

HOUSING, REGENERATION & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 4th October, 2010 at 6.45 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford, Shropshire

PRESENT: Councillors H.J. Unwin (Chairman), T.J. Hope, R. A. Overton, R.M. Tyler and D.R.W. White

ALSO PRESENT:

Call-In Signatories: Councillors C.F. Smith, R.K. Austin, E.A. Clare, L. Lomax and A.A. McClements

Cabinet Representative: Councillor E.J. Carter – Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity

IN ATTENDANCE: Jonathan Eatough (Head of Governance), David Sidaway (Head of Property & Design), Fiona Botterill (Scrutiny Manager), Stephanie Jones (Scrutiny Officer), Kate Turner (Special Projects) and Emma Harvey (Senior Solicitor)

HRPSC-8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors H. Rhodes (Call-In Signatory) and H.J. Williams

HRPSC-9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None.

HRPSC-10 CALL-IN REQUEST – TELFORD TOWN CENTRE – CIVIC OFFICES

The Board had been convened to consider a Call-In Request in respect of the Telford Town Centre – Civic Offices which had been judged to be valid by the Chairman of this Scrutiny Committee to be in accordance with the Protocol for Member Call-In as set out in the Council's Constitution. As required by the Protocol, the Members had received a copy of the Call-In Request Form, the report to Cabinet the recommendations of which had formed the basis of the Call-In, and an A4 summary of the key issues raised by the Call-In Members.

The Call-In Request related to the following decisions made by the Cabinet at its meeting on 14th September, 2010.

- 2.1 That Cabinet endorse a series of decisions which have informed the current design for the new Civic Offices and are included at Appendix A;
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the external configuration, size and appearance of Civic Offices, detailed at Appendix B, which will form the basis of a reserved matters planning application;

- 2.3 That Cabinet grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to approve the details of the reserved matters planning application;
- 2.4 That Cabinet grant delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to award all contracts necessary for the continued implementation of the scheme, in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules.

The Procedure to be followed at the meeting, as set out in Appendix D of the agenda, was outlined to the meeting by the Chairman.

In accordance with the Protocol, Councillor C.F. Smith, Lead Call-In Member, outlined the reasons for the Call-In which had arisen from the assurances given at the Scrutiny Leadership Board meeting held on 25th March, 2010 of continuing scrutiny of the Town Council project. Despite these assurances the Cabinet had made a further milestone decision on the 14th September, 2010 on the Civic Offices without the involvement of scrutiny. In addition, he was of the opinion that information on this project was being provided to the media before other members had been informed.

In accordance with the Protocol an informal meeting had taken place between the Call-In Members, the decision taker and the Head of Governance to clarify the points at issue following which an A4 summary of the Call-In arguments was drawn up, as attached at Appendix C1 together with the Cabinet response attached at Appendix C2.

Councillors R.K. Austin, A.A. McClements, E.A. Clare and L. Lomax raised a number of issues relating to the key issues set out on the A4 summary, namely car parking, the provision of meeting rooms, the Council Chamber, ICT, and the ground conditions relating to Southwater Lake.

Councillor E.J. Carter (Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Prosperity) responded to the Call-In and questions raised by stating that there had been no deliberate intent by the Cabinet not to involve the scrutiny process in the decisions taken on the new Civic Offices but, unfortunately, significant changes to the scrutiny function had taken place following the Annual Council Meeting in May 2010 which had meant that for sometime there was no clearly identifiable scrutiny body to undertake this role. However, he wished to give assurances on behalf of Cabinet that this Scrutiny Committee would be given the opportunity to become involved in future decisions. With regard to the questions raised by the Call-In members, he said that many of the detailed decisions, such as the internal layout of the new Civic Offices had not yet been taken and the Committee would, therefore, have an opportunity to discuss them and put forward views.

Following a detailed debate of the issues raised, the Chairman asked the Committee to vote on whether it supported the Call-In:

'That the recommendations outlined at 2.00 of the report (*dated 14th September, 2010*) be subject to scrutiny prior to decisions being made. It was agreed by

Councillor Carter at the Scrutiny Leadership Board on 25th March 2010 that Scrutiny should be involved throughout the process.'

Following a debate on the issues raised, in particular the importance of ongoing scrutiny of the decisions taken in respect of the future development of the Town Centre including the new Civic Offices, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Call-In request be accepted;**
- (b) that Scrutiny be involved in the key milestones identified in Appendix C2 – Cabinet Response to Key Issues Raised by Call-In;**
- (c) that all Members of the Council be informed, at the earliest opportunity, of any future decisions or announcements regarding the new Civic Offices.**

The meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: