

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 1st April, 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Bush (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon

Also Present:

Councillor Michael Braley

Officers:

S Hanley, M Hanwell, S Jones and C Walker

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

118. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Alan Mason.

119. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

120. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

121. MEMBERS' IT - PRESENTATION

Officers delivered a presentation, attached at Appendix 1, which covered the following areas:

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Chair

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- Background information in respect of the Public Services Network (PSN) and steps which the Council had taken in order to achieve compliance.
- Ongoing inspections/audits of the IT systems by representatives of the Cabinet office.
- The introduction of managed devices, which are owned and secured and can only be used for Council business.
- The continued updating of the Council's systems and the upgrading of the Microsoft software programmes.
- The impact of PSN on Members' use of IT, including the introduction of iPads.
- The costs incurred by the Council and the decision to introduce iPads.

Officers also responded to queries which had been received from a number of Councillors in respect of problems with the IT system which they had encountered over recent months. It was anticipated that these would be largely resolved with the introduction of the new iPads. It was acknowledged that printing could be an issue, as following the introduction of iPads and under the PSN compliance it was not possible for Members to have a printing facility at home. There would, however, be a print facility made available in each political party Group Room at the Town Hall.

Following the presentation, Members raised and discussed the following:

- The accessibility of social networks. These were used regularly by Members in order to communicate with their constituents.
- The use of modern.gov to access meeting minutes and agendas electronically.
- The use of the iPad for other areas of Members' work, for example as a County Councillor, a Magistrate and a School Governor.
- The continuous changes in technology and the ability to upgrade the iPads after a two year period.

RESOLVED that

the presentation be noted.

122. FOOTBALL TASK GROUP - INTERIM REPORT

Councillor Bush, as Chair of the Football Task Group, informed Members that the Interim Report had been prepared in order to clarify the position with regard to Redditch United Football Club (FC).

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The Task Group had reviewed the business case put forward in more detail and raised the following points:

- The Council was bound by EU law which prohibited the use of public funds to support a private entity and required it to put any development of a new stadium out to tender.
- The Council was in a difficult position as it was both the landowner and the planning authority for any future development of the land concerned.
- Issues with the current site going forward and the number and type of properties which could be situated on it.
- The flooding issues at the Washford site.
- No allowance being made for Section 106 monies and contingency being put in place in respect of abnormalities at the site.

The Committee discussed how the working relationship between the Council and Redditch United FC had broken down since the decision in November 2013 not to pursue the relocation proposals. It was suggested that the Club and officers should consider together how facilities at the current site could be improved, especially to support community use. Although there was a covenant on the land the option to investigate what might be reasonable to add to the site had not been considered and the group was suggesting that it should therefore be further investigated.

The Task Group Members confirmed that from the information provided it was clear that Redditch United FC was being run in a much more appropriate manner than in previous years. They had been particularly impressed with the presentation delivered in respect of the youth teams and the work carried out with a wide age range of young people. The group was suggesting that the Council should take any action possible to support this work.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the interim report of the Football Task Group be received and noted: and**
- 2) **Redditch United Football Club be encouraged to discuss with Officers how to make the best use of the current football club site and to look at more local options to accommodate its expansion.**

RESOLVED that

- 1) the second objective of the Task Group, namely “to investigate the sustainability of Redditch United FC for the future with particular focus on the current relationship with the Borough Council and how this has been affected by recent events” be signed off as having been achieved; and**
- 2) the final report deadline for the remainder of the Task Group’s objectives be postponed and reviewed at the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2014.**

123. LANDSCAPING TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor Gay Hopkins, as Chair of the Landscaping Task Group, delivered a presentation which highlighted the areas which had been investigated by the Task Group and which had led to it making seven recommendations for the Executive Committee’s consideration.

Detailed information was provided in respect of the following areas:

- The traditional way of working and the role of operatives within the team including litter pickers and tree surgeons.
- The transformation work which had taken place and how the team was now working, including taking ownership of workloads.
- Improvements that had been made in communicating with residents, which include direct face to face contact made by tree surgeons and place operatives.
- Details of the site visits which Members had carried out together with the interview with the staff based at the depot.
- The ability for staff to use and develop new skills.
- Information about the trees intervention programme and the fact that professional tree surgeons employed by the Council had greater discretion in the trees intervention trial to carry out work required on trees.
- Details about the Place project, a new holistic approach to managing the environment in an area, and how this was being rolled out to other areas from the initial trial location in Winyates.
- The involvement of residents in the place intervention trial which involved encouraging them to liaise with the operatives on site and to take ownership and to have pride in their particular areas when the work had been carried out.

