

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board

At 7.00 pm on Monday 27th November, 2023 in the
Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George St, Corby NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Gill Mercer (Chair)
Councillor Lyn Buckingham
Councillor Lora Lawman

Councillor Kevin Watt
Councillor Graham Lawman

Officers

Ben Smith (Head of Democratic Services/Statutory Scrutiny Officer)
Adele Wylie (Executive Director of Customer and Governance/Interim Deputy Chief Executive)

6 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

7 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023

Resolved that:-

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8 Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

9 Notification of requests to attend the meeting.

It was noted that there had been no requests to speak at the meeting.

10 Scrutiny Workplan - November 2023 Update

The Scrutiny Management Board considered the updated annual workplan for 2023/24, a copy of which is filed with the agenda, marked 'item 5'.

The Board discussed the proposed plan and made a number of minor amendments.

It also considered the Executive Forward Plan for September to December 2023, noting it would be an important tool to use to decide which items were of importance to exercise pre-scrutiny.

Following consideration of the proposed amendments to the Workplan, the Board then considered additional items that had been requested for Consideration at particular meetings of the scrutiny committees. Of those not already having been identified as being in the workplan, the following was agreed:-

- i) Green Burials (requested by Corporate Scrutiny Committee) – that this was a proposal that the Board considered most appropriate to be considered by the Executive Advisory Panel for Planning Communities or Sustainable Communities as it would require a policy development focus in the first instance to assess whether it was an appropriate subject for the Council to develop.

It was noted that a revised version of the Workplan, arising from comments made and setting out the changes agreed would be attached to the minutes of the meeting.

It was resolved that:-

That the Scrutiny Management Board:-

- (a) Notes the updated list of dates for when items included in the Workplan are to be considered;
- (b) Approves the second iteration of the Workplan attached at Appendix A, subject to the comments now made in respect of the current Executive Forward Plan and items generated by scrutiny committees.
- (c) Notes that the Workplan remains a living document which will be subject to review and may be updated further
 - i. to reflect the changing needs and priorities of scrutiny; and
 - ii. following consideration of items requested by the three scrutiny committees and individual councillors.

(Reason for Decisions – To meet the Constitutional requirements for the Scrutiny Management Board to demonstrate its strategic responsibility for the Scrutiny function, its overall responsibility for the direction and management of Scrutiny, and to fulfil its obligation to develop, approve and monitor the Annual Scrutiny Workplan.

(Alternative Options Considered – Not to update the Scrutiny Workplan - however this would not demonstrate the Board's strategic responsibility, or provide the necessary strategic direction to the three Scrutiny Committees.)

11 Scrutiny Training Programme

The Scrutiny Management Board considered a report setting out the recent training programme undertaken with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked as item 6.

The Board noted that a programme of scrutiny training had been provided during September and October 2023 targeting different skills and groups of scrutiny members.

The Board considered that the training provided had been comprehensive and wished to thank the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) for its support in providing training in the following areas:-

- The Essentials of Effective Strategic Scrutiny
- Questioning and Listening – Essential skills for Scrutiny Cllrs
- Chairing and Leading Scrutiny Committees
- Council Finance, Budget and Commercial Scrutiny
- Children’s Services and Safeguarding
- Health & Social Care Scrutiny

The Board expressed disappointment that more members of Scrutiny had not been able to attend the various training dates, but noted that those who had been unable to attend, that there was a further opportunity to attend some bite-sized scrutiny sessions undertaken jointly by East Midlands Councils and the CfGS, details of which had been circulated to all members of the Council. These sessions, running from the end of November 2023 to mid-January 2024 included:-

- Understanding Local Government Finance;
- Scoping and Managing Scrutiny Reviews;
- Questioning Skills for Elected Members.

In considering any further training for 2023/24, the Board considered that additional training should be explored around analysing data and the use and interpretation of performance indicators.

It was resolved that:-

That the Scrutiny Management Board:-

- (a) Notes and welcomes the recent programme of training undertaken;
- (b) Considers that it would be useful to complement the CfGS training with internal training by officers in respect of understanding local government data and performance indicators.

(Reason for Decisions – To meet the Constitutional requirements for the Scrutiny Management Board to demonstrate its strategic responsibility for the Scrutiny function, its overall responsibility for the direction and management of Scrutiny, and to fulfil its obligation to overseeing the co-ordination of scrutiny members’ learning and development.)

(Alternative Options Considered – Not to undertake or review the undertaking of effective training for scrutiny members - however this would not demonstrate the Board’s strategic responsibility, or provide the necessary skills to develop the ability of members to provide effective scrutiny of the Council’s processes.)

12 Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm