

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**TUESDAY, 5 APRIL 2011
2.00 PM**



COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Robert Hearmon
Councillor David Higgs
Councillor Trevor Holmes
Councillor Kenneth Joynson

Councillor Mrs Rosemary Kaberry-
Brown
Councillor Bob Russell
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor Mike Williams

PORTFOLIO HOLDER : Councillor Mrs Francis Cartwright (Economic
Development)

OFFICERS

Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Lucy Youles)
Principal Democracy Officer (Jo Toomey)
Head of Assets (Paul Stokes)
Head of Development and Growth (Mark Willeats)
Performance, Consultations and Communications Service Manager (Sharon
Yates)
Private Sector Housing Team Leader (Julie Hanson)
Energy Officer (Kevin Munford)

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

36. ACTION NOTES - 22 FEBRUARY 2011

The action notes of the meeting held on 22 February 2011 were
agreed as a correct record.

37. UPDATES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

The Head of Assets attended the meeting to update Committee Members
about the Cellar Bar at Stamford Arts Centre. When the franchise was due
to expire, the Council explored different options for the Cellar Bar. The

options considered the needs of the different groups who used Stamford Arts Centre and the Cellar Bar. Some users did not like going to a bar downstairs; there were also accessibility problems. A temporary bar was installed in the gallery.

Consultation, which received approximately 650 responses, revealed that a lot of users liked the Cellar Bar but they also liked the ground floor bar. Interim arrangements were put in place for the current franchisee to run both bars until the new franchise went out for formal tendering. The tender would be for the Cellar Bar and the Gallery Bar. It was anticipated this process would take six to twelve months.

Members asked questions about the practicality of running a temporary bar from the Gallery and transporting stock. They were also concerned about security and safety implications. The Head of Assets assured Members that all alcohol and the till were removed from the Gallery when the bar was not in use. He also confirmed that the arrangements were compliant with the requirements of statutory agencies named within the Licensing Act 2003, including Lincolnshire Police and Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised the Committee that the Council had received a petition of 1,172 signatories who were against the introduction of the Gallery Bar. The petition did not have a sufficient number of signatories for referral to the Scrutiny Committee, but it was forwarded to the relevant officer who provided a response in accordance with the Petition Scheme. The Committee were happy with the way arrangements for the Cellar Bar were progressing.

38. QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT - GOOD FOR BUSINESS

The Committee welcomed the Performance, Consultations and Communications Service Manager and the Head of Development and Growth. They had before them the Quarter 3 Performance report, which concentrated on the Council's priority theme: good for business. Members discussed each of the aims within the theme:

Sustainable growth through the promotion of key town centre sites for new retail facilities and high quality office accommodation in Grantham and Bourne, and new housing in Grantham

Members questioned why development had only been earmarked for Grantham and Bourne. The development in Bourne was ongoing work on the Bourne Core Area. Both the district and the county councils acknowledged the importance of Grantham as the second-largest town in the county but identified that it was not performing as it should. Both authorities committed through the Grantham Growth project to improve Grantham and get it to the standard of a sub-regional centre. A significant project to enhance Stamford town

centre (the Gateway project) had already been completed.

Members recognised the importance of Grantham, but felt that no one place should be developed to the detriment of any of the others. The Economic Development Portfolio Holder told the Committee about the business innovation centre in the Deepings, which was proving popular. It was hoped a similar centre would open in Grantham, which would help meet demand for small units. The Portfolio Holder also advised that if the shop front scheme that was being piloted in Grantham was successful, it would be rolled out across the district.

Committee members suggested that the people of Grantham were cynical of developments due to take place, following plans drawn up and promises made in the past. A Grantham festival was the first step in engaging the public and making a difference to the town's ambience. Members commended the event that took place in Grantham on Saturday 2 April 2011, which had successfully met its aims: increasing footfall in Grantham town centre and bringing a feel-good factor to the town. It was hoped this event would help gain the support of residents for the improvements due to take place in the town. To further combat cynicism amongst residents, the Committee suggested that when a scheme was completed, it should receive a significant media push.

Members recalled the successful folk and food festival that used to take place annually in the grounds of Belton House. Following the success of the first Grantham Festival, a Gravity science and arts festival was planned for 2012. This would grow to incorporate fringe events in towns and villages throughout the district.

Create an up-to-date Core Strategy for future development

The growth ambitions across the district relied on clarity about where development should and should not occur. In 2010 the Core Strategy for development was adopted. It provides a very clear steer for developers and the public about what their expectations should be in terms of land use. Beneath the core strategy was the area action plan for Grantham and site specific documents, which were all on track to be inspected in 2012.

With any significant developments, the developers were required to ensure sufficient infrastructure. This was achieved through Section 106 Agreements which secured contributions towards infrastructure enhancement and/or creation. For major developments like the

Southern Quadrant, a full masterplan was required, showing the infrastructure and the proposed shape of the development.

Members of the Committee who also sat on the Development Control Committee stressed the importance of the planning policy documents. They also stated that recently a number of developers had requested the Committee reconsider the terms of their Section 106 Agreements. Members commended the work that had been done by the S.106 officer and were pleased that the Council was giving the role the support it needed.

Promotion of South Kesteven as a key location for new business investment

This aim focused on encouraging businesses into the district. Any businesses that contacted the council were signposted to the people who could help them. The service received by businesses was being redesigned so they could speak directly to the economic development team rather than going through the planning team.

Support for existing business to maintain employment and a balanced local economy

There was a lot of work that was being undertaken with schools and colleges around young enterprise. The Portfolio Holder also highlighted that Grantham's business awards had recently taken place. The council had also been involved in supporting the apprenticeship scheme through local colleges by helping apprentices get the tools for their trades.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Yates and Mr Willeats for attending the meeting and commended officers for preparing an excellent report.

15:10-15:15 The meeting was adjourned. Councillor Mrs Kaberry-Brown left the meeting and did not return.

39. AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY

At their meeting on 22 February 2011, the Committee agreed it would like to scrutinise a decision taken by Cabinet that had been implemented. The decision selected for post-decision scrutiny was the Lincolnshire Affordable Warmth Strategy. The Chairman welcomed the Council's Energy Officer and the Team Leader for Private Sector Housing. They explained about the strategy and addressed Members' questions.

The strategy was officially launched in October 2010 and was supported by all districts in Lincolnshire. The key feature of the strategy was the HELP (Home Energy Lincs Partnership) Scheme, which offered reduced price cavity wall and loft insulation for residents in Lincolnshire. The implementation of this scheme took a two-pronged approach: (1) targeting areas that were identified because of levels of fuel poverty; and (2) self-referral.

Four Wards were targeted, in which 4,600 properties were approached. Anyone else in the district who was interested in participating in the scheme could call a free phone telephone number. In total, installations had been completed in 1,111 households in the district, the highest of all the local authority areas in Lincolnshire.

The scheme had funding of £1.75m across the county. £550,000 had been spent and a further £227,000 had been committed. The funding would run until it had been exhausted, which was anticipated to take approximately two years. The HELP scheme had proved more successful than similar projects that had run in the district, however, no actual comparative figures were available. Lincolnshire County Council was identifying the demographic profile of those people who had taken advantage of the scheme.

To ensure the best possible take-up, letters were sent to all properties in areas identified as having the highest levels of fuel poverty. These were followed up by representatives going house-to-house. The Council also had an officer who attended events to promote the scheme. A lot of interest had developed through word-of-mouth.

Councillors raised concerns about companies trying to piggy-back the scheme and take advantage of residents. Officers reassured the Committee that assessors would be identifiable by their hi-vis jackets bearing the HELP logo. Their visits would be pre-dated by the mailshot sent out in that area. If the council becomes aware of any companies trying to use the scheme, it will look into them and take action to ensure they are not mis-selling products and services.

Councillors praised the scheme and thanked the officers for attending the meeting.

40. IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCRUTINY

As this was their last meeting before the election, Members decided

they would like to leave some advice and guidance for the incoming Scrutiny Committee. The group acknowledged the importance of the external scrutiny that had taken place and suggested that a further project could include drug use in South Kesteven (as part of its crime and disorder scrutiny function) – scrutinising trends, the services available and their accessibility and ensuring people receive the right advice. Following recent trends in other similar towns across the country, ketamine use was of particular concern.

Members also discussed increasing the level of internal scrutiny – holding the Cabinet to account and ensuring the district council is providing excellent services and meeting its aims.

The suggestion was made that the Committee look at local governance structures and arrangements and whether they proved effective for the residents of the district.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that work was being undertaken on the role and function of the policy development groups. Members were invited to submit their thoughts. The consensus was that scrutiny should continue to stand-alone and that policy development groups' work should focus on policy development. Any areas for scrutiny should be referred to the Scrutiny Committee. Members were also invited to submit any suggestions about improving the Scrutiny Handbook.

41. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Stamford College – Issues around travel subsidies for accessing higher education was not exclusive to Lincolnshire; it had become an issue nationally.

Bourne Youth Centre – At the last meeting of the Committee, Councillor Mrs Smith reported that Lincolnshire County Council were restructuring the provision of Children's Services, which would impact on Bourne Youth Centre. A meeting was held on 7 March 2011 with a number of local groups including two Rotary Clubs, the Len Pick Trust and the Roundtable. However, as the consultation on the County Council's consultation exercise was not scheduled to conclude until the end of April, the youth centre management committee did not feel able to develop any strategies for future provision.

Citizen's Advice Bureau – Councillor Holmes reported that despite appearing to retain all its funding in the budget papers, the CAB was now being charged £6,000 rent, which meant a slight reduction in funding. He suggested the incoming Council monitor the level of

funding that is being provided by the district council. Third sector organisations in the county are producing budgets based on assumptions, which could mean putting services for the elderly and vulnerable at great risk.

42. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, DECIDES IS URGENT

The Chairman thanked committee members and officers for their support and making the Committee so enjoyable. He was particularly pleased that the Committee came together and considered issues in a productive, apolitical environment.

Councillor Joynson was thanked for his Chairmanship, both by the Committee Members and on behalf of the Executive.

43. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 16:03.