

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 2nd June, 2016

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jane Potter (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Natalie Brookes, Andrew Fry, Wanda King, Paul Swansborough, David Thain and Nina Wood-Ford

Officers:

J Pickering

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

1. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joe Baker, Matthew Dormer and Jennifer Wheeler, with Councillors Natalie Brookes, David Thain and Wanda King present as substitutes respectively.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting held on 12th April 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS

The Chair presented the report in respect of the proposed introduction of budget and performance scrutiny working groups. The following points were highlighted in respect of the budget working group:

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- The work which the Committee has carried out over recent years to improve the scrutiny of the budget and to gain a better understanding of it.
- A working group would enable a number of Members to receive the information at an earlier stage and to feed into the budget process in a more constructive manner.
- Many local authorities had successfully used working groups for this purpose.
- In its annual report the External Auditors had suggested that the use of such groups could be helpful.

Officers expressed support for the suggestion and agreed that it would allow for more detailed scrutiny of the budget and more timely receipt of reports. It was also suggested that it would give the Overview and Scrutiny Committee an opportunity to work more closely with the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, with perhaps a Member of that Committee being a Member of the working group.

The Chair also provided details in respect of a working group which would concentrate on data provided within the corporate dashboard. This idea had come about following the presentation the Committee had received in respect of the corporate dashboard at its previous meeting. Whilst it had been useful, it was also clear that the dashboard provided an abundance of information which Members needed to gain an understanding of in order to scrutinise the Council's performance.

Members discussed how the working groups would work and whether these would be time limited or ongoing. Officers explained that as the introduction of them was new it was in the gift of Members to set the "ground rules" for the working groups. By establishing these groups the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would ensure that Members were focusing on two areas of best practice in terms of the scrutiny process. The Committee would have an opportunity at the end of the municipal year, as part of its annual report, to review whether the groups had been successful.

If Members were in agreement to setting up the groups then Officers would contact the Group Leaders to canvass membership. It was agreed that the groups would have no more than five Members (including a Chair).

Following further discussion it was

RESOLVED that

- a) a Budget Scrutiny Working Group be established with Councillor Jane Potter as Chair;**
- b) a Performance Scrutiny Working Group be established with Councillor Tom Baker-Price as Chair; and**
- c) Officers canvass the Group Leaders in respect of Membership of the two working groups.**

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRAINING - FEEDBACK REPORT

The Chair thanked those Members who had attended the training session on 31st May and advised that it had been both constructive and worthwhile with a number of key areas being discussed. These had been detailed in the additional papers pack and the Chair proposed that she would go through these whilst providing her thoughts on particular areas, allowing Members to also give their views in deciding which to include within the Committee's work programme. It was explained that Members had been split into two groups during the work programme planning exercise and it was noted that a number of the areas discussed within each group had been very similar.

Idea 1 – Promoting Redditch

A task group had been carried out a number of years ago which had concentrated on promoting Redditch as a tourist destination. It was suggested, from the discussions which had taken place at the training event that a further review would concentrate on promoting Redditch as a business centre and how it could have a positive impact on both the employment and future training needs of young people in the Borough. In this regard, Ideas 9 (Encouraging Business to come to Redditch) and 10 (Ensuring the Young People of Redditch meet the employment needs of the Borough) could be included within the group's remit, with a view to a full Task Group being established and not the Short Sharp Review suggested. Members were keen to ensure that young people were equipped with the right skills needed by employers in the Borough and that a review should be linked with both schools and the local college.

Officers informed the Committee that a scoping document would need to be prepared if this item were to be included within its work programme. Following discussion it was agreed that Councillor Paul Swansborough would take a lead on this and arrange to meet

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with Officers to prepare a scoping document for future consideration by the Committee.

Idea 2 – Mental Health

Members discussed whether this needed to be discussed as part of the overarching health issues or whether it needed to be looked at in isolation. (It was noted with some concern that residents had a shorter life expectancy by 8 years compared to other parts of Worcestershire). It was recognised that currently mental health was something which was receiving attention and a Task Group could take the opportunity to continue that high profile and ensure that it remained at the forefront of the health agenda.

There was concern that it was such a large subject that any investigation may not be able to do it justice. Members therefore discussed whether to, for example, concentrate on a particular age group, as it was noted that young men under age 25 had one of the highest suicide rates. Concerns were also raised that this may be an area which was more appropriate to be dealt with by the County Council and whether the Committee could have any constructive impact on the issue.

The Chair informed Members that lower level mental health problems, had been something which had been raised when she had recently attended a Corporate Management Team meeting. They had raised concerns about the impact this had on the work of the Council, for example in dealing the customers in respect of revenue and benefit payments.

Councillor Nina Wood-Ford had showed a particular interest in this area and was also the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was agreed that she would meet with Officers to discuss the preparation of a scoping document for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

Idea 3 – Working in a Two Tier Authority Area

It was agreed that as there were County Council elections due to take place in May 2017 this was an area which was not currently suitable for scrutiny, but might be in the future.

Idea 4 - The Council's Corporate Plan

Members agreed that it would be useful to have a presentation in respect of this at the July meeting, in order to establish the areas

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that it covered and whether the Committee could make a useful contribution towards its content.

Idea 6 – Dangerous Driving and Idea 7 Protecting Pets

Whilst it was appreciated that these were areas of concern it was felt that the Committee would have limited powers to make a significant impact on them and therefore agreed to take no further action.

Idea 8 – Community Engagement

It was agreed that no further action would be taken on this topic.

Idea 9 – Encouraging Businesses to come to Redditch and Idea 10 – Ensuring Young People of Redditch meet the employment needs of the Borough

As previously agreed these areas would be included within Idea 1 above.

Idea 11 – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Whilst it was understood that this was a countywide document, work could be done to breakdown the information to be Redditch specific. Following discussion Members agreed that it would be useful to receive a presentation which included that Redditch specific detail in order to establish whether further scrutiny from the Committee was needed in respect of those areas.

Idea 12 – Sustainability and Transfer Plan

It was agreed that it would be useful to receive a presentation which provided detail about what this covered and whether the Committee was able to make constructive feedback on its content.

Idea 13 – Disabled People’s Access to Employment

Before taking this matter further it was agreed that a presentation should be received by the Committee in order to establish what opportunities were available in the Borough.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s work programme be amended to take into account the areas covered in the preamble above.

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

Officers confirmed that there were no outstanding issues in relation to Overview and Scrutiny within the minutes, but highlighted a number of updates in respect of items on the most recent copy of the Executive Work Programme which had been tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the Executive Committee Minutes of 19th April together with the latest addition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Officers provided updates in respect of two items on the Committee's work programme. The Leisure Intervention item for pre-scrutiny was now expected not before 5th September. A scoping document, submitted by Councillor Tom Baker-Price in respect of Protecting Redditch's Heritage Assets would also be considered at the meeting on 5th July 2016.

Officers explained that the delay in respect of the Leisure Intervention report was due to additional work being carried out and which had taken longer than expected. The demand had been costed out but, customers were now being consulted in order to also evaluate the value.

RESOLVED that

subject to the amendments detailed in the preamble above the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.

8. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

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

Officers confirmed that the final draft report had been published as part of the agenda for the Worcestershire County Council Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board meeting on 25th May and would be presented to this Committee at its next meeting on 5th July

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2016. It was confirmed that, although Councillor Prosser was no longer a Member he had agreed to attend to present the report.

9. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Nina Wood-Ford, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), reported that the meeting scheduled for 8th June had been postponed. Councillor Wood-Ford explained that there had been a number of changes to the Executive of the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and matters remained uncertain. Members discussed a number of issues including:

- The removal of the midwifery led unit based at Redditch.
- The Alexandra Hospital being a base for the orthopaedic team.
- The ongoing review of services in Worcestershire.

Councillor Wood-Ford confirmed that she would provide a full report at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.48 pm