

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 13 September 2016

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, Debbie Taylor and Pat Witherspoon

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Clare Flanagan, Mark Hanwell, Sam Morgan and Judith Willis

Committee Services Officer:

Debbie Parker-Jones

21. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Work Programme

The following reports which were due to be considered, or possibly considered, at the meeting had been deferred to a later date:

- Housing Business Case; and
- Economic Priorities for Redditch – Annual Report.

The following items had been removed from the Work Programme until further notice:

- Applying Article 4 directions to the Council's schedule of locally listed buildings: and
- Health and Safety Policies.

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Chair

Efficiency Plan 2016/17 – Agenda Item 9

The Leader advised that this report had been pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee the previous evening, and that there were no recommendations or written comments forthcoming from O&S for the Executive Committee's consideration.

24. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 12th July 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5th July 2016.

It was noted that there were no recommendations to consider.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5th July 2016 be received and noted.

26. VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANT FUNDING 2017-18

The Committee considered a report on the funding split and themes for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) grants process for 2017/18. The report also sought approval for the proposed £75,000 Investing Grant for financial/debt support and problem solving advice to be awarded via a 3 year contract, and for any underspend in grants at the end of any year be put back into balances. The overall budget of £241k for the grants process remained the same as for 2016/17, £4k of which would facilitate the delivery of training to the VCS and external funding workshops/events. The proposed funding split and themes also remained the same.

Officers explained the rationale behind the proposed 3 year Investing Grant contract. If approved, the contract would be procured in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, against a detailed contract specification, and in accordance with the Council's policy for funding VCS organisations using the Shopping, Investing and Giving Framework. A suggestion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might consider the proposal for a 3 year contract was not supported by the majority of Members. However,

whilst the Grants Panel would no longer be involved in the process for this particular grant, Members were happy to receive any comments from the Panel on this.

Officers responded to Members' questions and confirmed that the vacant Voluntary Sector Grants Officer post was currently under review, which Officers hoped to be in a position to update Members on within the next month. An apprenticeship position was also due to be recruited to.

Members agreed that, as far as possible, every effort would be made for all monies to be allocated each year, with any underspends to be put back into balances to be kept to a minimum. A Member queried the levels of grant underspends over the preceding 2 years, which Officers agreed to look into and circulate details of after the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the themes and percentages of funding be allocated for the 2017/18 voluntary and community sector grants process as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;**
- 2) the £75,000 Investing Grant be allocated for financial/debt support and problem solving advice and be awarded via a 3 year contract; and**
- 3) any underspend in the grants at the end of any year be put back into balances.**

27. STREET NAMING REQUEST

Members considered a report which sought approval, as an exception to the Council's adopted Street Naming and Numbering Policy, to allow the currently un-named approach road from Bromsgrove Road to the Valley Stadium to be named "Sallie Swan Street". Mrs Swan was Vice-Chairman of Redditch United Football Club until her death in April 2016 and was married Mr Chris Swan, Club Chairman.

It was noted that whilst naming the access road would change the street address of the Valley Stadium, no other addresses would be affected by the addition. Any postcode changes would be at the discretion of the Royal Mail. It was a requirement under public law that policies were not rigidly applied and that the authority must be prepared to consider whether a particular set of circumstances merited an exception to current policy. Whilst best practice was to wait 3-5 years after the death of an individual before memorialising them with a street name, Members agreed that this risk was

mitigated as Mrs Swan's family had expressed support for the proposal and had given their consent for the street to be named after her. A separate instance, agreed under a former administration, of naming a street after a living person was also noted.

Members fully endorsed the proposal in light of Mrs Swan's work for the town.

RESOLVED that

an exception to the Council's adopted policy on Street Naming and Numbering be agreed, to allow the naming of a street "Sallie Swan Street", after a person not currently on the list of approved names.

28. ICT INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCE

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the outsourcing of a small part of the ICT Team. The request was being made in light of significant ongoing staff recruitment and retention difficulties within the Infrastructure section of ICT; a small specialised technical area which performed a key role in maintaining day to day delivery of the Council's ICT service.

Officers explained the difficulties in this regard and reiterated that, notwithstanding this request, the overall organisational approach remained that of sharing internal resource wherever possible. The proposal affected two posts, one of which was currently vacant.

The current cost to Redditch of providing the service was £34,093 and it was estimated that the costs for delivering this part of the service externally would be approximately £30,000 in the first year, with larger savings estimated for any additional years. If Members approved the proposal a procurement process would be undertaken and if the return on this represented value for money the outsourcing would proceed. It was noted that approval was also required from Bromsgrove District Council in order for any outsourcing to proceed.

A Member queried what would normally happen when the remaining member of staff within the Infrastructure Team was either off work due to illness or on holiday leave. Officers confirmed that in such circumstances the work would be outsourced. A Member queried the outsourcing costs for this over the preceding 2 years, which Officers agreed to look into and report back to Members on.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the proposal for the functions provided by the ICT infrastructure roles to be outsourced to an external provider be approved;
- 2) authority be delegated to the Head of Transformation and Organisational Development to undertake a tendering process to identify a suitable supplier to take on the ICT infrastructure functions; and
- 3) authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to finalise and enter into a suitable legal agreement with the supplier identified under recommendation 2) above.

29. EFFICIENCY PLAN 2016/17 - 2019/20

Members were presented with the Council's Efficiency Plan 2016/17 – 2019/20 which, if approved, would be submitted to Central Government to enable a 4 year financial settlement to be secured for the authority. As Government's response following the New Homes Bonus (NHB) consultation was still awaited, NHB funding would not form part of the 4 year settlement. It was noted that there had been no specific guidance from Government on the format or detail required for the Plan, however it was anticipated that the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and Council Plan would form the basis of this.

As confirmed under Leader Announcements earlier in the agenda, the Efficiency Plan had been pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee the previous evening and there were no recommendations or comments forthcoming from O&S for the Executive Committee's consideration.

The Plan confirmed that the Council did not accept the methodology behind the £330k "negative grant" that would be paid back to Government in 2019/20, and that there was an expectation this would be offset by financial benefits associated with the localisation of Business Rates. Notwithstanding the uncertainties, Officers were recommending the request for a 4 year funding arrangement to enable some levels of stability in the financial projections, with it being anticipated that cuts to funding could be more severe should the Council not support the Government's offer.

Key themes detailed in the report had been identified to enable Officers to manage the shortfalls in funding. Heads of Service had given their best estimates on the levels of additional income and savings they felt could be made over the four years in order to

address the budget pressures. More detailed delivery plans were currently being drawn up as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan, details of which would be brought to Members later in the year.

Officers responded to Members' questions on future savings and the Council's continuing programme of driving out waste through transformation and continuous improvement via its systems thinking approach. Significant challenges lay ahead in light of ongoing budgetary constraints and the Council needed to ensure that it was as efficient as possible before it looked at any front-line cuts. Assessing the value for money of services provided and demonstrating where resources could be aligned were key factors in addressing how to manage funding shortfalls, with all options for service delivery needing to be looked at.

RECOMMENDED that

the Efficiency Plan 2016/17 – 2019/20, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for submission to Central Government to enable a 4 year financial settlement to be secured.

30. REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - JUNE 2016 (QUARTER 1)

The Committee received a report which detailed the Council's final financial position for the General Fund Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the period April to June 2016 (Quarter 1 2016/17). Further to a previous Member request, Officers also circulated a list of current vacant posts across Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils, which included relevant recruitment updates.

The revenue and capital underspends of £61k and £234k respectively were noted. This was the first time the HRA figures had been included in the finance monitoring report and this information would continue to appear in future reports.

Officers responded to Members' questions and agreed to provide further details to Members outside of the meeting on:

- the Economic Development overspend;
- salaries and on-costs for current vacant posts;
- timescales for reviews of and/or recruitment to vacant posts; and
- clarification on the £45k Repairs and Maintenance underspend in light of the additional costs involved to the Council with the gas safety inspections.

RESOLVED that

the current financial positions for the quarter April to June 2016, as detailed in the report, be noted.

31. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

There were no outstanding referrals to consider.

32. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

It was noted that the meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) scheduled for that evening had been cancelled as the Local Plan Modifications were currently out for consultation, with the next PAP meeting due to take place on 1st November 2016.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.20 pm

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Chair