

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD

Meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board held on Thursday, 25th March, 2010 at 4.00 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford, Shropshire

PRESENT: Councillors D.R.W. White (Chairman), R. Aveley (Vice-Chairman), A.A. Mackenzie, A.A. Meredith and K.L. Tomlinson and W.L. Tomlinson (co-optee)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors S.M. Kelly (for minute no. SLB-120), E.J. Carter (for minute no. SLB-127), R.K. Austin, Y.C. Hicks, K.S. Sahota and C.F. Smith
Jonathan Eatough (Head of Governance), David Sidaway (Head of Property & Design), David Middlemiss (Strategic Architect – Town Centre Team), Emma Harvey (Solicitor), Fiona Botterill (Scrutiny Manager), Stephanie Jones (Scrutiny Officer), Sarah Morris (Scrutiny Officer) and Sadie Roberts (Assistant Democratic Services Officer)

SLB-117 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meetings of the Scrutiny Leadership Board held on 14th January and 4th February, 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

SLB-118 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

Councillor J.A. Francis

SLB-119 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None.

SLB-120 REVIEW OF SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairman informed the Board that he had presented Professor Steve Leech's Review of the Scrutiny Arrangements to the Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd March, 2010. Councillor S.M. Kelly, Cabinet Member: Efficient, Community Focused Council, had presented the Cabinet's response to the Review and it had resolved that the Scrutiny Leadership Board be informed that Cabinet's preferred model was Option 2, i.e. Priority based Sub-Groups. The Chairman expressed his disappointment that this decision had been made without taking account of the views of Scrutiny and he had, therefore, invited Councillor Kelly to attend this meeting to explain the rationale behind the Cabinet's resolution. The Head of Governance clarified that Cabinet had agreed a response to the Review in its role as one of Scrutiny's consultees.

Councillor Kelly explained that Professor Leech's Option 2 mirrored the seven priority areas identified as part of the organisational review, "One Council One Vision". The Council's main drivers were now its key community priorities and Cabinet had recommended Option 2 as the best way forward in order to ensure that the Scrutiny function had a structure and a programme that would add value. He accepted that Scrutiny had the right to determine its own priorities but considered

that this would be best achieved by focussing upon the Council's Priority Plans. With regard to the future structure of Scrutiny, he was of the opinion that the Board should become an informal committee comprising the chairman of the seven Priority-based Sub-Groups. The committee would meet on a regular basis to decide upon its own work programme with one of the Sub-Group Chairmen acting as lead member with the right to attend Cabinet meetings. He also wished to see the Sub-Groups politically balanced and he accepted that this could result in each of them having a Chairman from the majority Conservative Group.

Members of the Board made the following responses:

- The change to one party chairmen would be counter to the principle which had always existed at Telford & Wrekin of the Scrutiny function being non-political. It was fundamental to Scrutiny that Members were able to work in an environment of trust and openness.
- Scrutiny's role was not only that of scrutinising the Council but also its partner organisations, a role which was being extended by current legislation. This would not be possible in the future if the Scrutiny function was constrained by the seven priority areas.
- The current Scrutiny arrangements had only been in place for a year and it might be preferable to allow them to continue for another year while the recent organisational changes 'bedded down'.
- The Scrutiny Leadership Board had achieved many positive outcomes and it should be left in its current form.
- The Scrutiny Assembly at its meeting on 8th March, 2010 to consider Professor Leech's Review of Scrutiny Arrangements had expressed a view that the Value for Money Scrutiny Group and the Corporate Parenting Group should be retained in their current format.

In response Councillor Kelly said that he fully supported the Council's need to work closely with its partner agencies, particularly on cross-cutting issues, and this relationship would be invigorated based upon the priorities enshrined in 'One Council One Vision'. Scrutiny could still decide if it wished to look at partner organisations and he would encourage more holding of them to account. Councillor Kelly said that Option 1 of the Review, to maintain the status quo in Scrutiny, was no longer an option given the financial restraints facing the Council. The Priority Plans were important, extensive and fit for purpose and would provide a wide range of areas for scrutiny work and for the executive to be held to account.

Councillor Kelly left the meeting and the Board discussed his comments and the recommendation made by the Cabinet. Following a detailed discussion it was agreed:

- (i) That Option 3 of the Review be the Board's preferred way forward subject to the Value for Money Scrutiny Group and the Corporate Parenting Group remaining rather than be subsumed into the proposed Panels.
- (ii) That, if the principle of political balance was approved for Scrutiny bodies, the principle of any Member being able to attend any meeting be retained.

SLB-121 SCRUTINY ASSEMBLY 29TH MARCH, 2010 – SCRUTINY OF PRIORITY PLANS

The Briefing Note prepared by the Scrutiny Officer set out the format and final arrangements for the Scrutiny Assembly for the Board's approval. In addition, she tabled a detailed programme together with copies of each of the priority plans, which set out the high level objectives and key targets for each priority area. The Briefing Note proposed that each group when discussing its Priority Plan, should address three key questions, namely:

- Do you broadly agree with the sub-priorities in the Priority Plan or not?
- Is there anything missing from the Priority Plan?
- Is everything a priority, or could something be dropped?

At the end of each session the Scrutiny Lead Member would summarise the comments made and agree their group's response.

SLB-122 CHAIRMANS'S UPDATE

The Scrutiny Manager said that an update on the Scrutiny of Priority Plans would be brought to the next meeting of the Board on the 13th May, 2010. As a result, the draft agenda might require shortening and she would liaising with the Chairman to agree the final version.

SLB-123 SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN 2009-10

The Board noted the Scrutiny Forward Plan for the remainder of the municipal year.

SLB-124 COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

The Board noted for information Edition 103 of the Council's Forward Plan.

SLB-125 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board would take place on Thursday, 13th May, 2010.

SLB-126 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

SLB-127 UPDATE ON TELFORD TOWN CENTRE

As agreed at the meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board held on 4th February, 2010, the report of the Head of Property & Design set out the methodology used to evaluate the options for the replacement Civic Offices site based upon location, size and delivery strategy for the building. The report explained, by means of a flow

chart, the sequence of events and evaluation carried out to form a recommendation to Cabinet. Attached to the report were appendices setting out the sites that were evaluated and the assumptions made, the evaluation criteria used, and summary feasibility information for the five shortlisted sites.

Having gone through this evaluation process Southwater had been identified as the preferred option for the following reasons:

- It would act as a regeneration catalyst for the Town Centre
- It was affordable
- It was owned by the Council
- It was an available/vacant site

In presenting the report the Head of Property & Design said that he welcomed the opportunity to engage with the Scrutiny Leadership Board now and throughout the entire project. The Members of the Board asked a number of detailed questions of the Head of Property & Design, the Strategic Architect and the Council's Solicitor. Councillor E.J. Carter, Cabinet Member: Regeneration added that this has been an objective decision based upon the Council's need to rationalise its existing office space.

Councillor C.F. Smith, the Lead Scrutiny Call-In Member, stressed the need for the whole project to be scrutinised and Councillor Carter responded that he believed that the Board was the best way forward to achieve this and to communicate future plans to all members of the Council. The Head of Property & Design added that he would bring details of the key milestones of the project to the Board and the Chairman agreed that this should happen three times a year.

The meeting ended at 6.25 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: