



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES  
HELD IN  
THE FORLI ROOM, TOWN HALL  
ON 11 JULY 2016**

**Present:** Councillors D Over (Chairman), R Brown (Vice Chairman),  
S Allen, H Fuller, D Fower, JR Fox, J Whitby

**Also Present:** Henry Clark Independent Co-opted Member  
Keith Lievesley Independent Co-opted Member  
Philip Nuttall Independent Co-opted Member

**Officers Present:** Gary Goose, Head of Community Services  
Paulina Ford, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Joe Dobson, Independent Co-opted Member.

**2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

**3. Minutes of Meeting held on 7 March 2016**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2016 were approved as an accurate record.

**4. Appointment of Co-opted Members**

The report was introduced by the Chairman. The purpose of the report was for the Commission to consider whether they would wish to retain the four Independent Co-opted Member positions appointed from the Parish Liaison Forum. The Chairman highlighted the following areas for discussion:

- The number of Co-opted Members and whether this should be retained at four.
- Where Co-opted Members should be recruited from and if the Parish Liaison Forum should nominate Members.
- Should Co-opted Members be recruited from a wider field, e.g. by advertising through the council website.
- Should other interested parties be invited to make nominations?
- If the Co-opted Members continue to be nominated from the Parish Liaison Forum should they solely be from rural parishes.
- How the original Members were recruited.
- Replacement of Members who leave mid-term.

Comments and observations were made around the following areas:

- Members felt that it was essential to continue with the four Co-opted Members from rural areas of the Parish Liaison Forum as their input had been invaluable to the work of the Rural Commission.
- It was suggested that the number of Co-opted Members could be increased however the Senior Democratic Services Officer advised the Commission that to increase the number from four per Scrutiny Committee would involve a change to the constitution.
- It was suggested that Co-opted Members could be recruited from other interest groups.
- Police attendance and community association member attendance was also raised.
- It was recognised that Parish Councils did have rural representation and this was helpful as the work of the Rural Commission was to represent rural communities. It was therefore important to nurture the relationship between the Parish Liaison Forum and the Rural Commission.
- One of the current Independent Co-opted Members present commented that he was the Chairman of the Parish Liaison Working Party that organised the agenda for the Parish Liaison meetings, the Parish Conference and monitored the urban Parish areas. The work of the Rural Commission would be explained at the next meeting of the Parish Liaison Forum and felt that it was important that any Co-opted Member of the Commission should be a representative of a rural parish.

Councillor Fuller, seconded by Councillor Fower recommended that the current number of four Independent Co-opted Members remain the same. A vote was taken and unanimously agreed.

Councillor Allen, seconded by Councillor Fuller recommended that the four Co-opted Members be nominated by the Parish Liaison Forum. A vote was taken and unanimously agreed.

Councillor Whitby, seconded by Councillor Fower recommended that if four Independent Co-opted Members were not forthcoming from the Parish Liaison Forum, the Community Capacity Manager should approach alternative organisations to seek nominations for the additional member(s). A vote was taken and unanimously agreed.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Commission agreed to retain four Independent Co-opted Members as part of the membership of the Commission with no voting rights for the 2016-2017 municipal year and that this arrangement be reviewed on an annual basis.
2. The Commission further recommended that the four Independent Co-opted Members be nominated by the Parish Liaison Forum and that if any or all of the nominations were not forthcoming then the Community Capacity Manager should seek nominations from other organisations.

## **5. Review of 2015/2016 and Future Work Programme 2016/17**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which provided the Committee with a review of work undertaken during 2015/16 and sought approval of the draft work programme for 2016/2017.

The Chairman went through Appendix 1, Recommendations made during 2015/2016 and sought views from the Committee on any recommendations that might require further monitoring. Members also considered the draft work programme for 2016/17 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

Discussion took place around the following areas:

- Concern was raised regarding the state of overgrown hedges and verges and it was highlighted that in some cases road signs were being obstructed and hidden from view due to the overgrowth of vegetation. Concern was expressed that the contractors Amey were not being thorough enough in the maintenance of these areas.
- Members requested that a briefing note be provided with details of the Amey contract which refers to the maintenance of rural verges and roadsides.
- Members suggested that the re-siting of signs, both directional and speed signs could improve safety by avoiding the overgrowth and consideration could be given to the long driving view when positioning road signs in future which would be an improvement moving forward.
- The Head of Community Services informed Members that a national road safety campaign was due to start which would focus on driving in rural areas and the hazards of driving on country roads.
- Emergency stopping places for travellers. The Head of Community Services advised Members that the arrangements for handling unauthorised encampments would be discussed at the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2016. There was currently one designated Emergency Stopping Place in the city.
- Superfast broadband had still not been provided to some rural areas and Members requested an update. It was noted that an item had been placed on the work programme for 7 November meeting covering this subject.
- An update on the Farms Estate Strategy action plan was requested and it was noted that an item had been placed on the work programme for the 7 November meeting.
- Devolution and the effect on rural communities and Parish Councils. It was noted that there was a public consultation underway and anyone could feed into this.
- Rural economy. The impact of the Leader Fund following Britain's decision to leave the EU in the short and medium term was discussed.
- School standards in rural areas.

### **ACTION AGREED**

The Committee noted the report and agreed the work programme for 2016/2017.

The Committee requested that the following briefing note be provided:

- Amey contract details regarding the maintenance of grass verges and hedgerows in rural areas.

### **6. Forward Plan of Executive Decisions**

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

### **AGREED ACTION**

The Commission noted the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions

The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 7.50pm.

CHAIRMAN

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