

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES WIGSTON ON MONDAY, 27 OCTOBER  
2008 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM**

Present: Councillor M H Charlesworth – Chair  
Councillor M Griffiths – Vice Chair

Councillors: Mrs L M Broadley, Mrs J M Gore, J Kaufman, Mrs H E Loydall and P Swift (7)

Officers Present: P Johnson, M Cregg, S Folwell, J Crooks, M Hibbitt, Ms R Vanza-Adams, Miss L Rawling and A Wood

**14. MINUTES**

Prior to the signing of the minutes the following matters were referred to:-

In response to a question from Councillor Kaufman, referring to minute reference 12 on page 193 of the report pages, it was confirmed that the agency staff are contracted for 8 hours per day, not 37 hours a week.

Following a question from Her Worship the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Gore, regarding the relationship issues between agency staff and supervisors, the Deputy Chief Executive informed the meeting that the issues raised at the previous meeting would be discussed at a meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> November with officers and staff, and that Members would be informed of the outcome in due course.

RESOLVED: That with the above matters duly noted, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 September 2008 be taken as read and confirmed as a true record.

With the agreement of the Panel, the Chair varied the order of the business indicated on the agenda by taking consideration of item 4a first.

**15. REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Members considered the reports of the Deputy Chief Executive as contained within report pages 230 to 237, which should be read in conjunction with these minutes as a composite document.

a) Key Performance Indicators

Amongst the items discussed were the following:-

- NI 195 – reference was made to both the “Cancelled” stickers and the charge of £10.00 per day for fly posting.
- NI 196 –it was confirmed that it was anticipated that over the next 6 months the enforcement targets would be reached.
- NI 197 – officers were congratulated on the apple day event recently held at Brocks Hill Environment Centre.
- With regard to BVPI 212 it was noted that if the properties requiring major repairs are removed from this scenario, the situation improved dramatically. Further discussions were continuing with the Audit Commission.

- With regard to BVPI 17A it was confirmed that regarding recruitment, the authority always chose the best applicant for the vacancy, regardless of ethnic origin. It was explained that the target for this BVPI was in designed to reflect the representative make up of the local community.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

With the agreement of the Panel, the Chair took consideration of report item 2b next.

## **16. REPORTS OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Panel considered the reports of the Deputy Chief Executive as contained within report pages 195-218 which should be read in conjunction with these minutes as a composite document.

### **(b) Awareness Raising in Recycling and Waste Management**

During the discussion on this report, the efforts of the department to raise awareness of recycling issues, particularly with school children were congratulated and the children were seen as the future recyclers of the borough.

The Contracts Operation Manager drew to Members' attention that the funding for the Recycling Promotions Officer expired on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2008 and a bid had been made to endeavour to continue this funding in order that the facility could continue. Members concurred that if the bid for external funding was not successful, it was important that funds be found to continue this initiative to maintain the authority's endeavours to increase its recycling rate. The Deputy Chief Executive moved to ensure Members that in this eventuality, the existing budget provision would be able to cover this.

The subsequent discussion focused around the one click system, garden composting via the green bags procedure, kitchen waste recycling currently being trialled elsewhere, new in-vessel composting vehicles being introduced in December, the crucial factor of the County Council's recycling rate being the one to measure landfill tax calculations, tetra paks the need for education rather than enforcement on recycling, and the green cone system for recycling kitchen waste which is available to purchase by residents. It was noted that where kitchen waste and home composting collections are made weekly, with fortnightly refuse collection, recycling rates tended to be higher.

Members concurred in their satisfaction at the quality of this report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

With the consent of the Panel, the Chair took consideration of the 4<sup>th</sup> Item 3a next.

## **17. REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

The panel considered the report of the Director of Community Services as set out in report pages 219 – 229, which should be read in conjunction with these minutes as a composite document.

a) Landlord Services Inspection and Action Plan

The Head of Housing Services introduced this report by reference to the inspection carried out by the Audit Commission and the outcome as detailed in paragraph 4 of the report. Mr Folwell went on to consider that whilst it was felt that the authority did provide very positive levels of service as noted in the report, the strict criteria laid down by the Inspectorate rendered the authority with a measure of no stars with no certain prospects for improvement.

In his opinion, this meant that a major shake up was needed to enable the department to move forward and meet the challenges laid down by the report.

One of the key challenges was to take on board internal and external expertise in almost a mentoring role since change would not be evident without external intervention. Secondly, a customer based focus was at the heart of improvement.