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- The fact that as part of the intervention trials place operatives and tree surgeons were working on cases that might not previously have been addressed by Council staff in order to both meet the needs of the customer and improve the condition of the local environment.

Following the presentation Members discussed the Place project in further detail and officers confirmed that the aim was for less work schedules to be produced and for the operatives to be pro-active rather than reactive in the work that they carried out. Members agreed that allowing the operatives to discuss a particular situation directly with the resident would help in cases where the work being requested was not always possible. This communication was often appreciated by the customer and helped to clarify the reasons why the operatives were delivering work in a particular way.

The Committee thanked Councillor Hopkins and the Task Group Members for the detailed report.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) new Members should be invited to visit teams responsible for tree maintenance, landscaping and cleansing services as part of the Member Induction process to provide them with an opportunity to learn about the work of these teams;**
 - a) a short briefing outlining the work of the place intervention, tree intervention and landscaping teams should be provided prior to a Council meeting early in the municipal year to provide those Members who are unable to participate in the member induction visit with an opportunity to learn about the work of these teams;**
- 2) a contact list of key senior and operational Officers, containing the telephone and email details together with the basic information about the Officers' responsibilities, should be provided for the consideration of Members;**
- 3) Members should be provided with updates on progress made addressing landscaping issues that they have referred to Officers at the request of residents including at the point of resolution;**
- 4) data relating to landscaping cases reported for each area be provided for Members' consideration on an annual**

basis. Every Member should receive data for the areas they cover;

- 5) one of the Environmental Services Teams' performance measures should be to monitor the number of landscape cases that take longer than six months to resolve. The information obtained through this monitoring process should be reported in the strategic measures for consideration of Senior Officers and elected Members;
- 6) Officers should undertake a feasibility study, risk assessment and cost benefit analysis to assess the potential for the Council to bulk plant trees in Council open spaces and other appropriate locations. This feasibility study should take into account the following matters:
 - (a) the legal implications, if any, of this action;
 - (b) the financial costs involved in planting and maintaining these plants;
 - (c) the availability of grants from the government and other sources to help pay for bulk planting in the Borough;
 - (d) demand within the market;
 - (e) where bulk planting would take place in the Borough;
 - (f) the size of the plots available for bulk planting;
 - (g) the implications for the Council's Planning Department in relation to the Local Plan;
 - (h) the potential revenue that could be accrued by the Council; and
- 7) Officers should investigate how to dispose of logs in a way that would maximise income for the Council. Part of this investigation should involve a risk assessment. Any revenue from these sales should be reinvested in landscaping services.

124. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Committee had received a topic proposal form from Worcestershire County Council, containing the terms of reference for a review of whether there should be a shared waste collection service in Worcestershire. The county Council had contacted every district Council to find out whether there was any interest in doing this jointly. There had been a mixed response from the districts, though Bromsgrove District Council had agreed to participate.

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Members were advised that as this review had been proposed by the county Council it would be facilitated by county Council Officers. If Members chose to participate in this review it would not be treated as one of the quota for Task Groups in 2014/15. The county Council was intending to start evidence gathering in April 2014 with a view to complete the review in October 2014.

The Committee was advised that senior Officers had strong views on this long standing issue. It was suggested that there were other areas where time could be better spent, including through a scrutiny exercise focusing on the relevant PFI (Public Finance Initiative) contract.

Members discussed the council's current waste and recycling service, which it was agreed was efficiently run. This service had secured cost savings through the transformation process and the route optimisation programme. The extent to which a shared service with the rest of the local authorities in the county would make any useful contribution to efficiencies savings within Redditch Borough was therefore considered questionable.

RESOLVED that

Redditch Borough Council should not participate in the Joint Scrutiny of Integrated Waste Collection and Disposal Service.

125. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

Officers informed Members that this report contained the latest quarterly update on the action that had been taken to implement scrutiny recommendations.

The updates had been provided in three appendices:

- Appendix 1 – which contained further information about recommendations which had been implemented since the last update was received.
- Appendix 2 – Detailing recommendations that had not yet been implemented. Members noted that wherever possible Officers had been asked to provide an estimate of the date by which these recommendations would be implemented.
- Appendix 3 – Further information about the recommendation from the Promoting Sport Task Group regarding provision of

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outdoor games. This information had been recorded separately due to the amount of detail provided.

