

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on
Tuesday, 13th September 2011 at 6.00pm in the Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors D. White (Chairman), V. Fletcher, G. Green, A. McClements, R. Sloan, C. Turley.

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillors S. Davies, S. Bentley, D. Davies, R. Evans, I. Fletcher, K. Tomlinson, W. Tomlinson; Scrutiny Co-optees J. Gulliver, M. Ward, R. Williams; Richard Partington, Interim Chief Executive; S. Jones, Scrutiny Group Specialist; T. Clarke, Scrutiny Officer.

SMB-4 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None

SMB-5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr. Sloan declared an interest in matters relating to DWP.
Cllr. V. Fletcher declared an interest in matters relating to CAB.

SMB-6 **CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL AND CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION**

All Scrutiny Assembly members had been invited to take part in this part of the meeting.

Cllr. S. Davies, Cabinet member for Co-operative Council, Partnerships & Environment and Richard Partington, Interim Chief Executive, gave a presentation on Telford & Wrekin – A Co-operative Council. A number of key points from the presentation were highlighted:

This highlighted a number of the challenges and opportunities facing the borough and Council, the national policy context, the ethos and approach of the Co-operative Council, the Council's emerging priorities, examples of Early Adopter schemes developed through a co-operative approach, the Council's programme of community and staff engagement and the key elements of the Co-operative Council – "new ways of working, new solutions, better outcomes – a co-operative borough".

In addition to the information provided in the presentation, the following information was provided in response to members' questions and comments:

- With regard to Town & Parish Councils, the Co-operative Council approach is not about pushing responsibility for services onto Town & Parish Councils. The Cabinet member had spoken to most of the Town & Parish Councils, and many had come forward themselves with ideas about how they could get involved to do things better, including by working jointly with other Town & Parish Councils. However, it had to be recognised that savings must be made, and that Town & Parish Councils have a role to play.

- Options for alternative models for managing and running libraries and other services were being considered. The Localism Bill due out in the autumn would give voluntary and community groups the right to challenge local authorities over their services, and under a European Directive this could provide an opening for private sector providers to move into the market. The Scrutiny Chairman brought the Cabinet member's attention to a previous scrutiny report which had recommended that libraries were considered to offer the First Point customer service. A copy of the report had been sent to the Cabinet member for Health, Wellbeing & Leisure.
- With regard to the Co-operative Commission, around 60 people from partner organisations, voluntary and community groups had been invited by Cabinet members or volunteered to join the Commission which brought together a wide range of expertise. Many were staff working in front-line services with an understanding of issues, ideas about how things could be done differently and the barriers to change. There are huge funding issues to be addressed, and the Commission will look at new ways of delivering services co-operatively for less money. The first meeting of the Commission would be on 16th September and the Commissioners would choose 6-7 topics to review. Reviews would be carried out by sub-groups and recommendations would be agreed at the end of the review. The Commission's report and recommendations would go to full Council to debate.
- In response to a suggestion about targeted benefit take-up campaigns, there was an issue with the grant funding allocated by the Council to the CAB for the provision of benefit advice/support but the Director of the CAB was on the Co-operative Commission and would work with partners on this.
- The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) contract framework and procurement process had been used to facilitate supplier, skills and training opportunities for local people, and this was also being looked at as part of the framework 2 procurement for 2012. The BSF funding was for the construction of the schools, and additional facilities (e.g. sports) were funded by the Council.
- Brookside had been selected as the pilot ward for Co-operative working because of the existing good links into the community and because of economic and social factors. The parish council and local residents would lead this work with the Council. Governance arrangements would be developed by the end of September and work would start from October. The work would be on-going with an iterative process of learning and applying lessons. Feedback can be given in the future.
- With regard to a question about the possibility of staff in leisure services moving into a Trust to run leisure services, members were assured that this was one option that was being considered and that the idea had come from staff at an employee engagement session as part of the service review, and quite independently from the Co-operative Council work. Staff felt that a Trust model would give them the freedom to deliver services in a more commercial way. However, at this stage, there has been no proposal to create a Trust, rather the work-stream was looking to explore

how the freedoms and flexibilities identified by staff could be realised with the service still a part of the Council.

- In response to a question about the relationship with RSLs and how the Council could encourage them to act responsibly, the Cabinet member said that a fresh look would be given to this, and that it was about building relationships. Lessons could be learnt from Brookside where the Council, Wrekin Housing Trust and the Parish Council worked well together. Mapping had also been done in Woodside/Brookside to identify private landlords so that the Council could see what could be done to ensure private landlords take responsibility for their property.
- Regarding the distribution of funding across the borough and whether resources would be concentrated in deprived wards to bring them to a better standard leaving other wards with no funding, the Cabinet member replied that there was a balance to be struck. There was limited capital for regeneration, but it does not always take capital to regenerate an area - much could be done by local people and human resources to revitalise an area.
- Cllr. V. Fletcher said that progress had been made in schools and businesses to champion Fair Trade, and the Cabinet member would bring the campaign to the attention of Cabinet colleagues.

