

ITEM 4

Time commenced - 6.00 pm

Time finished - 8.25 pm

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION 13 DECEMBER 2005

Present: Councillor Graves (in the Chair)
Councillors Ahern, Allen, Hickson, Higginbottom, Jackson, Jones,
Latham, MacDonald, Smalley, Travis and Turner.

61/05 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

62/05 Late items introduced by the Chair

There were none.

Councillor Latham highlighted that she had been appointed at a previous meeting of the Commission to the Compact Forum but on attending the Annual General Meeting she established that it was Community Regeneration Commission Chair and Vice Chair who were eligible for nomination to the Forum. Steve Dunning, Assistant Director Democratic Services, said that the Council had normally delegated these appointments to the Scrutiny Management Commission.

Resolved to appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Regeneration Commission to the Compact Forum.

63/05 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

64/05 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

65/05 Minutes of the Special Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Management Commission and the Culture and Prosperity Commission

The Minutes of the Special Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Management Commission and the Culture and Prosperity Commission held on 31 October 2005 were received.

66/05 Call-In

There had been no call in of a decision.

Items for Discussion

67/05 Derby Marketing

John Forkin from Derby Marketing gave a presentation to the Commission outlining their work on a Marketing Strategy for Derby. He said that a branding exercise for Derby was important as it would attract investment to the City, help to create jobs opportunities and raise Derby's profile with businesses.

Councillor Travis asked why Derby was not featured in business magazines and travel magazines like other big cities were. It was noted that Derby does not have a dedicated PR department dedicated to raising Derby's profile. John Forkin reported that Derby Marketing were working on bringing Communications teams across the City together to develop a more structured Public Relations Strategy.

Councillor Higginbottom asked whether the name of the airport was detrimental to Derby Marketing's work. Mr Forkin felt that there was an optimism about the future of Derby due to the extensive building work currently being carried out in the City and said that his research had demonstrated that the people of Derby were positive about the City's future prospects.

Councillor Ahern felt that selling the City to people who already lived and worked in the City would not be too difficult a task however he raised concerns that many people commute out of Derby to other neighbouring Cities and spend in shops there rather than in Derby. Mr Forkin reported that Derby Marketing needed to carefully develop Derby as a product to encourage people to spend their money in the City. He suggested that customers needed to have a greater understanding of what Derby had to offer. Whilst figures showed that commuter rates between Nottingham and Derby were roughly the same, it was noted that Derby was losing out to other big Cities in the area.

The Commission thanked John Forkin and the Derby Marketing Team for their detailed presentation.

Resolved to note the report and to request future updates on the marketing of Derby.

68/05 Gershon Update

The Commission received an information pack from the Paul Dransfield, Director of Finance on the Gershon report and the efficiency agenda.

Paul Dransfield reported that the Government had set every Council targets to save money. The targets had been prescriptive in how the money could be saved. A savings report for 2004/5 had already been submitted along with a half year report for 2005/6 and the Paul Dransfield believed that Derby City Council was on target to achieve the planned savings for the remainder of the year. The Committee noted that an officer group had been established with responsibility for co-ordinating Derby City Council's work on achieving savings.

Resolved to refer the matter to all Overview and Scrutiny Commissions for information.

69/05 Meetings with Individual Members of the Council Cabinet

The Commission received a report from the Director of Corporate Services outlining the proposed arrangements for meetings with individual Members of the Council Cabinet.

Councillor Hickson felt that the proposals added a layer of unnecessary bureaucracy to the Council's decision making structures.

Councillor Latham commented that Commission Chairs were facing the possibility of an additional 40 meetings per year under the new proposals. She felt that officer involvement would increase significantly and that this aspect of the proposals had not been significantly explored. She believed the Commission should reject the proposals.

The Chair felt that the Scrutiny Management Commission Members all welcomed the opportunity to meet with Council Cabinet Members but expressed concern that the proposals were perhaps not the best way of doing this.

Councillor Travis believed that the Commission Chairs should be able to ask the Council Cabinet Members to attend a meeting at their request. She believed the proposals reversed this and forced Commission Chairs to meet the relevant Council Cabinet Member at his or her individual Council Cabinet Member meeting.

Councillor Turner was prepared to give the proposals a try as he felt there were benefits in the revised decision making structure.

Councillor Higginbottom agreed and said that consultation with Council Cabinet Members had been requested by Commission Members and that the opportunity to meet regularly with Commission Members should be welcomed.

Councillor MacDonald also believed that the opportunity to consult with the Council Cabinet Members should be welcomed.

Councillor Jones felt that the Council Cabinet Members should have agreed dates for the meetings in conjunction with the Commission Chairs rather than simply informing them of when the dates would be.

Councillor Ahern highlighted that if Overview and Scrutiny Commission Chairs had been consulted with prior to the reforms being implemented, many of the issues and problems expressed by Commission Members could have been resolved.

Councillor Smalley was disappointed that the Scrutiny Management Commission's previous work on consultation had been ignored by the Council Cabinet.

Resolved to ask the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Management Commission to meet with the Leader and Deputy Leader to discuss the comments and concerns of Commission Members.

70/05 Performance Eye

The Commission noted that the Performance Indicators had not altered significantly since they were examined at the last meeting.

Resolved to note the oral report.

71/05 Retrospective Scrutiny

There were no items for Retrospective Scrutiny

Resolved to ask Members to contact the Scrutiny and Complaints Manager with any items for Retrospective Scrutiny.

72/05 Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission.

There were none.

73/05 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

No items were identified in the Council Cabinet Forward Plan for consideration at future meetings of the Commission.

Resolved to note the items on the Forward Plan which fell within the Commission's remit.

Matters referred to the Commission by the Council Cabinet

74/05 A Vision For Ageing

The Commission received a report from the Cabinet Member for Adult Services on 'A vision for Ageing'.

Richard Talaska summarised the report for the Commission and detailed the consultation process that had taken place to produce the Council's strategic approach to meeting the needs of an ageing population.

Councillor Turner, the Council's Champion for Older People stated he strongly supported the positive 'can do' approach evident in the Vision.

Councillor Smalley said he welcomed the report. He raised concerns about the funding available to progress the Vision into specific policies.

Councillor Travis felt that if the Council was intending to support older people to live independent lives, public transport issues would need to be addressed.

Resolved to welcome the report.

75/05 Reviewing the Council's Vision, Objectives and Priorities

The Commission received a report from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Policy on the Council's Vision, Objectives and Priorities for 2006/09.

Councillor Allen felt that the Lifelong Learning high level objective should be given a wider remit than simply a catalyst for economic growth.

Councillor Hickson expressed concern that economic development and leisure were not covered by the objectives.

Councillor Latham expressed her disappointment that whilst Cabinet Members had a full day to discuss the objectives, the Scrutiny Management Commission were only given time to discuss the paper as an agenda item. The Director of Finance explained that this was only the start of the consultation process and that consultation with Members would continue until 1 March 2006.

Councillor Smalley felt that all Members would broadly support the objectives but would differ in their approaches to achieving them. He was concerned that the objectives could result in a narrow band of expenditure and felt that broader priorities would be preferable.

Resolved to note the Council's proposed Vision, Priorities and Objectives for 2006/09

76/05 Review of Council Tax Income/Expenditure

The Scrutiny and Complaints Manager introduced a preliminary scoping report for a proposed review of Council Tax income and expenditure by Ward in Derby. He informed the Commission that Blackburn with Darwen Council had carried out a similar review several years ago. He highlighted that the Blackburn investigation had not examined any expenditure under £1 million yet, despite this, the review had cost the Council in the region of £35,000 in consultant's fees and this figure excluded any Council Officers' time costs and other additional fees. He emphasised that if the Commission decided to proceed with this review they needed to be aware of the levels of work, time and expense involved.

Paul Dransfield, Director of Finance said that this was an interesting topic that could provide useful information but he highlighted the difficulties in carrying out a review of this nature. He said the Commission would have to decide how to class expenditure on things that benefited residents in a particular Ward as well as residents across the City. He cited examples like city parks and old people's homes that were located in a ward but were utilised by residents across Derby.

Councillor Higginbottom stated that she had previously supported this review but had not been aware of the costs involved. She wished to withdraw her support for the review as she was concerned about the significant costs involved.

Councillor Smalley suggested that the Commission could ask the Cabinet for funding to support this review.

The Chair said he was not clear about the purpose of carrying out a review on this issue and said he felt uncomfortable with the expense and time that would be involved if there was not a worthwhile reason for examining this issue.

Councillor Smalley felt that the information would help to highlight areas where there was not sufficient expenditure or conversely where there was unnecessary expenditure taking place.

Councillor Travis felt that the Blackburn Review highlighted a number of difficulties that had led her to query the results and the worth of carrying out the review.

Councillor Latham asked whether the Scrutiny budget was not sufficient to fund this proposed review. The Scrutiny and Complaints Manager reported that there was approximately £25,000 in the Scrutiny budget but that this funding was for all Overview and Scrutiny Commissions.

Paul Dransfield highlighted that stage 1 of the proposed review would provide Commission Members with a clearer picture of what would be involved in carrying out this review and of the likely costs and time commitments required.

Resolved to ask Councillors Higginbottom, Hickson/Smalley and Allen to form a sub group to take the review forward to the first stage.

77/05 Proposals for the Merger of Local Police Forces.

The Chair asked the Commission Members for any further comments on the proposals to merge local Police Forces.

Members felt that their meeting on 28 November 2005 with the Chief Constable of Derbyshire and the Chair of the Police Authority had been extremely useful.

Councillor Latham felt that the reforms were being rushed through and that this important issue needed far more time for consideration.

Councillor Hickson reported that, earlier in the day, he had attended a Police Authority meeting on the proposals. He stated that the Police Authority had concerns about the timescale, cost and the implications for an indirectly elected Police Authority. He said the Authority had decided that they would not be making proposals in response to the Government's request for voluntary Police Force mergers. He suggested that a federation approach where Police Forces had a legal duty to assist neighbouring forces in times of emergency was the Police Authority's preferred option when faced with an imposed merger.

Councillor Smalley wished to retain the current force. He said more time was needed to think through the merger proposals and he suggested that the Commission should support the Police Authority on this issue.

Councillor Turner felt that the Commission's priority should be to support the best option for the people of Derby which may not necessarily coincide with the Police Authority's wishes.

Resolved to refer the report to Council Cabinet with the following recommendations:

1. Having regard to the resolution of the Council passed on 23 November 2005, the Scrutiny Management Commission recommends the Council Cabinet to:

a) express the Council's support for the resolution made at the Association of Police Authorities Summit of Chairs and Chief Executives of Police Authorities on 7 December 2005 and,

b) seek a solution which will secure effective policing of the city of Derby as the top priority.

MINUTES END