

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH
ON 13 JULY 2015**

Present: Councillors: Harrington (Chairman) Stokes, Brown, Rush, Murphy, Okonkowski and J R Fox.

Also Present: Joe Dobson Independent Co-opted Member
Keith Lievesley Independent Co-opted Member
Phillip Nuttall Independent Co-opted Member

Officers in Attendance: Ch. Insp. Robin Sissons Head of Community and Safety Services
Belinda Child Head of Housing and Health Improvement
Steve Bowyer Chief Executive, Opportunity Peterborough
Sheila O'Brien Opportunity Peterborough
Dania Castagliuolo Democratic Services Officer
Danielle Wright Members Services Assistant

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sanders. Councillor Rush was in attendance as substitute. Apologies were also received from Co-opted Member, Henry Clark and Adrian Chapman.

2. Declaration of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

3. Minutes of Meeting Held on 16 June 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Rural Overview

The report was introduced by the Head of Housing and Health Improvement and the Chief Executive of Opportunity Peterborough to provide Members with an overview of key strategic issues of concern for rural communities. The report outlined activities which were already in place and explored some opportunities for how additional interventions could help to address these concerns within the current challenging, financial landscape. The following key points were highlighted:

- The economic decline of rural communities
- The LEADER Programme
- Working with rural communities in relation to devolved services
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- Rural Crime Statistics

The Commission was asked to scrutinise the content of the report and progress in relation to directly meeting the needs of rural communities.

Questions and comments were raised around the following areas:

- Members queried how the sixty percent of LEADER funding was worked out. *The Chief Executive of Opportunity Peterborough responded that the sixty percent of the LEADER funding was a financial commitment by private businesses. It was a match funding arrangement which was geared towards the private sector and growing local businesses.*
- Members queried what type of bids would be accepted. *Members were advised that the bids would need to be driven towards economic development and growth.*
- Members queried where the Local Action Group meeting would be taking place and if invites would be sent to the Commission. *Members were advised that the meeting would be taking place on 24 July 2015 at Oakham Castle and invites had been sent out to Local Action Group members only.*
- Members queried whether the 15% of CIL funding which was going to be allocated to parishes would be kept with the Parish or with Peterborough City Council. *The Head of Housing and Health Improvement advised Members that the money would be handed over to Parishes if there was a development in place, if there was no development in place then the money would be held by Peterborough City Council. The Corporate Director for Growth and Regeneration had made it clear that he was willing to look at how CIL funding could be used as flexibly as possible.*
- *Members were informed that there would be further pots of money available for Parishes to bid for.*
- Members queried who private businesses would need to contact to apply for funding through LEADER. *Members were advised to contact Sheila O'Brien from Opportunity Peterborough.*
- Members queried if there was any alternatives in place to help with the process to ensure that rural areas would also receive investment. *Members were advised that digital connectivity was key to rural areas, it would encourage greater access for businesses to grow and develop, therefore business networks and support mechanisms run by Opportunity Peterborough should be made available to all rural businesses.*

Councillor J R Fox and Councillor Okonkowski joined the meeting at this point.

- Members queried how local farmers would be contacted to advise them of what was available to them. *Members were informed that the Local Action Group had a number of interested parties such as, the National Farmers Union, Natural England, small business networks and Farmers.*

The Head of Community and Safety Services gave a brief overview of the rural crime figures on page 19 of the report.

Questions and comments were raised around the following areas:

- Members sought clarification on the total crime in rural areas of 868, referred to on page 19 of the report, and queried if this number was for the whole year. *The Head of Community and Safety Services confirmed that this total was for the year from June 2014 to May 2015.*
- *Members were advised that the Crime Commissioners objective was to keep the front line policing at the same level and to date had managed to maintain 1400 officers for the county. Peterborough had a third of that number of Officers, as crime rates were higher in the City. This may not be the case for the future as further cuts were to be made. Cambridgeshire Constabulary was working to maintain the same level of service even after the cuts. They had invested £1.3m on a programme which allowed databases to share information automatically, it was predicted that this database could be sold to other forces in future to generate income for the Constabulary.*

Cambridgeshire Constabulary was also working with Special Constables whilst trying to recruit more volunteer's schemes.

- *Members queried the progress to date with the Employers Supported Policing (ESP) Scheme. Members were advised that the take up for this scheme had not been very successful.*
- *Members queried what Serious Acquisitive Crime referred to. Members were informed that this type of crime referred to serious crimes such as grievous bodily harm or dwelling burglaries.*
- *Members asked if it would be possible for the police to be more active within Parishes to promote schemes available. Members were informed that an email had already been sent to Parishes to offer them support and advice and there had been no replies from Parishes.*
- *Members queried whether it would be possible for Parishes to increase the precept and employ a regular Officer for themselves. Members were advised that the Parish precept could be spent on whatever the Parishes decided, therefore this would be possible.*
- *Members queried how much would the crime rate would have to rise before more police would be recruited. Members were advised that Government set the funding and the Constabulary would have to work with what they had been granted.*
- *Members asked for a brief explanation on modern technology and agile working. Members were informed that modern technology and agile working referred to officers being able to start duty without having to attend a briefing, as they could now be briefed remotely. They could automatically be allocated to incidents and see where vulnerable people were likely to be, in order to carry out welfare checks. Officers could now produce electronic statements which were sent automatically to CPS files systems. There was also video capacity to avoid Officers having to describe incidents. This all contributed to saving Officer time and providing a better service.*

ACTION AGREED

The Commission agreed that:

- Sheila O'Brien's contact details would be circulated to Members;
- a briefing note would be circulated, reporting on the activities of the Local Action Group;
- Members would send questions regarding CIL to the Democratic Services Officer, to pass on to the Corporate Director for Growth and Regeneration. The Commission would then receive a briefing note with answers to their questions.

RECOMMENDATION

The Commission recommended to the Parish Council Liaison that the group encouraged Parish Councils to invite the Head of Community and Safety Services to their Parishes to give a presentation on the safety schemes available to help keep rural communities safe.

5. Forward Plan of Executive Decisions

The Commission received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, which contained key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Commission's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Commission noted the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decision and requested further information on the following decisions:

- Day Opportunities Under 65 Independent Sector Extension Contract

- Award of Contract for Build of a Waste Transfer Station
- Contract Award for Mental Health Employment, Wellbeing and Recovery Service
- Extension of the Green Deal Provider Framework and Expansion of the Green Deal Community Area Fund
- Peterborough Visitor Economy Strategy 2015 - 2020

6. Work Programme

Members considered the Commission's Work Programme for 2015/16 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

AGREED ACTION

The Commission noted and agreed the 2015/2016 work programme.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair advised the Commission that the next meeting was scheduled for Monday, 7 September 2015.

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8.11pm

CHAIRMAN