

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL  
COMMUNITIES HELD AT THE FORLI ROOM - TOWN HALL  
ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2010**

**Present:** Councillors D Over (Chairman), G Nawaz (Vice-Chairman), R Dobbs,  
D Harrington, D Sanders and A Shaheed

**Officers Present:** Alana Diffey, Governance Officer  
Stephen Emeny, Governance Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mike Heath, Commercial Services Director.

**2. Declaration of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2010 were approved as a correct record.

**4. Responses to Recommendations Made by the Commission**

The report provided an update of the responses to recommendations made by the Commission at previous meetings.

Several Commission Members had received complaints from concerned parents regarding the revised student bus service which had affected the journey time for Year 11 pupils travelling from Eye Village to Arthur Mellows Village College in Glinton.

During consideration, the following concerns were noted:

- The journey time for students was now over one hour as a result of the service travelling from Eye to Glinton via Queensgate, resulting in a longer school day for students
- That some regulated busses were not being appropriately identified as school transport
- There were questions over whether CRB checks had been carried out for all drivers
- It was unclear whether the busses being used to transport the students were fitted with seatbelts

**ACTION AGREED**

That the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities requests that the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University reconsider the current bus service for students travelling from Eye to Glinton so that it travels direct rather than via Queensgate.

**5. Safe and Vibrant Rural Centres and Communities**

The Commission received a presentation by PC Simon Page from the Cambridgeshire Constabulary Rural Communities Action Team (RCAT). The presentation covered the role of the team across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. The main points of the presentation were:

- The type of work/crime tackled by the RCAT team, which included:
  - o Investigation of diesel and farm vehicle theft
  - o Monitoring of hare coursing
- The geographical area covered by the team, based in Sawtry, included the whole of Cambridgeshire and the rural areas to the north of Peterborough
- The main focus of the team over the upcoming months would be to monitor hare coursing which saw a spike in the number of events during the autumn

Members of the Commission thanked PC Page for attending the meeting and raised the question of requesting a larger Police presence in the rural villages surrounding Peterborough to help reduce the number of speeding incidents and vehicle related crime.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities writes to the Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire Constabulary requesting that the TFU and Traffic Divisions assist their colleagues in RCAT in policing the rural villages surrounding Peterborough, specifically to help tackle car and farm crime and the fear of crime during the day and night.

## **6. Rural Economic Development**

The Commission received a presentation by Mr Edwin Jones, Partnership Director for the East of England IDB Ltd (EEIDB). Mr Jones provided details to the Commission on the role of the EEIDB and how it had brought investment into the region and developed new and existing businesses in rural areas. The presentation also confirmed that:

- One third of businesses in Cambridgeshire are located in the rural area's of the county
- The importance of a rural farming economy as every farm producing a food product has 14 jobs in the chain in bringing that product to market
- Every £1.00 spent on locally produced goods, is worth £2.43 to the local economy as a whole

The presentation also confirmed that the area surrounding Peterborough contained some of the best soils in Europe to enable food growth and that European funding had a large focus for food producing farms. The added value being food security for the local area and with 69% of farms now earning more income from their diversified functions; tourism to farm and craft shops have helped develop rural economies further.

Mr Jones highlighted a range of the issues facing rural businesses, which were:

- The lack of reliable, fast broadband services in rural villages and locations
- Minimal public transport services for local children, commuters, and tourists wanting to visit the area
- The high cost of fuel for domestic and commercial vehicles for those living in rural communities
- Every thriving rural village has a local pub, however the number of rural pubs to close over recent years has increased

The following answers were given by Mr Jones in response to questions raised by the Commission:

- The local area around Peterborough has very competent farmers and many of the expertise used throughout the farming industry started in this area. These skills, along with first class soils and a vibrant local market, give the area a high produce yield and local growers must continue to concentrate on producing the food consumers want to eat.

- The area has excellent grazing land for animals, but usage is not seen as high a priority as the development of land for housing, etc. Parish Councils could raise these issues with developers if the development of farmland for housing affected local wildlife.
- One method of helping small businesses to expand would be to encourage the sharing of commercial farm property with other small business owners. This would share costs and produce revenue for farmers on otherwise unused buildings.

The Commission thanked Mr Jones for his presentation and attendance at the meeting.

### **ACTION AGREED**

That the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities writes to Anglia Ruskin University to establish if any courses in rural agriculture would be available to students once Peterborough became a university city.

### **7. Forward Plan**

The latest version of the Forward Plan, showing details of the key decisions that the Leader of the Council believed the Cabinet or individual Cabinet members would be making over the next four months, was received.

The Commission agreed that there were no further items from the Forward Plan to be included in the current Rural Scrutiny Work Plan.

### **8. Work Programme**

The Commission considered the work programme for the next meeting and it was agreed that the following items would be discussed:

- Planning Policy & Strategy Items
- Women's Enterprise Centre—Engagement With Women in Rural Communities;
- Speed Limits in Rural Areas;
- Local Transport Plan;

### **9. Date of the Next Meeting**

Tuesday 2 November 2010 at 7pm.

**CHAIRMAN**  
**7.00 - 8.07 pm**