

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on Monday, 5th March 2012 at 2.30pm in the Civic Offices, Telford

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Chris Butler, Service Delivery Manager Highway & Engineering Services; Steve Hollins, Team Leader Engineering Services; Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Group Specialist; Tracy Clarke, Scrutiny Officer.

SMB-30 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on the 9th January 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

SMB-31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. M. Hosken.

SMB-32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

SMB-33 FLOOD & WATER MANAGEMENT

Referring to the report circulated in advance, Chris Butler, Service Delivery Manager Highways & Engineering and Steve Hollins, Engineering Team Leader, gave an update on how Telford & Wrekin Council is meeting its responsibilities as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) under the Flood & Water Management (FWM) Act 2010.

The FWM Act 2010 had been enacted following the 2007 floods and the resulting Pitt review. A key issue to address was the deficiency of partner working. The Act had established county and unitary authorities as Local Lead Flood Authorities (LLFAs) with responsibility for leading actions with partners to combat flood events. DEFRA had awarded grants to LLFAs in 2011/12 and further grants had been awarded for 2012/13.

The following key work was highlighted:

- The spilt of the Severn Trent Regional Flood & Coastal Committee into two committees for the Severn & Wye and the Trent catchment areas from July 2012. Cllr. Shaun Davies, Cabinet Member for Environment, Co-operative

Council & Partnership had been nominated to join the Severn & Wye committee. Representation on the committee is vital in enabling Telford & Wrekin to bid into the £3m funding accumulated from the combined levies from each member local authority.

- The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) required by the EU Floods Directive had been submitted to the Environment Agency (EA) and was deemed exemplary. This identified the potential flooding hot spots in the borough.
- A Strategic Flood Risk Management Board had been established in 2011 including Cabinet Members and key officers from the Council and other partners (Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water and the emergency services). Cllr. Davies had recently been appointed as Chairman. An Operational Board had been set up to carry out the operational work and make recommendations to the Strategic Board for ratification. The Operational Board would meet monthly and the Strategic Board six monthly.
- The local Flood Risk Strategy was being developed in conjunction with partners and stakeholders including local communities and businesses and would define the actions required for effective risk management of flood events.
- The Council will become a Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB) in October 2012 and will be led by Highways and Engineering Services. The SAB will work along side planning to approve drainage systems for new developments. SAB approval would be required before a development could go ahead. The process would establish an income stream for the maintenance of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) as the authority would be responsible for maintenance of the approved systems. Further guidance on SUDS is expected in April 2012.
- From April 2012 property owners will require consent from Highways and Engineering Services to carry out works on watercourses on or adjacent to their property. Applications will be considered in both engineering and environmental terms and could be rejected, or modifications required.
- An asset register of all features in the borough that may affect flood risk was being compiled as a statutory requirement. This was a significant piece of work and would take up to 18 months to complete.
- Highways and Engineering were responsible for investigating all flooding incidents and reporting findings to the Environment Agency and the Strategic Board. There were requirements under the Act relating to prevention measures.
- Work was being done with Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency to jointly fund flood alleviation in Ketley.

- £45k funding had been secured to provide flood protection to properties in Old Hall Close and residents were involved in discussions.
- Highways and Engineering continue to manage the deployment of the flood barriers in Ironbridge with the Environment Agency. These tend to be predictable winter occurrences, unlike summer flash flooding. The barrier is a temporary defence and a fraction of the cost of permanent structures.

Members were informed that Telford & Wrekin Council was acknowledged nationally and regionally as an example of best practice in flood and water management. Officers attended conferences around the country with the Environment Agency and had hosted visits from other authorities to share best practice. Revenue had been generated in the past from providing consultancy services.

Following the presentation, members asked a number of questions and were provided with the following information:

- Development plans must be approved by Engineering Services for sustainable drainage systems. Commuted sums will be secured for maintenance costs which become the responsibility of the Council. It is recommended that money is ring-fenced for this purpose.
- The Council works closely with the water company, Severn Trent Water when addressing flooding problems in the borough. However, the funding mechanisms for each organisation are completely different. In addition the approach to designing flood alleviation schemes also differs and can present difficulties when agreeing to design capacities.
- The Council as the LLFA does not have powers of enforcement over its partners on the Strategic Board. However, the Council has a duty to investigate and report events to the Strategic Board and so far STW have been responsive to the initial investigations.
- Flooding of the disused mines and mineshafts in Telford & Wrekin presented a risk of instability.
- Stringent planning guidelines are applied to developments within flood plains. All planning applications are reviewed by the Highways and Engineering team so that development within a flood plain are strictly controlled.
- The DEFRA grant was £117k for 2011/12 which covered both salaries and work on the ground, and £146k had been allocated for 2012/13. Unlike some other authorities, the Council had retained specialist skills in-house so the Council was well placed to maximise funding and is able to provide consultancy services to other authorities.

- The register of flood features would take around 18 months to complete and will be published on the website.
- Each authority pays a local levy, funded by DEFRA, to the Regional Flood Defence Committee - in Telford & Wrekin this is the Severn & Wye Committee. Cllr. Davies will sit on the Committee and Telford & Wrekin will be able to bid for funds as well as being able to comment on the proposals brought by other authorities.
- Highways and Engineering Services hold several Geographical Information System (GIS) maps detailing all watercourses and drainage systems across the borough. These maps are very useful in predicting areas that are at risk of flooding.
- Funding is prioritised towards house and internal flooding rather than flooding of outdoor areas.
- Members were asked to help by reporting flooding incidents to the team.

RESOLVED

Members were reassured that the Council has continued its good work in this area.

SMB-34 PROPOSED CHANGES TO SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The Scrutiny Group Specialist summarised a report about changes which the Scrutiny Committee Chairmen were proposing to the scrutiny arrangements for the next municipal year. The key changes were:

- To merge the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees into one Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee. This was to address the large overlap between work programmes which it was felt would increase as the Health reforms brought about closer integration of health and social care.
- The establishment of a new Housing, Economy and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee. This would also incorporate transport, environment and regeneration within its remit. The intention was to establish a dedicated committee for these service areas, which currently fall within the remit of the Scrutiny Management Board.
- To invite Town & Parish Councils to elect one representative to sit on each of the Scrutiny Committees. This was to enhance links between scrutiny and the Town & Parish Councils.

There was a discussion about the proposals and the following points were made:

- That scrutiny needed a structure which would give robust challenge to the Executive and that a reduction in the number of scrutiny committees was not consistent with providing a strong check and balance across the range of Executive functions.
- That the work of the Committees would need to be balanced with the resources available, not only in the scrutiny team, but across the organisation a whole as resources become much more scarce.
- That the Scrutiny Management Board would need to manage the allocation of resources across the Committees.
- That the Town & Parish Council representatives would be appointed by the Town & Parish Councils themselves and that they should bring added value to the borough ward Members. Scrutiny Chairmen would need to address incidents of parish-related issues being brought to the table if this happened at meetings.

The process for making the changes was discussed. It was noted that the Scrutiny Management Board may make changes to scrutiny arrangements within the provisions set out in the Council's Constitution, and in consultation with the Scrutiny Assembly. Changes would be reported to Full Council by the Scrutiny Chairman.

RESOLVED

- **Members agreed the scrutiny committee structure as set out in section 5.1 of the report be consulted on with the Scrutiny Assembly**
- **Members agreed that the proposals to invite Town & Parish Councils to elect representatives for the Scrutiny Committees be consulted on by the Scrutiny Assembly and Town & Parish Councils**
- **That the timetable set out in Section 7.5 for making changes to scrutiny arrangements be noted.**

SMB-35 FORWARD PLAN AND ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that an additional meeting would be held in April to review feedback on the proposed changes to the scrutiny arrangements and to agree the final changes.

The Chairman advised members that he and Cllr. Turley had met the Strategic Housing Manager to discuss the issues raised at the January meeting regarding housing and Choose Your Home. A report was tabled to show what had been discussed, the actions agreed and a list of questions arising to be directed to RSLs. The questions would be sent to RSLs attending the Members' Information Seminar on 15th March to see whether they could be addressed in presentations or in the Q&A sessions. It was suggested that members attend the Seminar on 15th March, but were reminded that this this was not a scrutiny meeting but could complement

scrutiny work by proving members with was an opportunity to find out more, and potentially to ask questions. It was agreed that feedback from the Seminar would be discussed the next Scrutiny Management Board meeting for members to identify further scrutiny work.

The Chairman informed members that the revisions recently made to the Scrutiny and the Media Protocol had given rise to a number of comments. It had been agreed at the December meeting that the Chairman would approve changes to the protocol for circulation to Scrutiny Assembly and adoption into the Scrutiny Handbook. However, in the light of comments received, the Chairman suggested that the protocol be brought back to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board for further discussion and to approve the changes.

Dates for the meeting would be agreed by e-mail.

RESOLVED

That an additional meeting be held in April to agree changes to the scrutiny arrangements, to agree the Scrutiny and the Media Protocol and to agree the next steps in the review of housing issues.

The meeting ended at 4.00pm.

Chairman:

Date: