

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

MEETING	SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CALLING IN)
DATE	31 MARCH 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS BLANCHARD (VICE-CHAIR), KIRK, R WATSON, MOORE, SIMPSON-LAING, SCOTT AND TAYLOR
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLOR GALVIN (AS CALLING-IN MEMBER)

10. 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.

Cllr Taylor declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 (Called-in Item: Ward Committee Local Improvement Schemes Grant Applications), as a member of the Advisory Panel that had advised the Executive Member on the original decision on this item, and having expressed a view at the EMAP meeting. He remained in the room during the discussion on this item and participated in the debate, but did not take part in the vote.

11. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

12. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Scrutiny Management Committee (Calling In) meeting held on 21 December 2007 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

13. CALLED IN ITEM: WARD COMMITTEE LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES GRANT APPLICATIONS

Members received a report which asked them to consider the decision taken by the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, at a meeting of the Executive Member and Advisory Panel (EMAP) on 19 March 2008, on proposed changes to the grant application policy for Ward Committee Local Improvement Schemes.

The Executive Member's decision had been included on the decision list published on the Council's website after the EMAP meeting, a copy of which was attached as Annex A to the report. The original report, on which the decision had been based, was attached as Annex B. In summary, the Executive Member had decided to approve the proposed changes to the grant application policy, subject to some minor amendments and the preparation of an abbreviated form for schemes under £500. That decision

had been called in by Cllrs Gillies, Galvin and Watt, for the following reason:

“We feel that the new rules etc. will inhibit smaller community groups from applying and in more general terms we think it to be very bureaucratic and [that] it almost takes away some discretion of Ward Members.”

Members were invited to consider the following options in respect of the called-in decision:

Option A – to confirm the decision of the Executive Member

Option B – to refer the decision back to the Executive Member for them to re-consider or amend it in part.

Cllr Galvin addressed the meeting on behalf of the Members who had called in the decision. He commented that the application form and guidance for Ward Committee grants appeared designed to inhibit smaller groups from applying for small amounts and was too prescriptive and bureaucratic. Providing the necessary advice on the forms would unduly increase the workload of staff. The system also sent the message that ward councillors could not be trusted.

After the matter had been debated Cllr Kirk moved, and Cllr Watson seconded, that Option A be approved and the decision of the Executive Member confirmed. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared lost.

Cllr Scott then moved, and Cllr Simpson-Laing seconded, that Option B be approved and the decision referred back to the Executive Member, with a recommendation that a final decision on the proposed changes to the Ward Committee local improvement schemes grant application process be deferred until such time as the forms and guidance notes had been sufficiently revised to enable Members to give them proper consideration. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried and it was

RESOLVED: That Option B be approved and the decision referred back to the Executive Member, with a recommendation that a final decision on the proposed changes to the Ward Committee local improvement schemes grant application process be deferred until such time as the forms and guidance notes had been sufficiently revised to enable Members to give them proper consideration.

REASON: In accordance with the requirements of the Council's Constitution in respect of called in decisions.

P Blanchard, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.05 pm and finished at 5.55 pm].