A high level programme was therefore being implemented for which, the details were still being developed. However, some progress had already been noted, particularly with regard to gas servicing with the number of outstanding services reduced from 24 to 4 and the number of outstanding adaptations of property halved from 32 to 16.

During the subsequent discussion, Mr Folwell confirmed that with regard to the gas servicing arrangements, a change in the way that individual properties were targeted rather than blocks of properties, had made all the difference but difficulties still remained in endeavouring to access properties for the purpose of carrying out the services. It was noted that the authority was "meeting the decent home standards" and there were many positives to be taken from this report.

Members were pleased that the Audit Commission had agreed to become part of the Improvement Plan and, assuming that directions were indicated by the Audit Commission, a steer would be obtained for the future.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) The findings of the Audit Commission report are noted.
- (ii) Comments of the Members regarding the proposals for a new direction for Landlord Services are as outlined in the text above.

The order of business now returned to that indicated by the agenda.

**18. REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

a) Internal Audit Reports

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced this report and was pleased to note that there were no internal audit reports waiting formal responses to outside of the six week deadline.

Moving through the individual reports, a significant discussion arose during the report regarding Main Accounting – Central 2007/08, in particular, the facility for the encashment of cheques by members of staff at the cashiers' office.

Upon a motion to propose the withdrawal of this facility, proposed by Councillor Mrs Loydall and seconded by Councillor Mrs Gore, and upon being put to a vote, this was defeated by two votes for to five votes against.

During the consideration of the report regarding Grants to Voluntary Organisations the situation regarding Service Level Agreements was clarified.

It was therefore

RESOLVED: That

- (i) Cash - Cash Income - Cemeteries 2008/09  
RECOMMENDATIONS reference  
930,9302,9307 be approved and adopted.
- (ii) Main Accounting 2007/08  
RECOMMENDATIONS reference WP12 13 31  
40 43a and 49 be approved and adopted.
- (iii) Grants to Voluntary Organisations 2008/09  
RECOMMENDATIONS reference 1 3 4 and 5 be  
approved and adopted.
- (iv) Creditors Central 2008/09  
RECOMMENDATIONS reference C1 C2 and  
C12 be approved and adopted.

c) Review of Advice Provision

Prior to any discussion on this matter, Councillor Mrs H Loydall declared a personal interest in this matter and left the meeting at 7.40 pm.

The Chair, Councillor Charlesworth also declared a personal interest by virtue of his wife being a volunteer at Voluntary Action at Oadby and Wigston.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed Members that the purpose of this report was to indicate that the Service Level Agreement with the Helping Hands Community Trust expires on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 and therefore it is necessary to undertake an exercise to invite expressions of interest for the provision of independent advice within the borough from the expiry of the existing contract.

Mr Johnson mapped out the process including the expressions of interest which must be sent out this week, and returned by the 12 December 2008. To consider the returns, a special meeting of the Panel will need to be convened and the date of the 6 January 2009 had been suggested to consider the expressions received and shortlist these for presentation by the short listed organisations at the meeting of the Panel on 20 January 2009.

During the subsequent discussion, it was confirmed that there would be no increase in the budget specified and that prospective tenderers would be asked to demonstrate value for money within a budget range. The Deputy Chief Executive asked Members to consider that joint bids to alleviate possible financial constraints on individual providers, would be considered.

To facilitate a Special Meeting of the Panel on the 20 January, the Chair announced that the item regarding the review of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership would be moved to the February meeting. It was therefore

RESOLVED: That

- (i) The Panel recommends that Policy Committee approves an extension to the Service Level Agreement with Helping Hands Trust to the 30 June 2009 at one quarter of the 2008/09 grant plus inflation.
  - (ii) That with the withdrawal of the Leicester Law Centre, and the addition of Age Concern Leicestershire and its partners, the organisations which should be invited to submit a proposal for Advice Provision within the Borough with these proposals being submitted by 12 December 2008 be approved.
  - (iii) The proposals for Advice Provision be considered at a Special Meeting of the Panel to be held on 6 January 2009.
  - (iv) Short listed organisations be invited to present their proposals to the meeting of the Panel on 20 January 2009 and
  - (v) The Panel recommends the preferred provider of advice services to the Policy Committee at its meeting of 27 January 2009.
19. Members joined with the Chair in thanking Mr Johnson, who was attending his last Scrutiny Panel meeting before leaving the authority, for all his help and guidance over the past three years, and offered him their best wishes for the future.

**The meeting closed at 8.00 pm**