

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 2 MARCH 2016

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors N Clarke, J Cotterill, T Eynon, J Geary, D Harrison, V Richichi, A C Saffell and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors R Johnson, J Legrys and S McKendrick

Officers: Mrs M Meredith and Miss A Wright

27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J G Coxon.

28. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

29. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

No questions were received.

30. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2016.

Councillor T Eynon requested the minutes to be amended to reflect that, under the item entitled 'Section 106 Contributions for Health', it had been resolved to monitor progress on this issue and to invite the CCG representative to a future meeting to answer members' questions on future progress.

It was moved by Councillor J Cotterill, seconded by Councillor D Harrison and

RESOLVED THAT:

Subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31. UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

The Financial Services Team Manager presented the report to members, highlighting the proposed amendments to the Contracts Procedure Rules as outlined at Appendix A. She advised that the changes had been agreed by the procurement gateway board.

Councillor D Harrison stated that he had expected a legal advisor to be present at this meeting and expressed disappointment that no legal advisor was present. The Financial Services Team Manager gave assurances that the changes would not weaken security and attested that the Head of Legal and Support Services had been involved throughout the process.

In response to comments from Councillor N Smith, the Financial Services Team Manager advised that the procurement process would depend upon the value of the contract, and if this was over a certain threshold, EU procurement directives would apply. She assured members that proposals were being developed to encourage small businesses to do business with the Council.

Chairman's initials

Councillor N Smith commented that he was pleased to hear this, and added that there were a lot of sole traders in Coalville and it would be a shame if they were precluded.

Councillor N Clarke made reference to the change to the wording relating to seeking three quotations rather than obtaining three quotations. He sought clarification on the reasoning behind this change.

The Financial Services Team Manager advised that this wording had been amended by the Legal Team and she would provide a response in writing.

Councillor J Geary noted that for contracts under £1,000, only a verbal quotation was required. He questioned whether this was good practice not to ensure a paper trail. He added that he did not consider it to be too onerous to obtain a written quotation even if this was via email.

The Financial Services Team Manager advised that officers were required to document the verbal quotation for audit purposes and the invoice would also provide an audit trail.

Councillor A C Saffell sought clarification on what basis a decision could be made if three quotations were not obtained, and what would happen if only one quotation was obtained. He felt that a minimum of two quotations should be obtained before a contract could be awarded.

Councillor N Smith acknowledged that there could be difficulties in obtaining quotations and he felt that members ought to rely on officer discretion.

Councillor J Geary commented that if tradespeople did not respond to tenders, they should be removed from the approved traders list.

Councillor D Harrison urged members to be mindful that occasionally there would be very specialist contracts and it would be best not to tie the officers' hands.

Councillor N Clarke agreed that the process should be simplified for officers, however he felt that there should be more emphasis on making every effort to obtain three quotations.

Councillor A C Saffell suggested that to save time, the Council's surveyor could give an opinion on whether a tender represented value for money.

Councillor V Richichi commented that if officers were having difficulty obtaining three quotations, perhaps the approved supplier list should be expanded.

Councillor N Smith suggested that the new system should be advertised in the Coalville Times to expand the list of contractors.

The Financial Services Team Manager felt that in general, it was not a problem to obtain three quotations, and there was an approved schedule of rates in respect of housing repairs. She felt that this was only an issue in terms of specialist contracts.

In response to comments from Councillor T Eynon, the Financial Services Team Manager advised that suppliers would be selected from the local supplier list firstly from within North West Leicestershire; if this was not possible, a selection would be made from within the East Midlands before seeking a supplier nationally.

Councillor T Eynon suggested that this be made clearer in the Constitution.

RESOLVED THAT:

The suggested amendments to the Constitution be noted.

32. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor N Clarke requested that consideration be given to bringing forward the next meeting of Policy Development Group to enable consideration of the End of Year and Quarter 4 Performance Management Report prior to its consideration by Cabinet. He wished to particularly discuss recycling, as he had noticed that North West Leicestershire was the worst performing authority in Leicestershire.

Councillor J Geary stated that he felt scrutiny was toothless, positive recommendations were seldom made, and were not acted upon when they were made. He felt that members did not have the change to scrutinise things that concerned them. He felt that as a matter of importance, the way scrutiny was run in this authority should be scrutinised. He also requested that the Leader be present so that he could explain why he considered this to be a fit and proper scrutiny panel. He commented that under the previous Labour administration, scrutiny was chaired by the opposition, which made it meaningful and ensured the executive was held to account. He commented that scrutiny was just a talking shop.

Councillor D Harrison felt that the comments made by Policy Development Group were heard. He also felt that politics should not be brought into scrutiny.

Councillor J Geary made reference to the recent changes to the Constitution. He stated that Policy Development Group had highlighted references to Ward Members and requested that the plural be deleted to reflect the current single member wards. He added that when the report was considered by Council, the plural form was still included, highlighting that the comments were not listened to.

Councillor A C Saffell commented that items for scrutiny requested by members never seemed to materialise on the agenda. He expressed concerns that scrutiny was not working properly at all.

Councillor T Eynon noted the item on the work programme relation to Section 106 agreements, the date for which was currently to be confirmed. She sought confirmation of when this would be considered.

It was moved by Councillor J Geary, seconded by Councillor A C Saffell and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The following items be added to the work programme for the next meeting of Policy Development Group:
End of Year and Quarter 4 Performance Management/waste targets
The effectiveness of scrutiny at North West Leicestershire District Council
- b) The Leader be invited to the next meeting of Policy Development Group as a witness for the report on scrutiny.
- c) Consideration be given to the date of the next meeting to enable these items to be considered in a timely manner.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.07 pm

Chairman's signature