The Committee discussed the current poor state of the market area and raised concerns in respect of the lack of progress in response to the proposals that had been made by the Redditch Market Review in March 2013. Members requested that relevant senior Officers be asked to provide a further more detailed update at a future meeting of the Committee in order to clarify the current situation for the market and future intentions for implementing the group's proposals.

In respect of the Sickness Policy Short, Sharp Review it was noted that Officers had been unable to produce an A5 laminated guide to the Council's Sickness Absence Policy. Members stressed that this should only contain a small number of bullet points covering the key areas such as reporting absence and the requirement for a return to work interview to take place. It was suggested that one side could cover the employees responsibility and the other that of the employer. Following discussion it was agreed that this would be revisited and brought to a future meeting of the Committee for Members' consideration.

Members discussed the Access for Disabled People Task Group's recommendations and highlighted the importance of the proposal for a disability awareness session to be provided. At present it was intended this would be delivered as part of the Member Induction Programme. However, it was suggested that all Members, not just new Members, would benefit from this training. The committee agreed that whilst this should not be part of the mandatory training programme, the importance of this subject needed to be stressed and all Members needed to be encouraged to attend by Group Leaders.

RECOMMENDED that

the Member Development Steering Group be asked to extend participation in the annual disability awareness session to all Members rather than to confine to new Members in the Member Induction process; and
RESOLVED that

- 1) a detailed report be delivered, in respect of the implementation of the Market Review's recommendations, for consideration at a future meeting of the committee; and**

- 2) a draft bullet point summary of the key points of the **Sickness Absence Policy** be provided for consideration of **Members at a future meeting, as detailed in the preamble above.**

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

The Committee received the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 11th March together with the most recent edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme.

Councillor Brazier reported that he had been contacted by a number of voluntary sector organisations who had raised concerns that they had not been formally contacted in respect of the outcomes of the most recent rounds of the Council's grants programme. Officers explained that they understood that all relevant voluntary sector organisations had been contacted but assured Members that further clarification would be sought from relevant Officers as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 11th March and the latest edition of the Executive Committee Work Programme be noted.

127. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the latest version of the Committee's Work Programme. Officers highlighted the Overview and Scrutiny Training Session which was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 10th June 2014. All Members were urged to attend this session. The committee was assured that any newly elected Members would also be invited.

RESOLVED that

the Work Programme be noted.

128. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

- a) Abbey Stadium Task Group – Chair, Councillor Carole Gandy

Councillor Gandy informed Members that the group had interviewed the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism and discussed a number of issues including his view about leisure

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trusts. The group were due to meet again on Thursday 3rd April with the relevant Head of Service and the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources. The group had arranged to meet with the Leader of the Council on 11th April to seek his views on the subject. A further meeting was due to take place on 16th April when the group would be finalising their recommendations with a view to presenting their final report to the Committee's June meeting.

b) Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Scrutiny Task Group – Redditch Member, Councillor Alan Mason

Councillor Hopkins, substitute Member on the group, informed Members that she had attended the last meeting of the Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group in Councillor Mason's absence. It had been a most informative meeting and she explained that the members had split into two groups and interviewed a number of Members of the Joint Committee. These discussions covered what they saw as being their role within the partnership and from this it was apparent that they continued to be "localised" and did not give sufficient consideration to the partnership as a whole. The Committee was also informed that the Task Group had begun to formulate its final recommendations and continued to be on track to bring its draft report to the June Committee meeting.

c) Voluntary Sector Task Group – Chair, Councillor Pat Witherspoon

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that the group had made several visits to the Voluntary Sector including BARN where they had been provided with a wealth of information which they had been happy to share with Members. The group had also visited the Sandycroft Centre and heard about the various groups which it worked with and toured the building. Councillor Witherspoon confirmed the Task Group was on track to complete its investigations and final report in time for presentation at the July Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Members also held a general discussion on the role of the Council and the support it provided together with the structure of the Grant Panel.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

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(During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). However, there is nothing exempt in this record of the proceedings.)

129. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that the most recent meeting of Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) had been cancelled due to the setting up of new health groups. She therefore had nothing to report on this occasion.

130. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that

Under S.100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act, as amended, in respect of the Voluntary Sector Task Group Progress Report (as detailed in Minute 128 above).

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.03 pm