

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 26 JUNE 2012

Councillors Present: Jeff Beck (Substitute) (In place of Marcus Franks), Brian Bedwell (Chairman), Dominic Boeck, Jeff Brooks (Vice-Chairman), Virginia von Celsing, Dave Goff, Roger Hunneman (In place of Tony Vickers), David Rendel, Andrew Rowles (Substitute) (In place of Emma Webster) and Quentin Webb

Also Present: John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment), Nick Carter (Chief Executive), Chris Jones (Arts and Leisure Services Manager), Councillor Hilary Cole (Countryside, Environmental Protection, "Cleaner Greener", Culture), Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge, David Lowe (Scrutiny and Partnerships Manager) and Elaine Walker (Principal Policy Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Marcus Franks, Councillor Tony Vickers and Councillor Emma Webster

Councillor(s) Absent: Councillor David Holtby and Councillor Mike Johnston (Please note that after the meeting had taken place apologies were received from Councillor Johnston that due to rail disruption he had been unable to leave London.)

The Chairman thanked Councillor Jeff Brooks for chairing the meeting held on 29 May 2012.

PART I

15. Minutes

Please note that after the meeting had taken place apologies were received from Councillor Johnston that due to rail disruption he had been unable to leave London.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2012 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor David Rendel requested clarification as to why the final report of the Pot Holes Task Group had not been brought to this meeting. The Chairman responded that the Member who had raised the issue had not been available to attend this meeting, and as a courtesy to allow him to hear the debate, the Chairman had decided to defer the item until the next meeting.

16. Declarations of Interest

Councillor David Rendel declared an interest in Agenda Item 10, but reported that, as his interest was personal and not prejudicial, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

17. Actions from previous Minutes

(18:33 – Councillor Dominic Boeck joined the meeting)

The Commission received an update on actions from the previous meeting. Comments were received regarding the following items:

2.1 and 2.2: Supplementary information was received from Councillor Roger Croft, Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Council Plan and Housing, responding to discussions about housing and homelessness.

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Councillor Rendel expressed his disappointment with the response. He noted that there had been no intention to infer that employees within the Housing Service were not performing well, but other factors were causing a growing concern regarding homelessness, and that a shortage of accommodation on the district was a growing problem. Councillor Rendel referred to the debate at the Commission's meeting in May when it had been resolved that the Portfolio Holder be asked to facilitate a meeting with all involved agencies. Councillor Rendel suggested that solutions might be forthcoming if the issue was able to be discussed in a forum such as this.

The Chairman asked whether the Commission wished a Task Group to be established to review this issue. Councillor Quentin Webb considered that the formation of a Task Group would be premature in light of the fact that the Portfolio Holder had arranged a meeting with Sovereign Housing to discuss the issue.

(18:40 – Councillor Roger Hunneman joined the meeting)

Councillor Boeck suggested that prior to establishing a Task Group, it would be necessary to fully understand what issues it would be scrutinising. Councillor Brooks reminded the Commission that it was entitled to scrutinise any issue of concern, and reiterated the need for an opportunity to speak with stakeholders to obtain a full range of views and to explore any potential solutions. Councillor Dave Goff noted that the Portfolio Holder's response had not adequately addressed whether he intended to arrange a meeting with involved agencies.

The Chairman suggested that the Portfolio Holder be invited to the next meeting of the Commission along with a representative of Sovereign Housing in order for the Commission to discuss its concerns directly. The Commission agreed this course of action.

Councillor Rendel commented on the protracted processes employed for the re-use of Taceham House and questioned whether improved foresight could have minimised the delay. Councillor Rendel requested that the supplementary information be forwarded to the Resource Management Working Group for inclusion in its consideration of the asset management structure. The Commission agreed.

2.3: Councillor Rendel requested an update regarding the Commission's resolution to refer the proposed introduction of a 50mph speed limit on the A4 Bath Road at Padworth back to the Portfolio Holder for Highways for reconsideration.

RESOLVED that:

- The Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Council Plan and Housing be invited to the next meeting of the Commission to discuss housing and homelessness, along with a representative of Sovereign Housing;
- The Resource Management Working Group to receive the supplementary information in relation to Taceham House for inclusion in their consideration of the asset management structure;
- The Commission be updated on the progress of reconsidering the decision to introduce a 50mph speed limit on the A4 Bath Road in Padworth.

18. Items Called-in following the Executive on 14 June 2012

No items were called-in following the last Executive meeting.

19. Councillor Call for Action

There were no Councillor Call for Action.

20. Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

21. Update on Preparations for the Olympic Games

The Commission received a verbal report (Agenda Item 8) updating it on preparations for the Olympic torch relay through West Berkshire, and activities taking place within the district as part of the Cultural Olympiad.

Chris Jones initially explained that he would be collating information later in the year relating to both aspects of the Olympic celebrations in West Berkshire, and intended to report on the economic impact and benefits seen within the district.

Chris Jones informed the Commission of a number of events that took place across West Berkshire recently relating to the Cultural Olympiad. A series of events had been undertaken as part of 'The Berkshire Giant' project. Over the preceding week this had involved three community celebrations as well as a 'Giants trail', a community fair, and poetry and film workshops. Chris Jones reported that thousands of adults and children had taken part or attended and extremely positive feedback had been received.

A poetry event had also taken place at the Watermill Theatre involving schools, cub groups, young people with special needs, older people with Alzheimer's, community groups and private sector groups, who took part in a writing workshop to create original poetry based on the Olympic motto 'Higher, Faster, Stronger'. The poems would be displayed on a poetry trail in the grounds of the theatre until September.

