

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 12 September 2017

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Michael Chalk (observing)

Officers:

Mike Dunphy, Clare Flanagan, John Godwin, Sue Hanley, Julie Heyes, Andy Morris, Jayne Pickering, Deb Poole, Guy Revans, Samantha Skilbeck, Becky Talbot, Anna Wardell-Hill and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officer:

Debbie Parker-Jones

35. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All of the Councillor membership of the Executive Committee declared an Other Disclosable Interest in Agenda Item 6 – Leisure and Cultural Services Concessions Policy – as detailed at Minute No. 40 below.

37. 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:

- Commercialisation and Financial Strategy;
- One Public Estate Exercise; and
- Whistleblowing Policy.

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Chair

The Applying Article 4 Directions to Non-designated Heritage Assets report, which had previously appeared on the Work Programme for consideration by the Executive in December 2017, had been removed from the Work Programme at the request of Officers.

Overview and Scrutiny matters

It was noted that the Garden Waste Service report at Agenda Item 7 had been pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny ('O&S') Committee on 7th September. As the O&S Committee had unanimously endorsed all of the report recommendations there was no O&S minute extract for consideration by the Executive Committee.

It was also noted that there were no outstanding recommendations for the Executive Committee to consider from the 4th July 2017 O&S Minutes at Agenda Item 13, as the recommendation at Minute No. 25 – Council Housing Allocations Policy – had been dealt with at the 11th July 2017 Executive.

38. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON 11TH JULY 2017

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11th July 2017 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

39. REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CONSULTATIONS ON WYRE FOREST LOCAL PLAN REVIEW PREFERRED OPTION AND DRAFT WORCESTERSHIRE RAIL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Members considered the informal Officer responses submitted to Wyre Forest District Council ('WFDC') on the Wyre Forest Local Plan Review Preferred Option consultation, and to Worcestershire County Council ('WCC') on the Worcestershire Draft Rail Investment Strategy.

Due to the scheduling of the Executive Committee meetings it had not been possible for the responses to be considered by Members in advance of the deadlines for comments. It was noted that both consultations were non-statutory and that should further responses need to be submitted it should be possible to do this through the ongoing engagement the Council had with both WFDC and WCC.

Officers explained the background to the informal responses and the issues with these in relation to the town. In both cases, whilst Officers were not directly objecting to the documents it was felt that wider strategies needed to be developed as some elements had not been included in these. Redditch Borough Council needed to work with WFDC and WCC to develop the strategies in order for all parties to have a full understanding of all of the issues. The omission in the Draft Rail Strategy of any reference to an 'express' train from Redditch to Birmingham was noted, which it was stated had previously been discussed at various forums.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the draft Officer response to the Wyre Forest Local Plan Review Preferred Option, as attached at Appendix A to the report, and as submitted to Wyre Forest District Council as the formal consultation response, be approved; and**
- 2) **the draft Officer response to the Worcestershire Draft Rail Investment Strategy, as attached at Appendix B to the report, and as submitted to Worcestershire County Council as the formal consultation response, be approved; and**

RESOLVED that

- 3) **the report be noted.**

40. LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES CONCESSIONS POLICY

The Committee considered a detailed report on the introduction of a new concessionary policy for Leisure and Cultural Services. An updated list of recommendations and Section 6.2 of the report were tabled at the meeting.

Officers explained the background to the review, which had initially begun as a review of the current Reddicard scheme as part of the latest budget round. Officers highlighted the main elements of the report, including the key considerations and proposals detailed therein, and responded to Members' questions.

It was noted that the Council would still be the most generous authority in the area in terms of leisure concessions. The changes were not aimed at raising money as the majority of the headline prices would reduce under the proposals. The focus was on affordability and the greatest areas of need, with charges applying to those people who had the ability to pay for services; an approach which was supported by the majority of 1,650 survey respondents. This was important to ensure that the health and wellbeing benefits

that could be achieved by being physically active could continue to be offered to all residents, and to ensure that price was not a barrier to participation at Council-run services.

Officers advised that the somewhat complex Reddicard pricing structure had made the Council slightly uncompetitive, with the result being that pricing in some areas was above market rate. Services had to be sustainable in the long term and the Council needed to remain competitive in what was an extremely competitive and ever changing leisure market.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the new Leisure and Cultural Services Concessions Policy be approved and Officers make the required changes to increase the disability related concessions from 25% and 50% for In Work and Out of Work benefits to 50% and 100% respectively, as shown in the updated table at Section 6.2 of the report – as tabled at the Executive Committee and appended to these minutes. This change will also be made at Section 6.3 of the report where golf fees for disabled users will be based upon a 50% and 100% concession approach where applicable;**
- 2) Option 2, which maintains free of charge swimming for under 16's and introduces charges for over 60's swimming, be implemented as part of the review. This option will also include an affordability test to support those who need financial assistance to access services;**
- 3) the revised Fees and Charges supporting the new Concessions Policy, which will run from 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2018, be approved based on Appendix 2 to the report and in conjunction with list of variable prices shown as Option 2 in Section 6.1 of the report;**
- 4) the Head of Service variance be adjusted to 30% and responsibility for Officer authorisation of variances be delegated to service managers in agreement with the Leisure and Cultural Services Head of Service; and**
- 5) authority be delegated to the Leisure and Cultural Services Head of Service to vary the Concessions Policy in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder within the first 12 months of operation, to address any unforeseen issues that emerge.**

(Prior to consideration of this item, all of the Councillor membership of the Executive Committee declared Other Disclosable Interests in this matter by virtue of their memberships of / links to the organisations detailed below, which currently held meetings at the Town Hall and who were not charged for room hire. All of the Councillors remained in the room and participated in the consideration of, and voting on, this matter.

Councillor	Organisation
Joe Baker	Labour Party Friends of Gruchet-le-Valasse Friends of Auxerre
Juliet Brunner	Conservative Party
Debbie Chance	Labour Party Friends of Gruchet-le-Valasse
Greg Chance	Labour Party Friends of Gruchet-le-Valasse
Brandon Clayton	Conservative Party
John Fisher	Labour Party Redditch One World Link
Bill Hartnett	Labour Party Board of Redditch Co-operative Homes Friends of Gruchet-le-Valasse Friends of Auxerre
Mark Shurmer	Labour Party
Pat Witherspoon	Labour Party Redditch Older People's Forum Board of Redditch Co-operative Homes Friends of Gruchet-le-Valasse Friends of Auxerre

41. REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL GARDEN WASTE SERVICE

Members considered a report on the proposed introduction of a seasonal (March to November inclusive) garden waste service for the town. Officers presented the report and gave a presentation to Members on the key elements of the service, in particular on the financial elements of this, and responded to Members' questions in this regard. As detailed under Leader's Announcements it was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised this report on 7th September 2017 and had unanimously endorsed all of the report recommendations.

It was noted that the results of two surveys undertaken by Officers showed that there was demand for the service, with 72% of 1000 social media and postal respondents being in favour of this. In relation to the Map of consultation responses included in the agenda papers, Officers clarified that whilst Feckenham was covered by the proposed service, and had been included in the

consultation process, no responses had been received from any Feckenham residents.

In view of the survey responses, together with the fact that there was no longer any financial risk to the Council, and given that the environmental impact was now reported to be significantly different (reduced) to when a garden waste service had previously been considered by the Council in 2010, Members felt that the time was now right for the service to be introduced. Members also noted that notwithstanding the introduction of a garden waste service, both they and Officers fully advocated the composting of garden waste at home where possible, and would endeavour to encourage residents to do this.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) from March 2018 Redditch Borough Council introduce, and Bromsgrove District Council run as part of the shared services agreement for Environmental services, a seasonal (March to November inclusive) garden waste service on behalf of Redditch Borough Council;**
- 2) the charge for the service be £45 for the initial season, to be increased in line with fees and charges as appropriate;**
- 3) a set-up fee of £20 per customer be charged in the first year of service and for new customers in each following year;**
- 4) an introductory offer of a £10 set-up fee be used to encourage early sign-up before the 31st January 2018;**
- 5) the Head of Environmental Services, in consultation with the designated Portfolio Holder, be granted authority to temporarily reduce or remove the set-up fee as a promotional tool to increase and encourage subscriptions;**
- 6) should the Recommended Option be pursued, a capital commitment for the next 4 years of £31k in year 1 and £15k in years 2 to 4 be included in the Capital Programme;**
- 7) once the maximum number of customers has been approached a customer waiting list be employed and Officers bring a further report and business case with options for extending the service should it be required;**
- 8) the chargeable Orange Sack Service be formally retired as part of the new service changes; and**

- 9) a communication plan be devised and implemented to advise residents of the changes to Redditch Borough Council's waste collection service and the requirement to use brown bins only for garden waste.

42. VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Committee considered a report on the funding split and themes for the Voluntary and Community Sector grants process for 2018/19. The report also sought a change to the Help Me to Live My Life Independently £35k pot for discounted childcare, to widen out the scope of this theme to enable organisations to bid for funding for general projects focussed on children and young people.

All Members noted the importance of the grants process and of the work carried out by recipient organisations who delivered vital services to residents. Whilst the Council had limited resources it always aimed to allocate grants in the best way possible, based on the Council's Strategic Purposes. Members reiterated the need to ensure that details of the grants programme reached as many organisations as possible, both large and small, to ensure that all were aware of this. The use of social media was also encouraged in spreading details of the grants programme. Members highlighted the importance of organisations not relying solely on Council funding, and encouraged all organisations to seek additional funding in order to avoid financial difficulties should a grant not be awarded to them.

Some Members raised concerns on the back of complaints received from Redditch residents regarding a reported lack of obvious presence of the Redditch arm of Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch, being advised to visit the Bromsgrove office and facing difficulties getting through on the telephone lines. Officers agreed to take Members' comments back to Citizens Advice.

RECOMMENDED that

the themes and percentages funding be allocated for the 2018/19 voluntary and community sector grants process as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

43. DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

Members were asked to consider an updated version of the Dignity at Work Policy ('the Policy').

Officers advised that the Council and the Trade Unions were committed to working towards creating a working environment in which all employees were treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and where a zero tolerance approach to harassment, discrimination, bullying or victimisation was taken. The Policy had been seen and commented upon by the Corporate Management Team, Trade Unions and Staff Survey Programme Board, all of whom were supportive of this.

Members supported the Policy and felt that staff welfare was of paramount importance to the Council, with staff being deemed to be the Council's most valuable asset.

RECOMMENDED that

the Dignity at Work Policy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and adopted.

44. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Members were asked to consider a new Human Resources and Organisational Development Strategy ('the Strategy').

The Strategy, which was closely linked and should be read in conjunction with the Council Plan, detailed the approach the Council planned to take to ensure it had employees with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time, to enable the organisation to deliver its Strategic Purposes in the most effective way.

Members supported the Strategy and noted that this had been seen and commented upon by the Trade Unions, who were supportive of its contents.

A Member requested that, in future, any proposed new or revised policy/strategy reports clearly highlight any changes which were being proposed to existing policies/strategies, in order to avoid Members having to compare these with previous documents, which Officers undertook to do.

RECOMMENDED that

the Human Resources and Organisation Development Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and adopted.

45. JOB EVALUATION POLICY

Members were asked to consider a new Job Evaluation ('JE') Policy ('the Policy'), which set out the formal process for re-evaluating posts within the Council.

It was noted that the Policy had been agreed by the Job Evaluation Steering Group, which included Trade Union representatives from UNISON, GMB and Unite.

Officers explained the JE process and responded to Members' questions, with it being noted that it was the post, and not the person, who was subject to evaluation.

RECOMMENDED that

the Job Evaluation Policy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and adopted.

46. FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 2017/18

Members 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 2017 (Quarter 1 2017/18).

Officers explained that on the back of discussions with the Executive and the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, a summary position only, with general supporting financial commentary, was being given on the Revenue Budget, with Officers due to discuss the more detailed elements with their respective Portfolio Holders. It was noted that there was an £87k underspend at the end of the first quarter, which Officers detailed the key aspects of.

Officers went on to highlight the main elements of the Capital Budget Summary, notably the 'Help me find somewhere to live in my locality' underspend, together with the HRA underspends for Repairs and Maintenance and Supervision and Management. Officers were working on producing better profiles of spend based on realistic spend throughout the year, and stated that they would also provide a breakdown of spend against the £19m Financial Reserves in the Quarter 2 report.

In relation to the Efficiency Plan, Officers advised that a number of savings had been delivered, further details of which would be included in the Quarter 2 report. Members queried why only £85k of the proposed £1.572m savings set out in the Efficiency Plan for 2017/18 had been identified. Officers advised that it had not been possible to analyse all of the information in Quarter 1 and that full

details would therefore be set out in the Quarter 2 report. The issue of vacancies was raised and Officers undertook to include a schedule of vacant posts which had been deleted in the Quarter 2 report.

Issues highlighted by Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, as part of their Audit Findings Report for 2016/17, were raised. Officers stated that they accepted that there were issues in relation to the identification and monitoring of savings, and advised that they would be meeting with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council in October to look at their processes. Equally, it was noted from the Statement of Accounts briefing which had taken place the previous evening that progress had been made by the Council in both this and other areas, and that the Council was moving in the right direction.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the 2017/18 Capital Programme be increased by £209k to include the Section 106 projects detailed in Appendix 3 to the report; and**

RESOLVED that

- 2) **the current financial position for the quarter April to June 2017, as detailed in the report, be noted.**

47. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 4TH JULY 2017

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th July 2017.

It was noted that there were no recommendations to consider, with the recommendation at Minute No. 25 – Council Housing Allocations Policy – having been dealt with at the 11th July Executive.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th July 2017 be received and noted.

48. MINUTES / REFERRALS - TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER AND OUTSTANDING MINUTES OR REFERRALS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

There were no outstanding referrals to consider.

**49. CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - VERBAL UPDATE FROM
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND
REGULATORY SERVICES (IF APPLICABLE)**

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services confirmed that there was no update to be given in relation to the Corporate Parenting Board.

50. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

Members received the regular update report on the work of the Executive Committee's Advisory Panels and similar bodies which reported via the Executive Committee.

Members referred to the Planning Advisory Panel ('PAP') meeting which had taken place earlier that evening, and advised that a further PAP meeting was due to take place shortly to discuss the broad outline plans for the District Centres. It was also reported that a meeting of the Redditch Partnership Economic Theme Group was due to take place shortly.

RESOLVED that

the report and updates provided be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.15 pm

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Chair