SMB-7

SCRUTINY HANDBOOK

Members considered the report of the Scrutiny Group Specialist on the changes to the Scrutiny Handbook. The Scrutiny Handbook had been updated to reflect the new scrutiny arrangements, but there were some issues arising which were set out in section 5 of the report. There was a discussion of these issues and members agreed the changes they wished to be made.

RESOLVED

- **That any Scrutiny Member may attend any Scrutiny meeting to hear the discussion, and questions will be allowed at the Chairman's discretion.**
- **That there should be no more than one Spotlight or In-depth review undertaken by a Scrutiny Committee at any one time and that reviews should be undertaken in order of priority.**
- **That where there are competing demands between Scrutiny Committees for staff resources which cannot reasonably be met, the Scrutiny Management Board will decide how resources will be allocated.**
- **That the Chairman of the Scrutiny Management Board may use their discretion to allocate scrutiny suggestions directly to a Scrutiny Committee where the suggestion is urgent, or where the suggestion clearly relates directly to the work of a particular Scrutiny Committee.**

- That urgent suggestions referred to a Scrutiny Committee may be included in the work programme if agreed by e-mail by a simple majority of the Committee.
- That the number of co-optees on a Scrutiny Committee should not exceed 50% of the number of elected members, other than the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee which should not exceed the number of elected members.
- That once agreed, the Scrutiny Work Programme would be circulated to the Scrutiny Assembly and senior officers, posted on the website with a link to the Scrutiny Meetings and that a *What's On?* leaflet would be e-mailed regularly to all members with information about forthcoming meetings.
- That the Scrutiny Handbook would be made available electronically and hard copies would only be printed where requested.
- That the Head of Governance, in consultation with the Chairman of the Scrutiny Management Board, is delegated to make minor changes to the Scrutiny Handbook when required.
- That the final version of the Scrutiny Handbook would be sent to the Scrutiny Management Board for approval prior to publication.

SMB-8

POLICY FOR CO-OPTING SCRUTINY

Members considered the report of the Scrutiny Group Specialist on changes to the Policy for Co-opting Scrutiny Members. The proposed changes to bring the Policy up to date were agreed. There was a discussion about the 4 year restriction on former elected members becoming eligible to apply to be a scrutiny co-optee and the process for agreeing the changes to the Policy.

RESOLVED

- That the proposed amendments shown as tracked changes in Appendix 1 of the report on the Policy for Co-opting Scrutiny Members are made.
- That the requirement in the person specification in paragraph 3.3 that co-optees must not have been a member of Council in the past 4 years should be removed, but that to ensure the independence of co-optees, in such cases the co-optee should not take part in scrutiny of policies in which they were part of the decision making process as an elected member.
- That the Chairman of the Scrutiny Management Board would approve the final version of the Policy to be incorporated in the Scrutiny Handbook.

SMB-9

SCRUTINY SUGGESTIONS

Members considered and discussed the new Scrutiny Suggestions in Appendix E for inclusion in the work programme.

RESOLVED

- **Suggestion 1, the condition of footpaths for wheelchair users, would be included with scrutiny of highways maintenance by the Scrutiny Management Board.**
- **Suggestion 2, decriminalisation of on-road parking, a report on decriminalisation and parking enforcement would be brought to the Scrutiny Management Board.**
- **Suggestion 3, Choose Your Home, would be included in the work programme of the Scrutiny Management Board.**
- **Suggestion 4, the provision of accommodation based on national priorities, would be included in the work programme.**
- **Suggestion 5, Section 106 agreements, would not be included in the work programme due to legislative changes expected in the Localism Bill.**
- **Suggestion 6, patient care at PRH, it was suggested this would be discussed with the Local Patient Involvement Network (LINK).**
- **Suggestion 7, the impact of a managerial culture in schools, would be considered further**
- **Suggestion 8, planning enforcement, would not be included in the work programme due to expected changes to planning legislation in the Localism Bill.**

SMB-10

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman suggested that the Scrutiny Committee meetings should include a session for questions from members of the public, and this will be discussed further. It was agreed that future meetings would be held at 3.00pm of the first Monday of alternate months starting on Monday, 7th November.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm

Chairman:

Date: