

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on Monday, 5th December 2011 at 2.00pm in the Civic Offices, Telford

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Nigel Newman, Corporate Communications Manager; Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Group Specialist; Tracy Clarke, Scrutiny Officer.

SMB-16 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on the 7th November 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

SMB-17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. M. Hosken, R. Sloan.

SMB-18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

SMB-19 COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

At the previous meeting Members had requested an item to discuss what changes could be made to the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions to make it clearer to Members and the public what decisions Cabinet will be taking. The Chairman reported that he had had a meeting with the Interim Chief Executive and the Head of Governance and that a review of the Forward Plan was being undertaken and options would come back to the Scrutiny Management Board for discussion.

SMB-20 SCRUTINY SUGGESTIONS

Three new suggestions had been received to be considered for the Scrutiny Work Programme and had been circulated to Members as Appendix B.

The suggestions had been put forward by Mr. Peter Chadwick who was in attendance at the meeting and the Chairman invited Mr. Chadwick to present the suggestions to the Scrutiny Management Board.

The first suggestion was to review the application of Section 106 agreements, and the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), on developments in Telford and Wrekin so that the costs of infrastructure work

arising from developments are funded by the developer rather than the Council and hence indirectly by the Council Tax payer. It was suggested that this was a value for money issue for the Council. The question put forward in the suggestion was whether the Scrutiny Committee was satisfied that the guidance from the 2009 scrutiny review of Section 106 Agreements was being properly applied, particularly with regard to the CIL, where major developments were coming forward across Telford in general, including, but not only limited, to Newport.

The Chairman replied that scrutiny was not able to scrutinise planning decisions and that policies, processes or issues would only be scrutinised on a borough-wide basis and not on an individual development basis. The Scrutiny Group Specialist pointed out that the 2009 scrutiny review of Section 106 Agreements had included information about the CIL but had not drawn any conclusions or made any recommendations about its implementation in Telford and Wrekin.

Members discussed the suggestion and agreed that the use of Section 106 agreements and implementation of the CIL should be included as a topic in the scrutiny work programme, and that the suggestion would be referred to the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee.

The second suggestion related to how and when Town and Parish Councils should be consulted when the Borough Council considers disposal of any Council assets. The suggestion referred to recommendations made in a previous scrutiny review of the Sale of Assets relating to communication with Town & Parish Councils, and questioned the application of the process relating to the sale of land off Station Road in Newport.

The Chairman reiterated that scrutiny would only review policies, processes or issues on a borough-wide basis and would not look at specific issues relating to an individual development. Cllr. Green had taken part in the scrutiny review of the Sale of Assets and pointed out that the review had focused on communication with Ward Members and had not made any recommendations relating to communication with Town & Parish Councils.

It was agreed that the suggestion would be referred to the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

The third suggestion related to whether the proposed disposal of land holdings off Station Road, Newport together with disposal of interests in other land in Newport, is providing value for money for Council Tax payers when taking into account the proposed changes to financing of local authorities. There was a broader suggestion made to review whether there is a process in place to ensure value for money on the management, or sale, of Council assets.

The Chairmen reiterated that scrutiny would not investigate a specific case in Newport. The Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee monitors capital receipts on a regular basis and may be one aspect of the Committee's work in scrutinising the forthcoming budget proposals. It was therefore agreed that

this issue would be dealt with as part of the on-going work of the Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED

- **That suggestions 1 and 2 be referred to the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider as part of the work programme**
- **That suggestion 3 would be dealt with as part of the on-going work of the Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee**

SMB-21 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Group Specialist presented the progress report on the Scrutiny Work Programme. This summarised scrutiny activity to date and progress on delivery of the Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Council's Constitution and Scrutiny Handbook had been updated to reflect the new scrutiny arrangements. 57 scrutiny suggestions had been received and considered by the Scrutiny Management Board and Scrutiny Committees to agree the work programme. The Chairman had presented the 2010/11 Scrutiny Annual Report to full Council on 24th November. A total of 21 Scrutiny Committee meetings had been held between 23rd June and 5th December, and the report highlighted the key work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees and the outcomes. Scrutiny resources had been affected by a maternity leave and career break so that current resources were slightly below the 2.1FTE allocated in the restructure at 1.8FTE.

Members agreed that the report demonstrated the breadth of work being carried out by the Scrutiny Committees and requested that a copy of the report be sent to all Scrutiny Assembly and Cabinet Members, and to Town & Parish Councils with a list of contact details for the Scrutiny Chairmen to keep them informed about scrutiny work.

SMB- 22 SCRUTINY AND THE MEDIA

The Corporate Communications Manager had been invited to the meeting to discuss ways in which scrutiny could raise its profile with members of the public and what support could be provided to the Scrutiny Chairmen as media-spokespeople for the Scrutiny Committees.

There was a wide-ranging discussion and the following key points were agreed:

- General articles about scrutiny had been put in Council publications in the past. However, it was agreed that scrutiny is a difficult concept to grasp, and that a more productive approach would be to use specific pieces of scrutiny work on issues that are of interest to the public to raise awareness

about scrutiny and how it can make a difference.

- Press releases on scrutiny recommendations should pre-empt the publication of reports and recommendations being presented to Cabinet. The more controversial scrutiny's position was, the more likely the press would be to issue a release.
- That given the lack of a training budget and limited resources, training would be provided by PR to Scrutiny Chairmen on a one-to-one basis as required to meet specific immediate needs.
- Scrutiny Chairmen should consider the items on their Committee's work programme and come forward with their ideas about possible PR opportunities for specific pieces of work.
- The Scrutiny Media Protocol was in need of updating. A draft would be prepared by the scrutiny team in consultation with PR for approval by the Chairman. This would be sent to all Scrutiny Assembly members as a reminder about protocol for Members on talking to the media.
- There needed to be more communication with Town & Parish Councils.

RESOLVED

That the Scrutiny and the Media Protocol will be updated as discussed at the meeting.

SMB- 23 FORWARD PLAN AND ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

An update report had been circulated to Members on the Green Deal. Further information was requested on the potential partnership arrangements with private organisations to be circulated to Members.

It was agreed that the next meeting on 9th January would be about Choose Your Home in the wider context of the Housing Strategy.

The meeting ended at 3.43 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: