

# COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 June 2003 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Falp (Chair); Councillors Miss De-Lara-Bond, Mrs Edwards, Harris, Hatfield, Kundi, Offer and Sandhar.

(Councillor Hatfield substituted for Councillor Kinson).

(Councillor Sandhar substituted for Councillor Mrs McFarland).

George Dunkley                      Warwick District Federation of Tenants and Residents Association (Federation 2000).

John Laverty                          Independent Tenant Representative

**ALSO PRESENT:**                      Councillor Boad (Housing Services Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Ms Flanagan (Cultural Services Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Holland.

## 126. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minute Number 130 – Executive Agenda Item Number 13(B) - Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Councillor John Holland declared a personal interest in this item because he was the President of the Warwick Twinning Association.

## 127. **PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer which sought to provide Members with the opportunity to consider the proposals, for submission to the Standards Committee and the Council, to effect constitutional changes in respect of areas of responsibility for Portfolio Holders, and the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Committees.

At its meeting on 24 June 2003, the Standards Committee would be asked to recommend to the Council that a number of changes be made to the Constitution, including amendments to the area of responsibility for the Portfolio Holders, together with revised terms of reference for the renamed Scrutiny Committees.

The number of these Committees would also increase from three to four. The Council would then decide on these recommendations at its meeting on 9 July 2003.

## **COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

A schedule setting out details of the revised responsibilities for the Council's Portfolio Holders, with accompanying confirmation as to the responsibilities of the corresponding Scrutiny Committee, were set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

A revised Article 6 from the Constitution, reflecting the appropriate changes to the terms of reference for the Committees, was attached at Appendix 2 of the report.

The Council was in the process of adopting its Corporate Strategy. This document would set out the Council's objectives and priorities for the next four years, and it would form the overarching context for a rationalised approach to service planning and performance management. This would be an important contribution to the Council's response to last years EFQM Peer Assessment, which in turn would be an integral and necessary step in preparing for next years comprehensive performance assessment.

Realigning the areas of responsibility for Portfolio Holders, with attendant revisions to the scrutiny terms of reference, was also seen as being necessary to rationalise the process.

To allow Members to make a comparison with the existing arrangements, attached at Appendix 3 of the report was a copy of the final work programme and ancillary documents that were presented to the Committee in the final meeting cycle of the old Council. Although the Constitution makes no provision for a role for the Council's Scrutiny Committees in the prospective constitutional changes, it was anticipated that Members would have a keen interest in any amending proposals.

### **RECOMMENDED** that

- (1) the report be noted and no comments be made on the proposals; and
- (2) further consideration of a work plan for the ensuing year be deferred until a decision on the amendments to the Constitution has been taken.

## **128. THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION - A CASE STUDY**

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Directors which sought to provide an opportunity for Members to consider a case study as a practical example of how to develop the scrutiny role.

At the meeting of the Committee during the January cycle, Members received a presentation from Andrew Jones, Benefits Manager, which set out the proposals for the reform of the Housing Benefits Scheme.

## **COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

A copy of the accompanying paper was attached at Appendix 1 of the report for Members' information. A copy of the presentation given by KPMG, the Council's external auditors, immediately prior to the last meeting of the Committee, was attached at Appendix 2 of the report. It included a list of questions designed to stimulate debate on the form that effective scrutiny might take to assist in the delivery of a comprehensive, influential and proactive contribution to policy review and development, external scrutiny for performance management and review, and robust decision making.

Finally, attached at Appendix 3 of the report, was a copy of the Smart Guide to Overview and Scrutiny prepared by the West Midlands Local Government Association. It presented in bullet point formats some initial thoughts on the principle of effective scrutiny, around which a debate on the issues might be framed. The work of Housing Benefits clearly falls within the remit of this Committee and its work would be of interest to it in developing effective scrutiny of an important area of the Council's work.

Considering the issues in light of KPMG's presentation, possibly involving role play, it would give Members the opportunity to consider how they wish to develop the scrutiny role in generic terms for use across a range of Committee activity.

### **RECOMMENDED** that

- (1) Mr Jones be thanked for his presentation; and
- (2) the issue of benefits take up amongst the elderly and disabled form part of the Committee's work plan for the ensuing year.

### **129. EXECUTIVE MEETING - TUESDAY, 27 MAY 2003**

The minutes of the Executive held on Tuesday, 27 May 2003, which came within the remit of the Committee were submitted for information and scrutiny.

### **RECOMMENDED** that the minutes be noted.

### **130. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS)**

The Committee considered the items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Monday, 23 June 2003, which came within their remit. As a result the following comments were made for forwarding to the Executive:-

#### **Agenda Item Number 2 - Approval of Accounts 2002 – 2003**

The Committee noted the report.

#### **Agenda Item Number 3 - Financial Strategy and Budget Setting Timetable**

The Committee noted the report.

## **COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

### Agenda Item Number 4 - Corporate Strategy

Some members of the Committee expressed concern at the references made to the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Party Manifestos and the Committee agreed that these comments should be passed on. The Committee made no comments on the appendix to the report.

### Agenda Item Number 5 - Capital Programme 2003 – 2004

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report but expressed concerns regarding the slippage.

### Agenda Item Number 9 - Performance Management - Full Year Results 2002 – 2003

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report and, although concerned about the affordable housing issue, welcomed the results which fell within their remit.

### Agenda Item Number 10 - Future Strategy for the Giving of Financial Assistance for Private Sector Housing Repair and Improvement

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 13 (A) - Rural Initiatives Scheme – Applications from Budbrooke and Baginton

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

### Agenda Item Number 13 (B) - Grants to Voluntary Organisations

The Committee supported the recommendation in the report

## 131. **PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

## 132. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS)**

The Committee considered the confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Monday, 23 June 2003 which came within their remit. As a result, the following comments were made for forwarding to the Executive:-

### Agenda Item Number 17 - St Mary's Lands Proposals and the Hill Close Gardens Scheme, Warwick

The Committee supported the recommendations in the revised report.

**COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

Agenda Item Number 19 - Cultural Quarter Proposal, Spencer Yard,  
Leamington Spa

The Committee supported the recommendation in the revised report and requested that details of the value of the land be made available.

(The meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.)

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