

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 21st October,
2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jane Potter (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joe Baker, Michael Braley (substituting for Councillor Paul Swansborough), David Bush, Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy, Alan Mason, Nina Wood-Ford (substituting for Councillor Pat Witherspoon)

Also Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism)

Officers:

J Godwin, S Hanley, J Pickering, L Tompkin, C Walker, J Willis and A Wyre

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley A Scarce

35. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Swansborough and Pat Witherspoon with Councillors Mike Braley and Nina Wood-Ford attending as substitutes.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillor Jane Potter declared an other discloseable interest in respect of Minute No.45, the update on the work of the Proposals for Change by Tudor Grange Academy Short, Sharp Review. She left the room and took no part in the discussions about this update.

Councillor David Bush also declared an other discloseable interest in respect of Minute No.45, as a member of the board of governors at the Walkwood Middle School, part of the pyramid group which would be affected by the changes proposed by Tudor Grange Academy. He left the room and took no part in the discussions about this update.

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Chair

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In light of the Chair having to leave the room it was noted that the Vice Chair would preside over the relevant part of Minute No. 45.

Councillor Andrew Fry declared an other discloseable interest in Minute No. 40 Fees and Charges Report, due to his personal family connection to the Head of Community Services.

37. MINUTES

Officers reminded Members that they had received two emails since the last meeting in respect of the request for an update on defibrillators. Members discussed where the defibrillators had been installed and who had funded them. Officers confirmed that this matter had originally been referred to the Health and Safety Committee and a number had been sited at the Leisure Centres, with others being installed at the Town Hall and Palace Theatre. These had been funded by the Council, though defibrillators had also been donated for free by the West Midlands Ambulance Service.

Members were reminded that this issue had been raised following receipt of correspondence by Councillor Bush, in his capacity as the former Chair of the Committee, from a resident. It had been reported to Members that the Leader had made a pledge to provide defibrillators and as it was not clear to Members from the information received, whether this pledge had been made further clarification was requested from the Leader.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd September 2014, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

38. FREE SWIMMING DISCUSSION

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism, supported by Officers, responded to the pre-prepared questions that the Committee had provided.

Members were provided with details of the uptake of free swimming and it was explained that this was made available by the use of cards by those wishing to take advantage of the facility. The service had originally been instigated by central government for a short period and then reintroduced by the Council in more recent years. The Committee discussed the benefits of free swimming for both age groups and highlighted that in respect of the over 60s the

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attraction was not always about exercise as swimming could also be a social activity. It was difficult to pinpoint whether the service had encouraged more people to go swimming as the current system used did not provide enough detailed information on this subject. It was acknowledged that the system in place needed to be refreshed in order to provide more useful analytical data.

The following areas were discussed in more detail:

- Sports England's survey and whether the data could be used.
- The Sports England 3 x 30 minute indicator, which it was understood had been reduced to 1 x 30 minute session of sport.
- The increased figures for those participating in 1 x 30 minute session.
- How the service was publicised and whether the awareness of the service was reaching those who would benefit from it the most.

Members asked Officers to provide the following information:

- detailed usage figures for the period pre and post the cancelled central government funded scheme;
- the usage figures for the Council funded scheme based on monthly report broken down into financial years.
- a postcode analysis of the card sales for the period to show what locations the cards were purchased from.

The Committee also agreed that further promotion of the service should be considered by the Leisure Team to ensure that residents were aware of this option.

In respect of the impact of free swimming provision on public health and tackling obesity locally the Committee were informed that Redditch had seen an increase in the Active People Survey results and specifically there had been an increase in adults aged 16 or more participating in swimming activities at least once a week. This in turn had raised awareness of the Abbey Stadium and the other facilities that were available. Officers had been contacted by older people who wanted to get more active. They had been signposted either to suitable sessions at the Abbey Stadium or to community sessions such as the Falls Intervention. The recent Local Health Profiles for Redditch had shown a decrease in hip fractures for people aged 65 and over, an increase in levels of physical activity amongst adults and a reduction in early death from health related diseases.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the information provided be noted; and**

2) the additional information requested during the meeting be provided and circulated for the consideration of Members.

39. FUTURE YEARS FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 - PRE-SCRUTINY

Officers delivered a presentation which provided an overview of the proposals to ensure that the Committee were more involved, than in previous years, in scrutiny of the budget. The scrutiny process would assist in driving improvements in budget setting and transparency.

The following areas were also covered within the presentation:

- How the budget setting process was decided.
- The use of the Council's strategic purposes in the breakdown of the budget to ensure that a clear picture of proposed spending and measures in place to support each service..
- Lessons learned and the impact in future years.
- The use of the transformation process in order to redesign services and make savings.

Key dates were also provided which highlighted when specific reports would be considered.

Following the presentation Members discussed their disappointment as they had understood that they would have been considering more detailed information about the budget and not just the process for future meetings. During this discussion the following issues were raised:

- The findings and issues raised within the Council's Audit Report.
- The linking of the strategic purposes to more detailed budget information.
- The lack of a three financial year plan
- The ongoing transformation of services and whether all service interventions had been completed. It was suggested that for Members interested in this attendance at the forthcoming Shared Services Board meeting would provide further information and business case proposals.

The Chairman was concerned that with an already heavy work programme, particularly at its meeting on 24th November, the Committee would have insufficient time to carry out an in depth scrutiny of the Council's budget. It was therefore suggested that an additional meeting be set up to cover the budget items only.

RESOLVED that

officers arrange an additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th November 2014, commencing at 6.30 pm, to scrutinise the Council's budget.

40. FEES AND CHARGES REPORT - PRE-SCRUTINY

Members received the Fees and charges Report for pre-scrutiny and were advised that the Heads of Service had been invited to attend and would highlight any fees and charges which had increased outside of the standard 3 per cent. It was anticipated that these new rates would be set with effect from 1st January 2015 and in future would be reviewed every calendar year as opposed to financial year. The average 3 per cent increase would provide a total income of around £100,000 which would be included within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Leisure and Cultural Services

Officers highlighted a number of areas where an increase of slightly more than 3 per cent had been put in place and informed Members that often this was purely to round up (or in a small number of cases down) the amounts charged to make this manageable, particularly for reception at the leisure centres, when providing people with change. A number of items in respect of block booking had increased by around 5 per cent, and it was explained that as these bookings involved between 10-12 people, the increase per head equated to only a relatively small amount.

Members questioned the increase in Swimming Lessons, particularly those for Juniors, in light of a recent water related fatality. It was felt that by holding the price of at least the Junior Swimming Lessons that the Council could show that they were acknowledging the concerns around water safety and acting on them. The Committee discussed whether the potential to make no increase had been considered and the role of the schools in teaching young people to swim. Officers explained that under Key Stage 2 there was a level of competence which pupils were expected to reach (to be able to swim 25m). It was understood that the schools had various funding streams available to them to provide this activity, but each school had different arrangements and it was often the cost of transporting pupils to the swimming baths, which had an impact on the lessons they provided. It was believed that parents often used the swimming lessons provided by the Council to supplement those provided by the schools.

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The following areas were highlighted and discussed in respect of Leisure and Cultural Services fees and charges:

- The use of the rounding up and rounding down process.
- Charges for Sports Development services in order for people to be given the opportunity to participate in leisure activities in the community.
- The new pricing policy for community centres implemented in order to encourage new groups to develop and grow by initially paying a reduced rate. A sampling exercise had been carried out as part of this process.
- Increase in allotment charges. It was confirmed that discussions with users and allotment groups had taken place.
- Increase in civic suite commercial charges and the overhead costs incurred when hired out at the weekend.
- Reduced hire rates for community groups.

Community Services

The Committee was informed that all increases were within the 3 per cent threshold. It was noted that there had not been an increase in the fees for the Dial a Ride service. Members were advised that it had been agreed with service users that an increase would be implemented every three years in line with inflation.

Environmental Services

Officers highlighted the following points within the report:

- For the bulky household waste service an instant quote could be provided.
- The lack of space within the cemetery. There was confusion in respect of the interment of cremated remains and Officers agreed to provide further clarification for Members outside of the meeting.
- Reduction in charge for use of chapel for burial service at off peak times.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Officers highlighted the following matters in relation to the fees and charges for Worcestershire Regulatory Services:

- The increases for Pet Shops, Dog Breeding and Animal Boarding were 6 per cent and this was to ensure they were comparable with the rates charged by the rest of the County.

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- In respect of Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles a charge had been introduced for the Knowledge Test to cover administration.
- The remainder of the charges were set by statute and therefore no changes had been made.

Corporate, Customer Access and Legal and Democratic Services

Members were informed that there were no changes to the Corporate Charges. In respect of the Customer Access and Financial Support charges, Surveyors Fees had increased by 3.9 per cent to reflect the cost of the service.

It was highlighted that there was now a charge for a Deed of Variation which referred to complex s106 agreements and this charge had not previously been made.

Housing Services

Officers informed Members that there were no significant changes to the charges for Housing Services other than those in respect of St David's House, which had previously been agreed.

Planning and Regeneration

Officers highlighted the following matters:

- The move to charging the actual cost of providing documents, for example the schedule of buildings of local interest for less than the current cost.
- The availability of documents via the internet free of charge.
- The inclusion of an additional charge in respect of domestic extensions to a single building. This charge related to the need to employ an outside contractor to certify for example electric work which had not been fitted by a professional electrician.
- The increase in charges for archived applications was above 3 per cent and due to remote storage of these documents.
- Members were reminded that the Building Control department was not able to either make a loss or a profit from the charges it made for services.

In respect of recommendation 2 in the main report, Officers explained that due to the commercial nature of the business of Leisure and Cultural Services by granting the Head of Service delegated powers to change the fees it enabled him to ensure that for example the Sports Hall at the Abbey Stadium could be utilised

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at a reduced rate on a Friday evening, thereby allowing the Council to maximise usage of the facility.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the rate for Junior Swimming Lessons remain at the current 2014/15 rate;**
- 2) the fees and charges for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix 1-9 of the report be approved, subject to the recommendation detailed above, other than in the cases where;**
 - (a) Fees or charges are statutory,**
 - (b) Fees and charges are set externally, or**
 - (c) Other Council approved circumstances apply; and**
- 3) the Head of Leisure and Cultural Service be given delegation to alter the leisure fees and charges by a variation of up to 30%.**

41. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER - UPDATE REPORT

Officers provided a number of further updates in respect of the tracker, which had been received following publication of the agenda:

- Access for Disabled People Task Group – The disabilities awareness training had taken place as part of the Equalities training on 18th September. Unfortunately there had been a disappointing turnout for this, with only three Members attending.
- Abbey Stadium Task Group's Recommendation 1 - Members were advised that the Executive Committee had also agreed the amended wording in respect of therapeutic services and a sauna and steam room. This would be included in the next tracker report.
- Abbey Stadium Task Group's Recommendation 6 – A further update had been received and Members were advised that it was anticipated that the new displays would be in place by 5th November.
- Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group's Recommendation 4 - Human Resources had confirmed that they were in negotiations with the local college and were currently working on a job description and person specification for the suggested apprentice post.
- Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group's Recommendation 8 - Whilst support had been given to this

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recommendation by the Executive Committee Officers had highlighted a number of concerns which could potentially mean that it was not practical to have a new staff award for voluntary work carried out by staff.

- Football Provision Task Group final report – The recommendation from the group had been agreed by Executive Committee and would be included within the next tracker report.

Following this additional update Members discussed the following areas in more detail:

