

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 16th February, 2016

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jane Potter (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price (substituting for Councillor Gareth Prosser), David Bush, Andrew Fry, Paul Swansborough, Jennifer Wheeler and Nina Wood-Ford

Officers:

J Pickering and S Garratt

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

73. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Gareth Prosser and it was confirmed that Councillor Tom Baker-Price was attending as his substitute.

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

75. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings held on 5th January 2016 and 1st February 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

76. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Chair invited Councillor Tom Baker-Price to present a scoping document containing proposed terms of reference for a review of action that could be taken to increase the number of accessible vehicles available to passengers with disabilities in the Borough. In so doing he highlighted the following areas:

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Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 16th February, 2016

- This was an issue which had been discussed at both the Licensing Committee and a recent Taxi Forum and Councillor Baker-Price had spoken to the Licensing Team.
- Councillor Baker-Price described a particular incident which had highlighted the lack of vehicles with wheelchair access.
- Members were informed that some residents had been advised there was a need to book accessible vehicles some 24-48 hours prior to the required travel time.
- 5.7% of the fleet were adapted for wheelchair access but it was noted that the majority of these were used by Worcestershire County Council under contract and were not therefore available for general use.
- The impact of the availability of accessible transport on the life of a person with disabilities and their ability to live independently.
- The majority of vehicles were private hire and therefore the charging mechanism was not set down by the Council.
- The work of a previous task group which investigated access for disabled people to Redditch town centre using all forms of transport, and the recommendations which had arisen from those investigations.

Following presentation of the topic proposal Officers confirmed that Worcestershire Regulatory Services would be happy to be involved in the investigation. The following points were raised for Members' consideration:

- It was not possible to set a price tariff for private hire vehicles as the contract was made as soon as a person made the phone call to book the vehicle. Therefore the Council was not able to put a price cap on private hire vehicles.
- The change to the licences to operate adopted vehicles for a longer period of time which took place in 2009 had only led to there being an increase of three vehicles over that period.
- The disability training referred to in the previous Task Group's recommendations had been made available.

Councillor Gay Hopkins showed an interest in chairing the review and encouraged those Members that were keen to join her speak to their Group Leaders as soon as possible as it was important that the Review got underway as soon as possible in order to meet the suggested deadline. Members were reminded that such a review would be time consuming; and any Members would need to be committed to completing the investigation within the timescale suggested. In view of the timescale it was suggested that membership be limited to four Members and that Group Leaders' would be asked to respond to Officers as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a short sharp review be set up in respect of Disabled People's Access to Redditch's Taxi Fleet;**
- 2) Councillor Gay Hopkins be appointed Chair of the Short Sharp Review into Disabled People's Access to Redditch's Taxi Fleet; and**
- 3) the deadline for completion of the review be set at 12th April 2016.**

77. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016/17 TO 2018/19

The Chair informed Members that the report provided an opportunity to view the proposals made by the Executive Committee in respect of the budget and to make any recommendations to Council on 22nd February 2016. Members were also referred to Minute No. 89 of the Executive Committee minutes from 2nd February during consideration of this item.

Officers gave a detailed summary of both the report within the agenda pack together with the updated information provided in additional papers 1 and 2, covering the changes which had taken place since the Committee had considered the initial report at its meeting held on 1st February 2016. In particular the following areas were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The change in methodology in respect of funding allocations and the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) changes, leading to a negative grant payment to Government, from 2019/20.
- A cumulative reduction in core funding of -19.2% across local government.
- Central Government encouraging the implementation of a four year financial plan by local authorities.
- The impact of the significant funding reductions over the four year period for Redditch in comparison to other Councils.
- The consultation and proposed changes in respect of New Homes Bonus (NHB) which was due to finish on 10th March 2016 and the impact any changes could have on the Council.
- Formal confirmation being received that the Council would receive a slight increase in its proposed settlement from Central Government and the impact on the overall budget position.
- The impact following the addition of all Shire Districts (and Borough Councils) being given the flexibility to increase Council Tax by £5 per B and D equivalent properties.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 16th February, 2016

- Additional income identified relating to rental revenue from Redditch Town Hall Crèche and Woodrow Library.
- The final recommended balanced budget for 2016/17 taking into account the changes discussed and additional income identified.
- The need to address the additional cuts identified in future years, to ensure that quality of service provision was maintained in the Borough.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed the following areas in detail:

- The value of an additional column to take the budget position up to 2019/20 in line with the suggested four year plan.
- The terms of the lease for the Town Hall Crèche.
- The source of the graph, provided in the main report, in respect of the impact of the significant funding reductions for Redditch compared to other Councils. Officers confirmed that this had been provided by LG Future on behalf of the Local Government Association.

Members thanked Officers for preparing numerous reports on the subject of the Medium Term Financial Plan over proceeding months and for providing a good explanation of a complicated subject.

RESOLVED that

the report Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 – 2018/19 be noted.

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

Officers confirmed that there was no update in relation to Overview and Scrutiny within the Executive Committee minutes of 12th January and 2nd February 2016 as no recommendations had been made. In respect of the Work Programme the Committee was given the opportunity to consider whether there were any items suitable for pre-scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

the Executive Committee Minutes of 12th January and 2nd February 2016 together with the latest addition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

79. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Officers confirmed that, as requested, a presentation would be received at the Committee's April meeting in respect of S106 funding. The Chair had also agreed for an open invitation to be extended to all Members to attend this presentation.

Members were advised that there was no update in respect of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) as the meeting scheduled for January had been cancelled. There would be no further update until the Committee's April meeting as the next meeting of HOSC was on 10th March 2016.

Councillor Joe Baker took the opportunity to show Members a copy of the LGB&T Support Services Redditch community group's leaflet, which had been created following a recommendation from the Provision of Support Networks for the LGBT Community Task Group. Councillor Baker thanked those Members who had assisted with the Task Group and confirmed that 1,000 copies of the leaflet would be printed each month and be available from 29th February 2016.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.

80. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

Joint Worcestershire Increasing Physical Activity Task Group – Redditch Borough Council Representative, Councillor Gareth Prosser

In the absence of Councillor Prosser Officers informed Members that there had not been a meeting of this Group since December 2015. In respect of the Committee's request that the Chair of the Task Group attend to present the final report aided by Councillor Prosser, Members were advised that this had been declined. The Chair, Councillor Richard Udall, did not feel that the investigation was a formal joint task group and was therefore happy for Councillor Prosser to present the Task Group's findings.