

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION
8TH MARCH 2021**

PRESENT: The Chair (Councillor Seaton)
The Vice Chair (Councillor Hamilton)
Councillors Bolton, Hadji-Nikolaou, Brookes,
Grimley and Ranson

Councillor Morgan (Leader of the Council),
Rollings (Cabinet Lead Member for
Transformation) and Harper-Davies (Cabinet Lead
Member for Community Support and Equalities)

Chief Executive
Head of Customer Experience
Head of Leisure and Culture
Organisational Development Manager
Information Technology Delivery Manager
Leisure Contract and Business Manager
Democratic Services Manager, Democratic
Services Officer (NC) and Democratic Services
Officer (SW)

The Chair stated that the meeting would be recorded and the sound recording subsequently made available via the Council's website. She also advised that, under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting, and the use of any such images or sound recordings was not under the Council's control.

130. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 8th February 2021 were approved.

131. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

No disclosures were made.

132. DECLARATIONS OF THE PARTY WHIP

No declarations were made.

133. QUESTIONS UNDER SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PROCEDURES 11.16

No questions were submitted.

134. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

A report of the Head of Strategic Support to present proposals for amendments to the Scrutiny Committee structure, to enable the Scrutiny Commission to make recommendations to full Council (item 6 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. Concerns were raised that the reduction in scrutiny committees within the Council would mean a reduction in quality scrutiny. It was highlighted that a good level of scrutiny would continue at the Council, as the scrutiny panels commissioned would continue, with a total of four at any one time, to include the Budget Scrutiny Panel. It was recognised that the work of scrutiny panels and the recommendations developed had been valuable in the past.
- ii. It was acknowledged that the Scrutiny Commission had been operating with seven members for a number of years and that this had worked well in order to deliver a good level of scrutiny. It was considered that there was not a need to increase the number of members on the Scrutiny Commission.
- iii. It was considered that the proposal of 15 members sitting on the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee in option two was too great and may result in unmanageable meetings. It was also acknowledged that this committee would potentially cover a substantial amount of work. It was suggested that a total of nine members would work well in a Committee of this nature.
- iv. It was suggested that following Council approval of the Scrutiny Commission's preference in the revised Committee structure on 26th April 2021, a workshop be scheduled to allow members of the Commission to develop and align their work programme to reflect the new scrutiny structure. This would then be reported back into the Scrutiny Commission for transparency.
- v. It was acknowledged that the Scrutiny Commission had provided a good level of scrutiny, including pre-decision scrutiny, and a full work programme throughout the pandemic and that this was appreciated by the Cabinet and the Council in general.

RESOLVED

1. That it be recommended to Council that, with effect from the 2021/22 civic year:
 - 1a. The Scrutiny Committee structure be amended to consist of the following two standing scrutiny committees, with the responsibilities, functions and membership as set out in Appendix B, with the amendment that membership of the respective committees:
 - Scrutiny Commission (Membership 7)
 - Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee (Membership 9); and
 - 1b. Delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer to make any consequential amendments to the Constitution that may be required.

2. That it be noted that the Monitoring Officer will request that the Independent Remuneration Panel consider the special responsibility allowances for the Chair and Vice-chairs of the two committees, and that appropriate recommendations will then be made to Council to amend the Scheme of Member Allowances accordingly.
3. That a workshop be scheduled following the Council meeting on 26th April 2021 to allow members of the Scrutiny Commission to develop and align their work programme to reflect the new scrutiny structure. This would then be reported back into the Scrutiny Commission for transparency.

Reasons

1. To amend the Scrutiny structure following the review that has been undertaken.
2. To ensure that the Scheme of Member Allowances is kept up to date and relevant.
3. To ensure the work programmes of the newly established scrutiny committees were appropriate for the delivery of good scrutiny.

135. AUDIT COMMITTEE UPDATE

A scheduled meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Commission and Audit Committee had taken place on 5th March 2021. The discussion focussed on the potential changes to the scrutiny structure at the Council and highlighted the importance of scrutiny panels in maintaining a good level of scrutiny on a variety of topics.

136. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF ANY SPECIFIC FINANCIAL MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY CABINET

There were no items of this nature on the Cabinet agenda for the Commission to consider.

137. CABINET ITEMS FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The following items were identified for pre-decision scrutiny from the Cabinet agenda for 11th March 2021.

138. ICT STRATEGY 2021-23

A Cabinet report of the Head of Customer Experience to present the proposed Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy for the period 2021-2023 (item 9a on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Transformation, the Head of Customer Experience and the Information Technology Delivery Manager attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item. The following summarised the discussion:

- i. The Council was committed to supporting people to utilise online functions and also to provide services to those not online. There was a requirement to make online services as easy and accessible as possible to encourage participation. The provision of traditional services would remain.
- ii. There had been an unanticipated funding increase as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic used to support the workforce in remote working. Specific costing information was not available but would be circulated following the meeting. It was acknowledged that teams working within the ICT service at the Council had worked exceptionally hard to rollout the remote working capability across the organisation quickly and effectively.
- iii. The ICT Strategy 2021-23 was flexible and adaptable to meet further challenges and new ways of working should this be required. This included the possibility for hybrid meetings. There was an existing budget set aside for much of the work, including cloud migration and further projects would be considered based upon return on investment and the potential for maximising investments.
- iv. The ICT Strategy 2021-23 had considered security implications and best practice across many different organisations. Progress against the strategy would be routinely monitored at the SWAP Board.
- v. There was an aim to add value and innovation and to demonstrate the benefits of the initiatives undertaken. This measure would be based on the removal of barriers, improvements to interactions with the Council, ease of use and customer satisfaction.