With regard to the Olympic torch relay, Chris Jones reported the following:

- A full event plan had been finalised and approved by Corporate Board. Every conceivable eventuality had been considered, including road closures, the safe movement of large numbers of young people, crowd safety and missing children, and had been well received by the Thames Valley Resilience Forum;
- The plan had been tested through a multi-agency desk top exercise and all learning from this had been incorporated;
- The plan included information on how to deal with extreme weather, and this information would be made available to staff, schools and stewards;
- Steward training was underway and the required number of volunteers was expected to be achieved;
- The process would be evaluated following the event for lessons to be learned.

Councillor Rendel asked for details of the costs associated with the district hosting the torch relay and associated events. Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge replied that where other organisations were providing volunteers or events, the costs were absorbed by those organisations; for West Berkshire Council, the cost of volunteers was limited to staff time. Councillor Rendel queried whether volunteers were being reimbursed for travel expenses to attend training in Newbury. Chris Jones responded that they were not, however if there were sufficient numbers, a training session would be scheduled for the East of the district for those based further away.

The Cultural Olympiad programme was to be delivered as part of normal business. To achieve this, the Arts and Leisure Service budget had a commissioning budget of £30,000 which was being used to commission work with local groups. A further £20,000 had been allocated for infrastructure. Councillor Hilary Cole informed the Commission that when LOCOG had been invited to bring the Olympic torch to West Berkshire, there had been an understanding that there would be no cost to West Berkshire, however

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since then it had become apparent that in order to maintain public safety, a sum of £20,000 would be required. Nick Carter confirmed that this sum had been agreed after the Council's budget setting process in March, and had been allocated to the civil contingencies budget for day to day management.

Councillor Jeff Beck asked what media plans were in place to forewarn communities about the disruption that would occur on 11 July, but also on 10 July when the torch relay would be in Reading. Chris Jones responded that it was recognised that torch activity occurring close to the Council's borders would have an effect on West Berkshire communities and communication plans had accounted for this. Communication routes would include social media, leaflet drops to houses en route and talking to ShopWatch. Local bus companies were making their own arrangements. There was a possibility that the overhead matrix signs on the M4 and A34 could be used.

The Chairman recognised the quantity of work required to manage a project of this size and thanked Chris Jones for his role. Councillor Cole commented that the amount of work undertaken was exceptional for an event that would be just a few hours long.

22. Youth Clubs

Item 9 on the agenda, Youth Clubs, was not discussed by the Commission, but was deferred to a future meeting.

The Chairman explained that the Officers involved in this item were required to prepare for an Ofsted inspection and he had therefore excused them from attending this meeting. The item was to be postponed until the next meeting of the Commission.

RESOLVED that the Director for Communities be asked to confirm an Officer's attendance at the next meeting and the Commission's best wishes be extended for the upcoming Ofsted inspection.

23. Health Scrutiny Panel

(Councillor Rendel declared a personal interest in Agenda item 10 by virtue of the fact that his wife was a GP in West Berkshire. As his interest was personal and not prejudicial he determined to take part in the debate and vote on the matter).

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 10) on the work of the Health Scrutiny Panel (HSP).

Councillor Webb reported that the Health Scrutiny Panel had met on 19 June 2012 and the following topics had been discussed:

- Dignity and Nutrition in Hospitals: A representative from the Royal Berkshire Hospital had attended and agreed that a questionnaire would be given to all patients being released from hospital who were over 65;
- Child Poverty Strategy: An update had been received indicating that a number of events would be taking place over the next few weeks. The Panel expected the outcomes to be reported to them;
- Health and Wellbeing Board: A number of meetings were taking place that were shadowing clinical groups. Procedures were being set up in preparation for taking over from the PCT next year.

Councillor Hunneman asked how the dignity and nutrition in hospital questionnaire would be administered for those who were less able to respond. Councillor Webb responded that the LINK was managing the process, but questionnaires might be handed to carers where this was appropriate. If it was considered necessary, questionnaires could be followed up.

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Councillor Hunneman informed the Commission of a concern that had been raised at a recent Safer Communities Partnership meeting relating to an apparent increase in the number of suicides across the district. Nick Carter commented that this was a public health issue and would be raised at the Health and Wellbeing Board not the Safer Communities Partnership or the Health Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Webb informed the Commission that a Domestic Abuse Task Group had been formed with six Members, terms of reference and a scoping document had been produced and the first meeting was due to take place on 20 July 2012.

Resolved that the report and verbal update be noted.

24. Resource Management Working Group

The Commission considered a report (Agenda Item 11) on the work of the Resource Management Working Group (RMWG).

Councillor Rendel reported to Members that the next meeting would be taking place on 2 July 2012, and advised that the items for discussion would be:

- Asset Management
- Establishment Report Q4 2011/12
- Financial Outturn Report 2011/12

Councillor Rendel advised that the RMWG requested that a further item be added to the work programme to consider the impact on the Council's finances of Local Authority maintained schools converting to academy status. The Commission agreed for this item to be added.

Resolved that a further item be added to the RMWG work programme to consider the impact on the Council's finances of Local Authority maintained schools converting to academy status.

25. West Berkshire Forward Plan June 2012 to September 2012.

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan (Agenda Item 12) for the period covering June 2012 to September 2012.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

26. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme and that of the Health Scrutiny Panel and Resource Management Working Group for 2011/12.

The Chairman proposed that the annual report of the Commission be added to the work programme for review at the next meeting. The Commission agreed.

Resolved that the annual report of the Commission be added to the work programme for review at the next meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.30 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature