

## **SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board held on 16 September, 2009 at 4.00 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford, Shropshire**

**PRESENT:** Councillors D.R.W. White (Chairman), R. Aveley, J.A. Francis, A.A. Meredith and K.L. Tomlinson

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors J.M. Seymour (Deputy Leader), Stephen Burrell (Cabinet Member: Children & Young People), Victor Brownlees (Chief Executive), Jonathan Rowe (Head of Leisure & Culture) – for Minute No. SLB-67

Ken Clarke (Head of Finance & Audit) and Stephanie Jones (Scrutiny Officer)

#### **SLB-64      MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board held on 9 July, 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman subject to Minute No. SLB-61 being amended to read ‘*As Councillor K.L. Tomlinson was unable to accept the Chairmanship of the Value for Money Scrutiny Group due to her childcare commitments, the Chairman agreed that the Leader of the Independent/Liberal Democrat Group should be invited to nominate a representative to join the Value for Money Scrutiny Group and that a new Chairman would be sought from the existing Value for Money Group members.*’

#### **SLB-65      APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor A.A. Mackenzie

#### **SLB-66      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP**

None.

#### **SLB-67      UPDATE FROM THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE BOROUGH TOWNS INITIATIVE – SPORTS & LEARNING COMMUNITY (INCORPORATING THE FORMER TSLEC)**

The Board was provided with a verbal update on the decision made not to proceed with the TSLEC Project and to use the funding thereby released to provide Sport & Learning Community facilities across the whole of the Borough.

The Chief Executive stressed that many valuable parts of the TSLEC Project would be retained and built into the Sports & Learning Community facilities. In response to a question from Councillor K.L. Tomlinson he confirmed that the £286,000 revenue funding from the Telford & Wrekin PCT would still be used to provide a Men’s Health & Vascular Screening Project.

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The Chairman sought assurances from the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People that public access to the new facilities would be maintained and he agreed that a statement of community access would be issued in due course.

The Chairman requested that the Chief Executive attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board to give a further update on progress.

**SLB-68      PREPARATION FOR THE SCRUTINY ASSEMBLY MEETING  
ON 12 OCTOBER, 2009**

The Board was informed of the arrangements being made in respect of the Scrutiny Assembly Meeting on 12 October, 2009, which would be attended by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. The meeting would have a 'Question Time' format under the chairmanship of Councillor D.R.W. White and would be an opportunity for all Assembly members to ask questions important to them and to their Ward.

The meeting would include the asking of four or five pre-agreed questions with an opportunity for Members to ask supplementary questions. In addition questions on other issues could be raised by Members attending on the night. Members were, therefore, requested to agree the questions to be asked and that these be given to the Leader and Chief Executive in advance to allow them time to prepare a considered and detailed response. Agreeing questions in advance would ensure that the questions put were of a sufficiently strategic and challenging nature and avoided being too parochial or relating to individual ward issues. The combination of pre-agreed and open questions should focus the meeting on issues of future strategic importance while allowing scope for Members to ask questions about issues of concern to them. The Scrutiny Assembly had, therefore, been invited to put forward suggested questions for consideration and selection by the Scrutiny Leadership Board.

In conclusion, the Chairman agreed to write to all Scrutiny Assembly members reminding them of the opportunity to ask questions of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

**SLB-69      SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE**

The Board was informed that a Surface Water Drainage Special Interest Meeting (SIM) had been held on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2009 to review the ways in which an expanding population and climate change would impact on the drainage of water and how system capacity was planned to cope with future demands.

The SIM Group Members agreed that they would like to undertake an In-depth review on flooding and surface water drainage matters and that the Scrutiny Leadership Board should be requested to agree its inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme. It was noted that one of the recommendations of the Pitt Review following the 2007 floods had been to strengthen Overview and Scrutiny by local authorities in the context of a complex working

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environment and one in which flooding issues were not of a 'task and finish' nature. It was, therefore, suggested that with the range of issues within Telford & Wrekin and the growth expectations this would be an appropriate approach. The SIM Members, therefore, agreed a number of areas that such an In-depth review could cover, as set out in the report.

This suggestion for scrutiny had originally been sixth on the priority list for SIM but had been brought forward to coincide with early consultation on the Surface Water Drainage Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which would become part of the Local Development Framework. Given the level of interest shown in this issue, the Board was requested to consider its inclusion within the Work Programme as an In-depth review and, if approved, how it should be prioritised against the previously agreed Reviews.

The Chairman commented that surface water as an issue was now more relevant than ever and the Scrutiny Officer informed the Board that the Flood & Water Bill, which would be enacted in 2010, would place more responsibility on local authorities to deal with surface water management and resource issues. In addition, the Bill would require local authorities to work with their partners in this respect but with no accompanying powers over them.