RESOLVED

1. that the Cabinet be informed that the Commission supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Head of Customer Experience.
2. That the Head of Customer Experience circulate information to the Scrutiny Commission outlining the unanticipated funding costs to support the workforce in remote working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Reasons

1. The Commission, having carefully considered the report, felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.
2. To ensure the Commission was kept informed on the costs associated with the rollout of remote working across the organisation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

139. CORPORATE DELIVERY PLAN 2021-22

A Cabinet report of the Chief Executive to propose the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan for 2021-22 (item 9b on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Organisational Development Manager attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item. The following summarises the discussion:

- i. The Council would continue to aim towards carbon neutrality. Changes in working practices as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that there was potential to decrease carbon emissions across the organisation through the reduction of office space and fleet usage.
- ii. The recommendations of the 'Generating Commercial Income' scrutiny panel had been considered. It was recognised that the report of the panel had been developed prior to the pandemic and that there would be value in revisiting the recommendations.
- iii. Projects associated with the Loughborough Town Deal and the 800-year anniversary of the Loughborough Market and Fair were prominent within the Corporate Delivery Plan 2021-22. There were also a range of services and projects which focussed on other areas across the Borough.
- iv. The Council was aware of a potential increase in housing needs across the Borough as a result of the pandemic and were actively working to prepare for this. More information on the detail of these plans could be made available following the meeting.
- v. It was appreciated that the format and layout of the Corporate Delivery Plan 2021-22 was straightforward and accessible.
- vi. The hard work of the Officers involved in developing the Corporate Delivery Plan 2021-22 was acknowledged by the Chief Executive.

RESOLVED

1. that the Cabinet be informed that the Commission supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Chief Executive.
2. that the recommendations of the 'Generating Commercial Income' scrutiny panel be revisited by officers following the pandemic.
3. that more information be provided to members of the Commission on the plans in place to support a potential increase in housing needs.

Reasons

1. The Commission, having carefully considered the report, felt the Cabinet should approve the recommendations set out.
2. To consider the recommendations of the panel following the pandemic.

3. To inform members of the Commission on the plans to facilitate a potential increase in housing needs following the pandemic.

140. EXEMPT - LEISURE CENTRE CONTRACT RECOVERY UPDATE

An exempt Cabinet report of the Head of Leisure and Culture was circulated to Members and was considered under item 14 on the agenda.

141. SCRUTINY COMMISSION PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - CABINET RESPONSE

A report of the Cabinet was considered setting out its responses to the recommendations of the Commission on pre-decision scrutiny items (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet's responses to the Commission's recommendations be noted.

Reason

The Commission was satisfied that it added value where appropriate and welcomed the Cabinet's consideration of the Commission's views and recommendations as part of its decision making process.

142. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support to enable the Commission to review items from the paused Scrutiny Work Programme. This includes items for discussion highlighted by members of the Directorate-based Scrutiny Committees (item 11 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item.

The Commission did not add any items to its work programme. It was recognised that following approval of the new scrutiny structure at Full Council on 26th April 2021, the following would need to be scheduled and considered as part of a work programming workshop:

- i. Revenue Monitoring (General Fund and HRA) – Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee (July outturn annual item, September period 4 annual item, December period 7 annual item).
- ii. Resolutions of the Cabinet following the consideration of the report of the Budget Scrutiny Panel (Cabinet 11th February 2021, minute reference 84 2020/21);
 - that in respect of Panel Recommendation 1, in order to better reflect true asset performance, reports are submitted to the Audit Committee and/or Scrutiny Commission on a quarterly basis, after the quarter days where rent payments are made;

- that in respect of Panel Recommendation 5, Scrutiny Commission consider maintaining a record of savings made directly as a result of scrutiny work;
- that in respect of Panel Recommendation 8, the issue of continuity in the Budget Scrutiny Panel membership is considered by the Scrutiny Commission.

RESOLVED that the items highlighted be scheduled within the new scrutiny structure and be raised at a workshop following approval of the structure at Full Council on 26th April 2021;

Reason

To ensure timely and effective scrutiny of the matter/subject.

143. SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME

A report of the Head of Strategic Support to enable the Commission to review its own work programme, including considering the list of forthcoming Executive Key Decisions in order to schedule items for pre-decision scrutiny (item 12 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Democratic Services Manager assisted with the consideration of this item.

The Commission did not add any items to its work programme.

The programming of the pre-decision scrutiny item – Charnwood Local Plan Pre-Submission Consultation and Submission was queried. The item had been deferred from the Cabinet agenda for its meeting on 11th March 2021 and would be rescheduled in due course.

RESOLVED

1. That forthcoming Executive Key Decisions or decisions to be taken in private by the Executive, set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and scheduled scrutiny of those matters, be noted.
2. That the Commission's current work programme be noted.
3. That the work programme be updated in accordance with the items highlighted.

Reasons

- 1&3. To ensure effective and timely scrutiny, either to provide Cabinet with advice prior to it taking a decision or to ensure that the Council and external public service providers and partners were operating effectively for the benefit of the Borough.

2. To ensure effective and timely scrutiny.

144. EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED that members of the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest of disclosing the information.

At this point in the meeting the live streaming was switched off.

145. LEISURE CENTRE CONTRACT RECOVERY UPDATE

An exempt Cabinet report of the Head of Leisure and Culture was considered for pre-decision scrutiny (exempt item 9c on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Lead Member for Community Support and Equalities, the Head of Leisure and Culture and the Leisure Contract and Business Manager attended the meeting to assist with the consideration of this item. A summary of the Commission's discussion on this matter is provided in the exempt minute (Scrutiny Commission Minute 145E. 2020/21).

NOTES:

1. No reference may be made to these minutes at the Council meeting on 26th April 2021 unless notice to that effect is given to the Democratic Services Manager by five members of the Council by noon on the fifth working day following publication of these minutes.
2. These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.