

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 12th September,
2016

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jane Potter (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Natalie Brookes, Pattie Hill, Paul Swansborough, David Thain and Nina Wood-Ford

Also Present:

Councillor Juliet Brunner

Officers:

J Pickering

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

20. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Matthew Dormer, Andrew Fry and Jennifer Wheeler with Councillors David Thain, Pattie Hill and Natalie Brookes attending as substitutes respectively.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

22. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

23. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT - PRE-SCRUTINY

Officers presented the Efficiency Plan for 2016/17 – 2019/20 and provided Members with background information in respect of this. During the presentation of this report the following areas were highlighted:

- The opportunity to secure a minimum level of funding for the four years commencing April 2016.
- There had been no legislation or guidance provided by Central Government in respect of the format of an Efficiency Plan.
- A four year settlement would provide an element of certainty in relation to the Revenue Support Grant.
- The response from Government in respect of the New Homes Bonus consultation had not yet been received.
- There was no guarantee that the settlement offered would not change over the next four years.
- The inclusion of a “negative grant” system to repay Government was not anticipated and had resulted in additional financial pressures for the Council.
- The Efficiency Plan was not purely about the funding, but should include key actions within it and reference to the Council’s Plan.
- The narrative of the plan clearly stated that the Council did not accept the methodology used for repayment to Government, which would offset any financial benefits associated with the localisation of Business Rates.
- Key themes had been identified to enable officers to manage the shortfalls in funding, including increasing income and growth, identifying further efficiencies and assessing the value for money of the services provided.
- Officers informed Members that other authorities had been approached to get their views on what was being included in their efficiency plans and what format was being used. The format presented to Members was similar to those used by other Councils.

Further detail was provided in respect of the actual figures within the report, including the efficiencies which had already been approved for 2016/17. Officers then gave a detailed explanation of each item relating to the proposed efficiencies for 2017/18 – 2019/20. Each Head of Service had been asked to provide information in respect of efficiencies, but were also being asked to prepare a more detailed template of how those efficiencies would be met. These would then be presented to and scrutinised by the Council’s Executive Directors to ensure that the options put forward could be carried through.

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Officers explained to Members that there was a significant shortfall in funding particularly in 2019/20 when the negative grant was activated and it was appreciated that there were some difficult decisions which would have to be made by Members. There would be a variety of options put forward for the Executive Committee's consideration in respect of efficiencies, including the potential to outsource some services. The Council needed to look at new and innovative ways of continuing to both maintain the services it provided and, where possible, raise additional income. Examples of how alternative models of service delivery could be beneficial were given together with examples of how additional income could be raised. The use of balances was also highlighted and the lower limit for this was confirmed at £750k.

Following the detailed presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of areas, which included:

- Whether Heads of Service had been asked to look at every option available in order to make savings.
- Concerns around the option of outsourcing services. Officers assured Members that this would simply be an option and that the decision would remain with Members themselves.
- Whether there was further scope for further shared services. Officers informed Members that the only area which was not currently shared with Bromsgrove District Council was the Planning Department and it was anticipated that a business case for this would be brought before the Shared Services Board in the near future.
- The impact on the Voluntary Sector and whether the grant funding available to the sector would be impacted by the national decision to leave the EU.
- The removal of "waste" in processes to make areas more efficient and why such steps had not been taken at an earlier stage.
- The potential for redundancies having to be made and whether the cost of this had been taken into account.
- The possibility of reviewing staff terms and conditions.

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that

the Council's Efficiency Plan for 2016/17 – 2019/20 be noted.

24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER - MONITORING UPDATE REPORT

Officers provided a brief overview of the outstanding items referred to within this report, highlighting that it was hoped the Grants Apprentice, who would be shared between the Grants Team, Redditch Partnership and the Policy Team, would be in place by October 2016. It was also highlighted that whilst the recommendations from the Access for Disabled People for Redditch Taxis Short, Sharp Review had been endorsed by the Licensing Committee a number of them were subject to further consultation and an update would therefore not be appropriate at this time. It was likely that when the Committee next received this update, in January 2017, further information would be available.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of the outstanding recommendations, including:

- Whether the Grants Officer role, which was vacant was a post that could be deleted and, if not, when it would be recruited to. Officers agreed to seek clarification on this for Members outside of the meeting.
- LGBT Task Group – Recommendation 5, it appeared that this had been achieved through a new pilot training scheme which would be rolled out in early 2017 and could therefore be deleted from the Tracker.

It was noted that Recommendation 1 from the LGBT Task Group, in respect of the Council participating in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, had been reviewed and officers had felt that a significant amount of work was needed in order to make a submission. Members were disappointed with this response and asked for the relevant Officer to be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to provide a more detailed explanation.

Members noted that Recommendation 2 in respect of the LGBT Task Group had been raised with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) in a notice of motion. Officers were asked to monitor progress of this at meetings of WCC's Cabinet.

RESOLVED that

the Quarterly Monitoring Recommendation Tracker be noted.

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

Officers reported that there were no issues in relation to Overview and Scrutiny within the minutes. In respect of the Executive Committee's Work Programme it was noted that a number of items referred to were already included within the Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

the Executive Committee Minutes of the 12th July 2016 together with the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

26. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme and noted that an update in respect of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (which had previously been considered at the meeting in July) would be received at the December meeting. Following discussion it was agreed that all Councillors should be advised of this and invited to attend if they wished.

27. WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS

Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jane Potter

Councillor Potter informed Members that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had held two meetings, and had received an update on the budget, capital, reserves and balances.

Councillor Potter confirmed that the group had a schedule of meetings planned on a monthly basis and would be taking a more in depth look at the forthcoming budget and its process.

Members discussed whether it was necessary to hold an extra meeting of the Committee in November as it was a busy time in respect of the budget. After giving this consideration the Chair suggested that such a meeting would not be needed.

Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Tom Baker-Price

Councillor Baker-Price informed Members that the group had met on two occasions to date and had investigated how the system had been developed and were awaiting details of the cost. Particular

areas which had been looked at in more detail included staff sickness levels per department and it had been noted that these had not been updated recently. The relevant officers would be contacted to ensure this was rectified as soon as possible.

Future meetings would include detailed consideration of Lifeline and Forge Mill as it had been noted that there was a reduction in the use of these services. The group would also consider target setting and performance indicators from a strategic perspective.

RECOMMENDED that

the Council should have a robust four year funded Capital Programme for the period 2017/18 to 2020/21 to include estimates across each year of the budget; and

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

28. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFIRMATION OF TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Mental Health Services for Young People Task Group – Chair, Cllr Nina Wood-Ford

Councillor Wood-Ford informed Members that the group had already held a number of meetings and were at the early stages of evidence gathering. It had been challenging determining what constituted a young person as different organisations had different age criteria. Data had been provided in respect of suicide rates and Members had been concerned to note that the figures were significantly higher for males in Worcestershire.

A number of organisations had already been interviewed and the group also hoped to consult with representatives from local schools, colleges, Police and the Voluntary Sector. County Council representatives had provided written responses to a number of questions as they had been unable to attend on the dates which had been provided. It was also anticipated that representatives from the NHS would be invited to attend future meetings.

In response to questions from Members Councillor Wood-Ford confirmed that the group were looking at the correlation between deprivation and mental health problems and that the use of social media would also be considered.

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The Chair asked Members to formally confirm the Membership of the group, as this had not been done at the previous meeting.

RESOLVED that

the Membership of the Mental Health Services for Young People Task Group be confirmed as Councillors Nina Wood-Ford (Chair), Andrew Fry, Gay Hopkins and Jenny Wheeler.

29. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Nina Wood-Ford, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), provided Members with a brief outline of the items discussed on the agenda at the last meeting of HOSC. This included:

- Adult Mental Health – the reduction in services at Orchard Place, Redditch and the use of the Hub in Worcestershire were highlighted.
- The use of E-cigarettes – this had been the subject of a review and whilst it was agreed that there were some benefits from the use of e-cigarettes the evidence was inconclusive.
- The Acute Hospitals Trust had attended and provided information in respect of the forthcoming consultation process and its future plans, which it anticipated would be implemented by March 2017.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.18 pm