

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board held on Tuesday, 12th May, 2009 in the Scrutiny Meeting Room, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillor D.R.W. White (Chairman), R. Aveley, J.A. Francis, A.A. Mackenzie, A.A. Meredith and H.J. Williams

ALSO PRESENT: Alison Smith (Scrutiny Manager)

SLB-33 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th March, 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

SLB-34 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

Councillor L. Lomax

SLB-35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None.

SLB-36 SCRUTINY ASSEMBLY – 19TH MAY 2009 – CONFIRMATION OF FINAL ARRANGEMENTS

Members noted the updated, tabled final arrangements for the next Scrutiny Assembly. The Scrutiny Manager would provide copies of the Priority Plans to the Lead Scrutiny Members in advance of the Assembly.

The Chairman sought the Board's approval for refreshments to be provided prior to the Scrutiny Assembly by the "Eat and Enjoy" Group who are made up of young people and adults with learning disabilities who operated a café in Donnington as a training exercise supervised TCAT. The Board agreed to this and for the costs to be borne by the Scrutiny function. It was considered that this would be a valuable experience both for the members of the group and the Members. Councillor Roger Aveley suggested, and it was agreed, that this support for the youngsters be publicised and a photograph taken.

SLB- 37 FORWARD PLAN – AGENDA ITEMS 2009-10

Members noted the agenda items currently scheduled for meetings of the Scrutiny Leadership Board in 2009-10. This was a rolling programme to which additional items could be added as required. Councillor Roger Aveley suggested that the programme should also include the dates on which Scrutiny Reviews were due to be finalised and this was agreed by the Board.

SLB-38 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

Away Day

SLB120509Minutes

The Chairman asked Members if they wished to have an Away Day arranged but they agreed that the new arrangements should be allowed to run for a few months before any review is undertaken..

Chairing Arrangements for Sub-Groups and Attendees

The Chairman reported that the Corporate Parenting Group no longer had a Chairman following Cllr. Gill Green's resignation. The group have also expressed a wish to increase the numbers on the group. Councillor Joy Francis had volunteered to become Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Group and it was agreed that the group increase their numbers to 8 elected members and that Cllr. Francis be appointed to the group with a recommendation that she become Chairman.

He also informed the Board that Councillor Louise Lomax wished to stand down as Chairman of the Value for Money Scrutiny Group due to her commitments as a Non-Executive Director of the Telford & Wrekin Primary Care Trust. He had approached Councillor Bob Groom, the previous Chairman before his appointment as Mayor for 2008-09, but he had indicated that he did not wish to serve a further term as Chairman. Councillors Adrian Meredith and Roger Aveley were both Lead Scrutiny Members but it would not be appropriate for a member of the Administration to chair this particular Group. Given this, Councillor Helen Williams indicated her willingness to join become Chairman of the VFM Group for which Councillor Derek White thanked her. It was agreed that Cllr. Helen Williams be appointed to the group with a recommendation that she become Chairman.

SLB-39 WORK PROGRAMME SUGGESTION FORMS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING

The Scrutiny Manager informed the Board that four suggestion forms had been received, one of which was included in the printed agenda and three were tabled at the meeting.

Suggestion from Councillor R.K. Austin

Councillor Austin had submitted a suggestion that Scrutiny should consider the perceived breakdown of communications between the Council and Hark Apollo, the owners of Telford Town Centre. However, given the current possibility of legal action being taken by Hark Apollo against the Council, Councillor Austin had agreed that his suggestion be deferred until the next meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board in July.

Suggestion from Mrs. Joyce Clark

Mrs. Clark had submitted a suggestion that Scrutiny should consider reviewing the security arrangements in operation in Telford Town Park following a number of alleged assaults upon her grandsons over the years.

The Scrutiny Manager said that, although the incidents referred to were over a number of years, it had raised valid concerns relating to safety. She referred

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Members to the Scrutiny Forward Plan at Appendix C which set out the agenda items for the Leadership Board for 2009-10, including two meetings which would consider the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). As Members were aware, the Police & Justice Act 2006 had inserted a new Section 21A into the Local Government Act 2000 to extend the remit of Scrutiny Committees to empower local authorities to call in their local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) once a year. Therefore, the Scrutiny Manager suggested that, as the CDRP was scheduled to be discussed at the September meeting of the Board, this item be considered then or alternatively for a full review to be considered on this subject. In the meantime, The Chairman asked that the Council's Community Safety section and local police provide details of any safety/security issues relating to the Town Park in order that the Board would have an accurate picture of the level of problems in this area. Councillor Roger Aveley asked that the local Ward Members also be contacted for their views. This information would then be considered at the meeting of the Board in July, when a decision could be taken as to whether a review was an appropriate response to this Suggestion. The Scrutiny Manager would write to Mrs. Clark to explain the process that the Board was undertaking.

Suggestion from Councillor Karen Tomlinson

Councillor Karen Tomlinson had requested that Scrutiny should consider the issues relating to unadopted estate roads within the Borough, which resulted in problems with street cleansing, fly tipping, lighting, and general environmental maintenance.

Members said that this was a problem throughout the Borough and agreed that the procedures for signing off new developments to ensure that responsibility for adoption had been finalised should be considered by Scrutiny. The Scrutiny Manager suggested that information on the current procedures be established following which a decision could be taken as to whether to undertake a separate review or to incorporate it into the previously agreed review of highways. This was agreed by the Board.

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Mr. & Mrs. Neville had requested that Scrutiny review the Council's procedures for paying Housing Benefit to tenants of the Wrekin Housing Trust. The Scrutiny Manager referred Members to the briefing note provided by the Housing Benefits Manager, which set out the details of what was a long standing dispute which had been investigated by the Council's Corporate Complaints Co-ordinator and by the Local Government Ombudsman, who had made no finding of maladministration against the Council.

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SLB-40 COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN – MAY 2009 TO AUGUST 2009

The Board noted the key decision reports scheduled to be submitted to the Cabinet between May – August 2009.

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Suggestion from Mr. & Mrs. Neville

Mr. & Mrs. Neville had requested that Scrutiny review the Council's procedures for paying Housing Benefit to tenants of the Wrekin Housing Trust. The Scrutiny Manager referred Members to the briefing note provided by the Housing Benefits Manager, which set out the details of what was a long standing dispute which had been investigated by the Council's Corporate Complaints Co-ordinator and by the Local Government Ombudsman, who had made no finding of maladministration against the Council.

The Board agreed that no further action be taken and asked the Chairman to confirm categorically that the Council was not acting illegally in this instance with the Benefits Manager, and that a letter from the Chairman would be sent informing Mr. & Mrs. Neville that the Scrutiny Leadership Board did not wish to pursue their suggestion in this instance.

SLB-40 COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN – MAY 2009 TO AUGUST 2009

The Board noted the key decision reports scheduled to be submitted to the Cabinet between May – August 2009.

SLB-41 PROGRESS WITH CURRENT AND PLANNED SCRUTINY REVIEWS

The Board noted the update on the Reviews in the 2008-09 Programme. With regard to the agreed Special Interest Meetings (SIM), the Scrutiny Manager informed Members that the following Lead Scrutiny Members would be responsible for these meetings:

Domestic Abuse – Cllr. Helen Williams
Sustainable and balanced developments – Roger Aveley
Planning Applications and the role of Parish/Town Councils – Cllr. Roger Aveley
The transition of disabled children into adult services – Cllr. Joy Francis
Council Complaints System – Cllr. Adrian Meredith
Police and Community Together (PACT) Meetings – Cllr. Helen Williams

These SIMs were being held as the required two Members and a Lead Scrutiny Member had indicated their willingness to review these issues. With regard to the remaining SIMs that had been identified but for which no Members had yet volunteered, it was agreed that efforts should continue to seek volunteers. In addition, it was agreed that those Members who had not yet volunteered for SIMs should be contacted by the Scrutiny Manager, in the Chairman's name, requesting them to indicate which SIMs they wished to volunteer for.

SLB-42 DATES OF MEETINGS 2009-10

The Board noted that the following meetings had been scheduled for 2009-10:

Thursday, 9th July, 2009
Wednesday, 16th September, 2009
Thursday, 19th November, 2009
Thursday, 14th January, 2010
Thursday, 25th March, 2010
Thursday, 13th May, 2010

The meeting ended at 5.06 p.m.

Signed:

Date: