

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY SERVICES) COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, CORKS LANE, HADLEIGH ON TUESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2013

PRESENT: Mr J A B Long – Chairman

Mrs J Antill

Mr M Newman

Mr F R Lawrenson

Mrs A M Norman

Mr B D Hurren

Mr J M Owen

Mr J R A Sayers and Mr D L Wood were unable to be present.

20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Mr B D Hurren declared a non-pecuniary interest in the relevant part of the item referred to in Minute No 24 below in his capacity as a Director of The Quay Theatre and Chairman of the Board, but indicated that his interest was such that he was able to speak and vote on the matter concerned.

Mr J Owen declared a non-pecuniary interest in the relevant part of the item referred to in Minute No 24 below in his capacity as a member of the Car Park Group, but indicated that his interest was such that he was able to speak and vote on the matter concerned.

Mrs J Antill declared a non-pecuniary interest in the relevant part of the item referred to in Minute No 24 below in her capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Sudbury Citizens Advice Bureau, but indicated that her interest was such that she was able to speak and vote on the matter concerned.

Mrs A M Norman declared a non-pecuniary interest in the relevant part of the item referred to in Minute No 24 below in her capacity as the Council's representative on the Association of Suffolk Museums, but indicated that her interest was such that she was able to speak and vote on the matter concerned.

21 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

22 PETITIONS

None received.

23 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

None received.

24 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK AND 2013/14 DRAFT BUDGET

The Head of Corporate Resources submitted a report from the SFP Task Group ([Paper M127](#)) which was considered by Strategy Committee on 17 January 2013. A briefing note on Paper M127 from the Chairman of Strategy Committee and SFP Task Group was provided by the Corporate Manager – Financial Services at the meeting.

Members then scrutinised the contents of Paper M127 and it was noted that the views of both Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be reported to Strategy Committee at its meeting on 14 February 2013.

During consideration of this matter the following were among the points discussed:-

- Contracts – is the process of contract scrutiny robust enough? Is there a role for a Scrutiny Committee or the Procurement Task Group to scrutinise contracts in future? Reference was made to the specific issue of North Street Car Park in Sudbury and whether the car park really did need completely re-surfacing.
- Community Grants – the Committee felt strongly that consideration should be given to the use of the New Homes Bonus for community grants. It was felt that this would be entirely in line with the strategic vision and priorities that were currently being developed.
- Charity Shops – the Committee discussed the proliferation of charity shops within the district and asked for officers to review eligibility for rate relief. A question was also raised on reviewing discretionary rate relief and the reduction that was made a few years ago.
- Growth - There was a detailed debate about the nature and importance of growth, but Members offered differing views about the meaning of growth and the part it would play as part of the council's future vision. Members also noted the importance of making sure that the Council engaged with local businesses and was seen to be pro-active in enabling businesses to grow.
- Office space utilisation – the Committee commented on the available space in BDC offices and the accommodation strategy, noting that this was currently being reviewed.
- Car Parking – the matter of the net cost of car parking in the district was discussed at length. The following points were made:
 - Consider transferring the car parks to local businesses for them to take on responsibility for running them and bearing the cost.
 - Changing the free parking policy would not be a good idea and the net cost of the present policy was worth it for the business it supported.
 - The current system is confusing and difficult to understand for users.

- New Homes Bonus – using the New Homes Bonus to support the Budget generally was not seen as its best use and it was suggested that it should be used across a range of strategic priorities. It was also suggested that, although NHB could be used for building new (local needs) homes, the Council will be able to use the HRA self-financing funds also.

RESOLVED

That the information and recommendations contained in paper M127 be noted.

25 ANNUAL REPORT OF HAVEN GATEWAY PARTNERSHIP (HGP)

Councillor John Hinton, the Council's representative on the Partnership and the Strategic Director (Place) presented [Paper M139](#) providing Members with an overview of the issues tackled by the HGP in 2011/12 to enable them to scrutinise the work carried out.

It was noted that Strategy Committee had shown its support for the Ipswich Policy Area Board by approving the revised Terms of Reference at its meeting on 17 January 2013.

Following the presentation Councillor Hinton and the Strategic Director (Place) responded to various questions from Members regarding the work carried out and the future of the HGP.

RESOLVED

That the contents of Paper M139 be noted.

26 WORK PLAN

The Head of Corporate Organisation submitted a report ([Paper M143](#)) which provided details of the Committee's anticipated work for the remainder of 2012/13.

RESOLVED

That the Work Plan submitted as Paper M143 be noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 12.05 p.m.

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Chairman