

MINUTES of a meeting of the COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the Room 101, Old Council Offices, Whitwick Road, Coalville, LE67 3FJ on THURSDAY, 13 JULY 2023

Present: Councillor T Eynon (Chair)

Councillors M Blair-Park, M French, K Horn, S Lambeth, A Morley, E Parle, J G Simmons (Substitute for Councillor P Lees) and L Windram

In Attendance: Councillors D Cooper and J Legrys

Portfolio Holders: Councillors M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Ms K Hiller, Mr J Knight, Mr P Sanders and Mrs R Wallace

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors M Ball and P Lees.

**2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared.

**3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

**4. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2023.

It was moved by Councillor J Simmons, seconded by Councillor T Eynon and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2023 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

**5. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the inclusion of any items on the work programme.

The Strategic Director of Place set out what the Work Programming group had discussed on 6 July 2023.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director explained the role of the work programming group and the scope to shape the work programme moving forwards.

The work programme was noted.

**6. RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND**

The Economic Development and Regeneration Manager presented the report to Members.

In response to a question about what happens to any unspent money, and who was administering it, the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager advised that his

Chairman's initials

team was administering the fund and that they expected that the grant would likely be oversubscribed. If, and this was rare, it did look like the money would not get spent, there would be a push to further communicate with the public the existence of the grant.

In response to a question about how grants would be monitored, the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager advised that his team monitored and kept in touch with businesses. He also emphasised the importance of publicising successful applicants to showcase what we can achieve to support businesses and use as cases to use in further funding application.

It was agreed that a report on the results of the grant would be brought before the committee in due course.

The Chair thanked members for their comments.

## **7. HERMITAGE RECREATION GROUND ECOPARK**

The Head of Community Services presented the report and the Leisure Services Team Manager spoke to the proposed design as was circulated in colour at the meeting.

In response to a question about the materials used and what proportion were to be recycled, the Head of Community Services advised that this would be considered in the procurement process. He added that lots of walkways would be grassed, to reflect the national forest theme.

In response to a member inquiry about the project's funding, the Head of Community Services advised that approximately £300,000 would be from external funding sources to undertake the work; day to day maintenance would come from existing budgets.

In response to a question about the consultation process, the Head of Community Services advised members on how feedback was processed, the occasional challenges of doing so, and how the project would be publicised moving forwards.

In response to a question about cycling trails, the Head of Community Services advised that there would be hard footpaths and grassed trails – both open too both pedestrians and cyclists.

In response to a question about wheelchair accessibility, the Head of Community Services advised that the plans improved on what accessibility currently existed.

In response to a question about the feasibility and prudence of relying on volunteers, the Head of Community Services advised that Earthwatch would develop a group of volunteers and that the Council would take over if this method of maintenance stopped being effective.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments which would be presented to Cabinet when they considered the report on 25 July.

## **8. PROPOSALS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

The Strategic Director of Place presented the report to Members and noted the comments of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 11 July 2023.

A discussion was had on the general operation of the current Work Programming Group and the consensus was that it was working well. Several Members felt that the establishment of a Scrutiny Commission was a good way forward for the scrutiny function,

Chairman's initials

however it was felt that due to the current unstable political environment, the timeframe should be adjusted slightly so that the commission be appointed to and be operational from Annual Council in May 2024 rather than November 2023. This suggestion was not supported by all Members of the Committee and a thorough discussion was had.

Regarding the proposed terms of reference for the Scrutiny Commission, it was suggested that the composition be 5 Members as detailed but with an additional member from the largest political opposition group to be appointed as Chair.

The Infrastructure Portfolio Holder was invited to address the Committee and utilising his experience of Scrutiny at the County Council, he spoke in support of the establishment of the Scrutiny Commission.

Following further discussion on the comments made in relation to the terms of reference and the implementation timeframe, it was moved by Councillor A Morley, seconded by Councillor Lambeth and

RECOMMENDED THAT:

- a) The Scrutiny Commission be operational from the Civic Year 24/25 and be appointed to at Annual Council in May 2024.
- b) The Scrutiny Commission to comprise five Councillors in political balance to include the Chairs of both Scrutiny Committees, plus a sixth councillor from the largest political opposition group to act as Chair.

## **9. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

The Strategic Director of Place presented the report to Members.

A Member noted that the Leicestershire County Council annual report was much more public facing and friendly, and perhaps this demonstrated to the organisation a way to improve the report moving forwards. Officers noted the feedback.

Although Members agreed it was useful to see the work undertaken by the Committees, it was felt that more detail and a sharper focus on outcomes to demonstrate to the public the hard work of the Committees would be beneficial, particularly with the Task and Finish Groups.

The Chair thanked members for their comments.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.40 pm

Chairman's initials