The Board, therefore, agreed that Surface Water Drainage should be included in the Scrutiny Work Programme as an Indepth Review.

**SLB-70      DRAFT SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT FOR APPROVAL BY FULL COUNCIL ON 30 SEPTEMBER, 2009**

The draft Scrutiny Annual Report was presented to the Board prior to being submitted to Full Council for approval. The Head of Finance & Audit informed Members that photographs of the 2008-09 Scrutiny Commission Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen would be added and their contribution to the work of Scrutiny acknowledged. If Members had any comments to make on the draft, they were requested to contact the Scrutiny team.

**SLB-71      APPROVAL OF SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT**

Councillor R. Aveley, as the Lead Scrutiny Member, presented the Review Report on Procurement. Members had decided to undertake this review of the procurement arrangements as they were concerned that the Council did not have the right model in place to enable it to make the efficiency savings that would be required as it moved into the future. The three main objectives of the review had been:

1. To evaluate whether the Council has the right balance between centralized procurement (corporate) and devolved procurement (within individual business units);
2. To evaluate whether the Council's procurement processes provide value for money;
3. To make recommendations on the Council's procurement process to improve value for money.

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In particular, Councillor Aveley drew the Board's attention to the issues and implications which had been identified as arising from the, current, decentralised procurement structure, the key ones being the lack of strategic management and the lack of economies of scale.

The Review had made twelve recommendations, as set out in the report, each of which had been assigned a priority level and an indication of cost. With regard to Recommendation 2, the Board was advised that this had been amended to read 'To align current structures to create a post to champion, influence and co-ordinate Procurement policies and strategies at corporate level across the Council.'

## **SLB-72      CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

### Anti-Social Behaviour

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the reported, as tabled, from Tom Currie, Strategic Manager for Safer Communities. The Board, at its meeting on 9 July 2009, had received a report dealing with anti-social behaviour issues relating to Telford Town Park. In addition, the point had been made that, while the police, CSOs, and Council staff all had a key role in combating anti-social behaviour, Wardens (Rangers) were not accredited to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) but could be granted that power. The Scrutiny Manager had, therefore, proposed that the Board should make a recommendation to the Cabinet for the accreditation of appropriate officers to be considered and that the Town Park could be used as a pilot scheme which, if successful, could be extended to cover other areas of the Council's services, such as cleansing and environmental maintenance. However, this recommendation had proved to be difficult to carry through at this point in time and a number of legitimate concerns had been raised, as set out in the tabled report.

The Chairman, therefore proposed that, given the Board's legislative authority to scrutinise the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership with effective from 1 October 2009, a more thematic overview of anti-social behaviour in the Borough might be more conducive to the Overview & Scrutiny arrangements, within which framework the full range of tools and powers available to the Council could be reviewed and considered. Within this review actions to reduce anti-social behaviour and plans to address this in the future could be considered in a systematic manner. As the first stage in this process, Tom Currie, the Strategic Manager for Safer Communities had been invited to attend the meeting of the Board on 24 September, 2009  
Members indicated their approval of this proposed course of action.

### Attendance at Special Interest Meetings (SIM)

The Chairman said that a number of SIMs had now been held and it had become clear that the number of members required to call a SIM, i.e. three, might be too small as at some meetings only two members had eventually

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attended and had been out-numbered by the officers present. He therefore, sought the Board's views on raising the required minimum number of members to four.

Members were of the view that the required number of members for a SIM should remain at three and that a meeting should go ahead even if only two members were present. However, it was also agreed that the decision to cancel a meeting due to members being unable to attend should be left to the individual Chairman of the SIMs.

In-depth Review on 'Keeping Members Informed'

In light of the issues around TSLEC and more general issues about the need for members to be kept informed, the Chairman proposed that the In-depth Review on this issue should be brought forward but as a Spotlight Review rather than a full In-depth Review. This was agreed by the Board.

Prioritisation of In-depth, Special Interest and Spotlight Reviews

The Head of Finance & Audit updated the Board on the staffing changes within Scrutiny which would result in the section being under-resourced until early 2010. Given that there were still 'old year' reviews to be completed and 'new year' reviews to be commenced, together with the Spotlight Reviews and Special Interest Meetings, he sought the Board's guidance on prioritising this work. Following a discussion, it was agreed that the 'old year' reviews should be completed first and that the Chairman and the Head of Finance & Audit should decided on the priority to be given to other work in line with the available resources.

**SLB-73      SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN – AGENDA ITEMS 2009-10**

The Board noted the Forward Plan of agenda items scheduled for its meetings in 2009-10 as set out in Appendix F.

**SLB-74      TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN – EDITION 96**

The Board noted the current edition of the Council's Forward Plan, as set out in Appendix G.

**SLB-75      DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday, 24 September, 2009.

The meeting ended at 5.55 p.m.

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** .....

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