up to 18 September 2007 the Commission gives delegated authority to the Chair, Vice Chair together with a Liberal Democrat member to formally consider and approve work programme items referred by the other Commissions, and**
- 2. To provide a report to the 18 September 2007 meeting listing the use of this authority.**

23/07 Performance Eye

No items had been selected for this meeting.

The Commission considered the indicators which fell within the Commission's portfolio. It was suggested that Performance Eye needed to be real time to enable questions to be raised. The Commission requested that a report be presented to the next meeting with an explanation of why the information was not up to date.

The Commission also fed back on the Workshop which had been held on 25 June 2007. Commission members had found the workshop very useful. It was suggested that the case study be circulated to members who had been unable to attend the Workshop.

Consideration needed to be given to scores where they could not achieve the target. An example of Trading Standards Enforcement was given where they could only reach 80% of the target due to cuts in the training budget.

The Commission requested that the top five successes and failures from departments be notified to the Chair and Vice Chair. It was reported that the most vulnerable indicators and direction of travel were being considered and the poorest would be given attention via a performance surgery at the individual Cabinet Member meetings to which the appropriate Scrutiny Chair and Co-ordination Officer would be invited.

Resolved

- 1. To request reports on BV9, BV10, BV2a and BV127b to the next meeting.**
- 2. To review targets which could not be achieved.**
- 3. To receive a report at the next meeting on the experience of performance surgeries.**

24/07 Retrospective Scrutiny – Silk Mill Fire

The Commission considered a report on the Fire at the Silk Mill in April 2002. The matter had been reported to the Environment Commission in July 2006. The emphasis for that report was the length of time of the closure of the riverside footpath. That report did not however give a full account of the event leading to the fire, the remedial work and reasons for the ensuing delays in completing the replacement of the fire escape. A copy of the full report was attached at appendix A to the report. The report also outlined issues arising in relation to the fire and other recent developments.

There was concern about anti social behaviour in the area with Cathedral Green effectively becoming a cul-de-sac and asked for a report on this.

The Commission were concerned that fire safety training needed to be done particularly in schools. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order required responsible people to be identified and training to be carried out. It was reported that there was no budget for training. Members were told that fire risk assessments needed to be carried out on the Council's 900 buildings and this would take some time to complete.

Resolved

- 1. To request a report on the issues raised to the next meeting.**
- 2. To request a report on the problems with anti social behaviour at Cathedral Green.**
- 3. To request a report on the implications of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order and the implementation plan.**

25/07 Car Parking Enforcement

The Commission received an oral report from David Gartside, Head of Traffic and Mikk Campbell, Parking Services Manager on Car Parking Enforcement. It was almost year since the Council had taken over responsibility for car parking enforcement from the police. It was noted that enforcement was going well and a standardised process was being adopted. The appeals process for parking tickets was outside the normal appeals process and cases could be referred to an external independent adjudicator. Enforcement policy was agreed by Council Cabinet, Councillor Smalley had responsibility for enforcement activity and Councillor Banwait had responsibility for the car parking strategy.

Members of the Commission raised concerns about parking on grass verges, yellow lines and issues relating to blue badge holders.

Resolved to note the report and request a progress report at a future meeting.

26/07 Review of May 2007 City Council Elections

The Commission considered a report on the City Council elections which took place on 3 May 2007. These were the first elections held since the Electoral Administration Act 2006 was introduced and therefore a number of new challenges faced the Elections Team in preparing for and running the elections.

The Commission had recently completed an in depth policy review on electoral registration during which many changes arising from the Act were identified and discussed. In the run up to the elections there was also a great deal of publicity on some problems faced by Elections Teams across the country particularly in the area of postal voting. Although the Council's Elections Team avoided many of the problems highlighted in the media there was now an opportunity for the Commission to review how the elections went in Derby and consider an action plan identifying areas to be examined when planning for future elections. A copy of the proposed action plan was attached to the report at appendix 2.

Concern was raised about the registration of attainers via the telephone system. A new supplier had been arranged for this years canvass to address the issue of registering attainers. There were also concerns about people receiving an acknowledgement for their postal vote application but not actually receiving the postal vote. It was acknowledged that this issue had been referred to Royal Mail to investigate.

In relation to the count there was concern about the quality of work some of the counting staff employed. Derby was the only Council in Derbyshire and only one of a small number of Councils in the East Midlands to hold the count on the Thursday night. There were issues around postal votes being delivered to polling stations and the Council House up to 10pm on polling day and getting those votes processed and included on the count took time. It was always difficult to get count staff at night and this year most had come from the University and quality could not be assured. Due to the hours of poll it was not possible to use polling staff to count and therefore fresh staff had to be recruited. A question was raised on whether it would be better to revert to counting in each ward, but this would not be practical due to the issues with postal votes being delivered up to close of poll. It was suggested that a central announcement at the Count would be better than at the individual count tables so that everyone knew what was going on elsewhere:

A Bill currently before Parliament would allow Councils to opt for whole council elections instead of by thirds. However this would need consultation and the earliest implementation date would be 2011.

Councillor Bayliss expressed his support for the proposal in the action plan which suggested that signage at polling stations should be reviewed.

Various suggestions were made in relation to how people could be made more aware of deadlines for registration, postal votes and proxy votes.

Resolved

- 1. To note the review of the May 2007 City Council Elections and approve the action plan.**

2. **To ask the Corporate Director – Corporate and Adult Services to progress the review of the count as soon as possible so that they could be addressed before the start of planning for the next election.**
3. **To congratulate the staff involved in preparing for and making the election successful.**

27/07 Proposed Commission Work Plan for 2007/08

The Commission considered its work plan for 2007/08. It was suggested that a review of the Community Safety Partnership and a review of the cycle of Local Government Elections could be undertaken.

Resolved

1. **To request that the background work be undertaken relating to the effect on voter turnout of the cycle of Local Government Elections and that the political parties be consulted.**
2. **To approach the Community Safety Partnership about a scene setting meeting in September.**

28/07 Evidence Gathering meeting with Helen Osler of Derby City Partnership

The Commission noted that an informal evidence gathering meeting with Helen Osler from Derby City Partnership had been arranged for 19 July at 6pm.

29/07 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

The Commission examined the items on the Forward Plan which were relevant to the Commissions remit.

Resolved to request a report on item 38/06 Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership Inward Investment Strategy.

30/07 Responses from Council Cabinet to any Reports of the Commission

There were no responses to any reports of the Commission.

31/07 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were none.

MINUTES END