
MEETING	SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CALLING IN)
DATE	26 MARCH 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS RUNCIMAN (VICE-CHAIR, IN THE CHAIR), BARNES, KING, MCILVEEN, POTTER, GILLIES (SUB FOR CLLR GALVIN), RICHARDSON (SUB FOR CLLR STEWARD) AND WATSON (SUB FOR CLLR CUNNINGHAM-CROSS)
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLORS AYRE, BARTON, CRISP AND REID
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS GALVIN, CUNNINGHAM- CROSS AND STEWARD

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Potter declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of the called-in report, as she was employed in the voluntary sector by an organisation who had made bids to a number of ward committees.

46. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that no members of the public had registered to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

47. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last Scrutiny Management Committee(Calling In) meeting held on 30 January 2012 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record

48. CALLED-IN ITEM: NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING - A NEW APPROACH

Members received a report which asked them to consider the provisional decisions made by Cabinet at their meeting held on 6 March 2012. The report sought members' approval for a new model of Neighbourhood Working through which the Council would work with partners to deliver better services for York's communities.

Details of the Cabinet's provisional decisions were attached as Annex A to the report with the original report to the Cabinet attached as Annex B. The provisional decisions had initially been called in by Councillors Runciman, Reid and Ayre, on the grounds that:

- (i) There has been a complete lack of consultation with stakeholders, including ward councillors and ward organisations such as Parish Councils. The results of consultations should be clearly reported.*
- (ii) The potential effect of the measures being suggested to neighbourhood working across the city mean that any decision on the future of this report should be taken by all members, given the impact it will have on all communities in the city.*
- (iii) The report does not take into account the continual running costs of present projects (such as the cost of salt bins already in place), and the effect they might have on future budgets.*
- (iv) Options other than the proposed 'Community Contracts' concept have not been properly proposed or discussed.*

Following the provisional Cabinet decision, Councillors Barton, Healey and Galvin had then also called in the item, post decision, on the grounds of:

- (i) Lack of consultation with Parish Councils and Ward Members, and the potential effect lack of grants will have on the future of local organisations.*

- (ii) *Challenge to the assumption the new system will be non-bureaucratic. (Paragraph 8).*
- (iii) *Opposition to a non elected organisation distributing public money by way of grants previously voted upon by residents.*
- (iv) *Lack of information regarding the effect of double taxation following the implementation of the scheme.*

Members were asked to decide whether to confirm the provisional decisions (Option i) or to refer them back to the Cabinet for re-consideration (Option ii).

Cllr Reid addressed the meeting on behalf of the pre-decision Calling-In Members. She expanded on the four reasons given for the call-in pointing out that the new approach would not deliver a better service as it appeared that residents would no longer be consulted on budget decisions affecting their wards. She questioned how priorities could be proposed in community contracts without a budget. No indication had been given of how residents views would be taken into account when monies were allocated.

Councillor Ayre confirmed that there were a number of good ideas in the new approach however this appeared to be a flawed policy which would damage the city and its residents. He questioned how the Council for Voluntary Service could undertake additional work with reduced funding and similarly with staffing reductions how would any proposals be delivered. Reductions in the number of ward meetings however would not assist residents in attending meetings and he pointed out that the report failed to address the financial implications of any changes.

Cllr Barton then addressed the meeting on behalf of the post decision Calling-In Members. He pointed out that across the country there was increasing transparency and development of decision making to local levels which was not being reflected in York. These proposals diluted the involvement of elected ward members with the transfer of more responsibility to officers and unelected bodies. He went on to refer to the lack of consultation with Parish Council's and Ward Members on the proposals not allowing them the opportunity to any make suggestions.

Cllr Crisp, the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion, referred to the reasons for the call in, particularly the lack of consultation. She pointed out that some useful approaches had been identified from the area working pilot undertaken last year which had provided input into the new model of working. She reminded members that the Fairness Commission had recommended that ward budgets should no longer be continued in their current form. In order for members to work with their communities it was proposed to provide service delivery through new Community Contacts which would provide clear channels, and streamline officer roles. It was reiterated that the current systems were wasteful in terms in terms of budgets and staff and that the new scheme focussed on real issues and directed money where it was most needed.

Members questioned the Cabinet Member in relation to a number of points including, how ward budgets would be allocated, concern at the impact in wards where grant support would not continue for youth clubs, rural Post Offices etc. and details of any consultation with Parish Councils.

Officers responded to the points made, confirming that there would be sufficient staff to ensure that the new model worked, allowing time for engagement and support for communities. It was emphasised that the new model would provide additional accountability and focus for all concerned.

After a full debate, it was

RESOLVED: That Option (i) be approved and that the provisional decisions of the Cabinet be confirmed.

REASON: In accordance with the requirements of the Council's Constitution.

Cllr J Galvin, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.55 pm].