- The use of “smiley faces” and that consideration should be given to amending these for some of the recommendations following the updates received.
- Arts and Culture Task Group - the possibility of an Arts Centre being established and whether it was realistic for this recommendation to remain on the tracker.
- Landscaping Task Group’s Recommendation 1 - the invitation for members to visit the Place Team and whether this had been taken up by any Members.
- Landscaping Task Group’s Recommendations 6 and 7 - It was understood that these had been suggested by officers and Members requested further information as to the feasibility of implementing these recommendations in the current climate before deciding whether they should remain on the tracker.
- Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group and the new staff award for voluntary work carried out by staff. After discussion it was agreed that this would remain on the tracker in order to provide the Chair of the Task Group with an opportunity to consider the response from officers.
- Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group’s Recommendation 9 in respect of the Redditch Hour on twitter. The Committee was advised that the Executive committee had suggested that the Redditch Town Centre Partnership should be asked to facilitate the launch of the Redditch Hour but the partnership had declined this offer. Following discussions Members agreed it would be appropriate to suggest that the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) would be a more suitable facilitator for it.
- Market Task Group – as there had been concerns raised about the lack of action on these recommendations a separate report would be received by the Committee at its meeting on 24th November.
- Whilst it was acknowledged that the Executive Committee had approved the Abbey Stadium Task Group’s recommendation in respect of the potential for a trust to manage the Council’s

leisure facilities, Members requested clarification as to when this review was expect to take place.

After further discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that

the Executive Committee ask the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) to facilitate the launch of a Redditch Hour on social media.

RESOLVED that

subject to the information requested in the preamble above being provided by the relevant officers, the report be noted.

**42. JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES (WRS)
SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee was provided with an update on the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee's response to the recommendations which had been put forward by the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Scrutiny Task Group in its Final Report. Members were advised that the recommendations had been considered by all the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the County and had been agreed by all but one (Wyre Forest District Council).

At the Joint Committee's meeting held on 2nd October the final report had been presented for its consideration by the Chair and Vice Chair. Recommendations 1 to 5 had been approved, and had referred recommendation 11 to the Executive committees at partner authorities for approval. In respect of recommendations 7 to 10 the Joint Committee had requested officers to bring forward alternative proposals to address the issues which had been raised.

Recommendation 6 had been addressed at a previous Joint Committee meeting when they had discussed alternative financial arrangements and recommendation 12 had been agreed and required action by partners' Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED that

the Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group Update Report be noted.

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43. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

Officers confirmed that the Executive Committee had considered the Football Provision Task Group's final recommendation and had approved it. It had also considered an amendment to the Abbey Stadium Task Group Task Group's recommendation in respect of Therapeutic Services and Sauna/steam room to be included within its remit when exploring the option for a Leisure Trust, and this had also been approved.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 8th September and the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

44. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

subject to the addition of a meeting to scrutinise the budget, as detailed in Minute No. 39, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.

45. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

Proposals for Change by Tudor Grange Academy Short, Sharp Review – Chair, Councillor Pat Witherspoon

As Councillor Witherspoon was unable to attend the meeting she had provided a written update on the work of the group. Councillor Carol Gandy also provided further information in respect of the following:

- The group had met with representatives of Tudor Grange Academy.
- The group had also interviewed the local M.P. and Councillor Rebecca Blake who had played an integral part in the petition.
- A representative of the Redditch Democratic Alliance had also been invited to attend a meeting, but had chosen to provide a written response.

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Councillor Gandy confirmed that the Group remained on track to bring their final report to the 24th November meeting.

(Prior to consideration of this update Councillor Potter declared an other disclosable interest in the subject as a school governor at Tudor Grange Academy. Councillor Bush also declared an other discloseable interest in this update as a school governor at Walkwood Middle School, part of the pyramid group which would be affected by the changes proposed by Tudor Grange Academy. They both left the room during consideration of this update and did not take part in the discussions).

Tackling Obesity – Chair, Councillor Jane Potter

Councillor Potter confirmed that the group had met on several occasions and at the last meeting had looked at data and health profiles for the County including levels of obesity and diabetes. This data had shown a slight improvement in obesity levels but a steep increase in Type 2 Diabetes. The group had also formulated some questions for leisure services Officers and public health representatives from Worcestershire County Council and were aiming to interview them at forthcoming meetings.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

46. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

In the absence of Councillor Pat Witherspoon, the Council's representative on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) a written update had been provided. The update referred to specific issues which had been discussed during the meeting. To help clarify the outcome of these discussions it was suggested that the minutes of the HOSC meeting should be circulated to Members.

RESOLVED that

Officers circulate the minutes of the HOSC meeting to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.