

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Monday, 24th November,  
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, Alan Mason, David Thain (substituting for Councillor Carole Gandy) and Pat Witherspoon

### Also Present:

Councillor Greg Chance, (Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport).

Mr Stephen Haselden, (Strategic Development Manager, Rotala PLC) and Ms Hayley Russell (Commercial Officer, Rotala PLC).

### Officers:

K Dicks, S Singleton and J Willis

### Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

## 50. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carole Gandy and Paul Swansborough with Councillors David Thain and Michael Braley attending as substitutes.

## 51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillor Andrew Fry declared an other discloseable interest in Minute No.53. Concessionary Bus Travel, due to his personal family connection to the Head of Community Services.

Councillor Jane Potter declared an other discloseable interest in respect of Minute No.55, the Proposals for Change by Tudor

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Chair

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Grange Academy Short, Sharp Review, Final Report. She left the room and took no part in the discussions in respect of this report.

Councillor David Bush also declared an other discloseable interest in respect of Minute No. 55, 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 Redditch. He left the room and took no part in the discussions in respect of this report.

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. 55.

## 52. MINUTES

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2014, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 53. CONCESSIONARY BUS TRAVEL - DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked the representatives from Rotala PLC, Mr Stephen Haselden and Ms Hayley Russell, for attending the meeting.

Councillor Greg Chance, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport, took Members through the written responses that had been provided to the pre-prepared questions. He highlighted that the scheme was not aimed at retired people but for the benefit of various groups within the community who would need to travel before 9.30 a.m. Mr Haselden reiterated this by stating that the concessionary scheme was not for retired people but for a set age range, many of whom had to access work. Members were also advised that the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENTS) was put in place to ensure that people who could not afford bus travel were still able to do so. The principle of the scheme was that the operator should be no worse or better off if no scheme was in place and calculated on a monthly basis with the operator being re-imbursed. However, it was explained that this was not how the Redditch Borough Council scheme was calculated. Instead a fixed annual rate was identified based on figures from 2011. Mr. Haselden felt that these figures were no longer relevant and as an operator Rotala plc was currently worse off. The figures would need to be revised for the scheme in 2015/16.

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The following areas were discussed in more detail:

- The data provided by Worcestershire County Council from the use of SMART ticket machines, how these worked and details of how journeys were recorded manually prior to 9.30 am.
- The number of people using the service in comparison to the number of journeys that were carried out.
- The overall data being provided by Centro (in respect of the concessionary passes). Mr Haselden explained that he had requested more detailed data several times, but had been unsuccessful due to legislation and rules from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- The types of passes provided and how these were being updated when those in receipt of them re-applied.
- The ENTS scheme being valid after 9.30 a.m. only.
- The benefits of the scheme to those who were eligible to participate.
- The financial cost to the Council and what number of journeys this was based on, together with details of actual journeys carried out and the potential increase in cost for future years.
- A breakdown of the journeys by route. Mr Haselden confirmed that this was provided on a monthly basis and the majority of the routes covered by his company were 51 (1,803 journeys), 57 (2,400 journeys) and 58 (2,377).
- It was confirmed that there was no legal requirement to provide the scheme before 9.30 a.m.

Following detailed discussions a proposal was put forward that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should recognise the value of pre 9.30 a.m. travel and appreciated Rotala PLC's support for the scheme. However this proposal was not endorsed by the majority of Members.

Whilst it was understood that Rotala PLC had been unable to acquire detailed data from Centro, Members requested that Officers attempt to access detailed information about the number of journeys undertaken by customers using concessionary passes in order for Members to understand better how the scheme was being used and its value.

**RESOLVED that Officers request detailed information in respect of pre 9.30 a.m. journeys and the number of concessionary pass holders making the journeys.**

## 54. MARKET SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - MONITORING UPDATE REPORT

Officers were invited to summarise the report, which provided an update to the recommendations that had been agreed following the Redditch Market Review being considered by the Executive Committee on 12th March 2013.

Members were informed that the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit had commissioned a piece of work from external consultants to advise on what types of markets could realistically be attracted to the North Worcestershire area, together with details of potential income and delivery of such arrangements for the future. The results of this review would be available from 12th December 2014.

It was noted that there had been a large number of recommendations from this scrutiny review. Some of the outstanding recommendations would be addressed within the consultant's report. However, Members were also asked to note that those recommendations which had not been addressed had significant cost implications attached to them. Overall, it was agreed that, considering the number of recommendations that the group had made, a large proportion had been completed and progress had been made.

Members also debated the following areas in detail:

- A new strategy for the market would be developed once the results of the review were known. Members raised concerns around keeping the current market area tidy and the number of parked vehicles including, it was understood, a caravan over the weekend period.
- How to make the area more attractive to customers. New stalls and layout were discussed and it was confirmed that this would be picked up within the consultant's report.
- On going cleanliness and pest control problems. Members discussed whether stall holders could be penalised for not disposing of rubbish appropriately.
- The range of goods sold on the various stalls.
- Whether there was a Market Manager and the times the Officer was available. It was explained that this was covered by a shared service and the Market Manager also managed the market at Bromsgrove.

Following further discussion it was

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the Committee receive the consultant's report when available; and**
- 2) the update report be noted.**

**55. PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE BY TUDOR GRANGE ACADEMY SHORT, SHARP REVIEW - FINAL REPORT**

Councillor Pat Witherspoon, as the Chair of the Proposals for Change by Tudor Grange Academy Short, Sharp Review presented the group's final report. She provided background information and explained that the purpose of the review had been to gain an understanding of Tudor Grange Academy Redditch's proposal to extend the age range of their pupils and the process they had followed in order to make those changes, together with assessing the potential impact on other schools in the Borough and identifying how to support ward Councillors and residents in contributing effectively to the debate on the subject. Members were reminded that the review had not been tasked with investigating whether a two-tier or a three-tier education system should be in place in the Borough or to draw conclusions around the Academy's proposals.

The group had gathered evidence from a range of sources including representatives from Tudor Grange Academy Redditch, Karen Lumley M.P., Councillor Rebecca Blake (this was due to her involvement in the petition), the Redditch Democratic Alliance and local schools, which had been contacted via a questionnaire. Representatives of the Redditch School Changes Action Group had also been consulted.

The key findings of the review were highlighted:

- Tudor Grange Academy Redditch followed the proper process set out by the Government.
- The process set down by the Government did not address the specific needs of schools and school pyramids in a three-tier education system.
- As a consequence there was uncertainty, confusion and in some cases anger amongst parents about the changes proposed by the school.
- The lead officer for the County Council informed the review that the County lacked the power and resources to undertake a review of the education system in the Borough. Recent legislation had provided academy schools with significant powers and therefore any review conducted by the local

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education authority could not make decisions that would be binding for academy schools.

- Poor communications by both the school and the County Council had compounded the confusion amongst parents.
- The group had attempted to consult with Councillors from the wards within the catchment area for Tudor Grange Academy. Members had been disappointed to only receive completed questionnaires from Councillors Baker and Potter, although it was acknowledged that evidence had been received from Councillors Blake and Braley in a different form. The group requested that in future group leaders be urged to encourage their members to respond when consulted by a scrutiny Task Group.

Councillor Witherspoon went on to provide some local context together with information in respect of the process which had been followed and highlighted that Tudor Grange Academy Redditch had followed the correct process and had gone beyond what was required by providing a business plan. The final decision about the school's proposals would be made by the Regional Schools Commissioner for the West Midlands in consultation with the Education Funding Agency (EFA). It had also been noted that when questions were raised by Karen Lumley in Parliament the Department of Education had confirmed that they did not hold records for three-tier education systems throughout England, although they had advised that there were 190 middle schools in total.

Councillor Witherspoon thanked the other Members of the review for the work they had carried out and also Jess Bayley, Democratic Services Officer for her support in carrying out a very thorough and informative review.

The Committee added its thanks and commented on how professionally the review had been handled and for producing an excellent and detailed report.

## **RECOMMENDED to the Executive Committee that**

- 1) The Chief Executive of Redditch Borough Council writes to the Secretary of State for Education, the Right Honourable Nicky Morgan PM, and the Minister of State for Schools, the Right Honourable David Laws MP, to request that specific guidance be issued to schools about changing the age range of their pupils in a three tier education system. This guidance should address the process that must be followed in cases where a school unilaterally decides to make**

changes that will impact on other schools in the local authority area and/or within a school pyramid.

**RECOMMENDED to Worcestershire County Council that**

- 2) Worcestershire County Council consult with Borough Councillors alongside County Councillors when commissioning educational services (within the remit of the Head of Learning and Achievement); and**
- 3) Worcestershire County Council, as the local education authority, should produce written guides about the education system and the process that needs to be followed when changes are made to schools. These guides should be produced in plain English and should be made available for parents and other interested stakeholders to access.**

(Prior to consideration of the final report Councillor Potter declared an other disclosable interest in the subject as a school governor at Tudor Grange Academy. Councillor Bush also declared an other disclosable 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 Redditch. They both left the room during consideration of this update and did not take part in the discussions.)

## **56. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE REPORT**

The Chair explained that two areas had been discussed during the most recent meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel and these were summarised in the update attached to the agenda.

Members discussed the update in detail and raised the following points:

- The Diamond Club for Black and other Minority Ethnic Communities. Councillor Witherspoon had recently attended an event where women from these groups had raised concerns that there was no support for those who suffered domestic violence. Officers agreed to request further details and provide these to Members.
- The number of women murdered each month by partners and how the agencies could work together to protect vulnerable women.
- The number of new clients attending the West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Unit.

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- The number of men suffering domestic violence.
- The role of the Police in addressing domestic violence.
- Support provided for the LGBT Community within the Borough. It was noted that the groups listed were not specific to Redditch but county based.
- It was understood the Redditch night club which had provided an event for the LGBT community in previous years had ceased to do so.
- The Stonewall group and the information they provided for schools and youth clubs.
- A number of other youth clubs had struggled due to lack of funding and Members encouraged them to apply through the Grants Panel as it was understood that a further funding round would be held in the New Year and that funds were available.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the minutes from the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 29th October 2014 be circulated to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

## **57. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME**

Officers highlighted the Executive Committee's comments in respect of three recommendations which had been put forward by the Committee. The Committee had requested, following consideration of the Fees and Charges report, that the rate for junior swimming lessons should not be the subject of an increase; this had been rejected by the Executive Committee. At the Committee's meeting on 2nd September Members had requested that the minutes of the Redditch Partnership Executive Group and the Redditch Community Wellbeing Trust be appended to the Council agenda. This proposal had also been rejected. However it was noted that instead the Executive Committee had agreed that the minutes should be publicised on the modern.gov system and the first minutes from the Executive Group had recently been published in this manner. Members were also informed that in respect of the recommendation from the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Joint Scrutiny Task Group, which had been approved by the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee and which related to the lessons learned from the WRS shared service experience, had been approved by the Executive Committee.

Following further discussion it was

## **RESOLVED that**



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**the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 28th October and the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

## **58. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

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

**RESOLVED that**

**the Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

## **59. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS**

Councillor Potter informed Members that since the last Committee meeting the group had studied a range of literature (including the Worcestershire Obesity Plan) and interviewed the Health Improvement Co-ordinator, the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services and the Sports and Physical Activity Development Manager. The group were also planning on interviewing representatives from the public health team at Worcestershire County Council and a member of the Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). For their final meeting they were hoping to interview the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council.

It was clear from the work of the group so far that there was an abundance of support available but the challenge was how to encourage people to take advantage of that support.

Members commented that at the last buffet held at the Town Hall there had been a limited selection of food and no salad or fresh fruit included within it and suggested that perhaps the Council could lead by example and include these in the future.

**RESOLVED that**

**the update report be noted.**

## **60. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Pat Witherspoon, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), provided Members with an update following the most recent meeting that she had attended. Councillor Witherspoon explained

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that a copy of a presentation had been included within the agenda as this had been the main area of discussion at the HOSC meeting.

The presentation covered the proposed changes to some services at the Alexandra, Worcestershire Royal and Kidderminster Hospitals. Members were also informed that this presentation was due to be delivered at a meeting of the Community Wellbeing Trust at the Ecumenical Centre. This was the first time that the actual proposals for what the services could look like had been put forward before it was put out to final consultation, which was not expected until the spring/summer of 2015.

There had also been a meeting with the University Hospital Birmingham (UHB) who had informed HOSC that they had not been involved in any discussion with regard to the service review. UHB had also confirmed that they were currently not taking any further patients from Worcestershire. There had been a 56% increase in patients from Worcestershire and they were at their full capacity and were therefore unable to take any further patients. They were already treating 61 patients and would continue to do so. UHB had acknowledged that they understood why people preferred to use the services as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was both nearer to Redditch and considered a centre of excellence. There were concerns around the border between Birmingham and Worcestershire. Whilst patients were given the option to choose where they wished to be treated if the hospital chosen could evidence that they did not have the capacity to take that patient then they were able to refuse to treat them.

Officers commented that further information had been released that day confirming that the consultation would not begin until spring/summer 2015. Approximately 50 workshops would be held with groups of people that would be most affected by the changes. There would also be a Transport Sub Group which will look at how patients could get to and from the hospitals.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the Chief Executive provided the additional information to Officers for circulation to Members.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 9.04 pm