

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 26th October,
2017

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jane Potter (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Roger Bennett, Natalie Brookes, Andrew Fry, Paul Swansborough, David Thain, Jennifer Wheeler and Nina Wood-Ford

Also Present:

Chris Malkin and Stephen Morton (V4)

Officers:

Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering and David Riley

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

40. LOCAL DISCRETIONARY RELIEF SCHEME - PRE-SCRUTINY (REVENUE SERVICES MANAGER)

The Financial Support Manager introduced the report and in so doing explained to Members that the last revaluation had taken place in April 2010 and that the 2017 revaluation resulted in a number of businesses at a national level facing large increases to their liability. The Government had therefore provided local authorities with funding in order that they might design their own local schemes to support rate payers facing any such increases.

The scheme had been designed to ensure that the costs of relief remained within the allocated funding whilst maximising support for those eligible. The exact criteria was detailed within the report and included the ratepayer occupying fewer than four hereditaments within England, occupying the premises for ordinary commercial business and not using the premises for an excluded purpose. The expected costs were also detailed within the report.

.....
Chair

Following presentation of the report Members raised a number of points which were discussed in more detail:

- Whether from the modelling there were sufficient funds available to cover the costs of the relief. The Financial Support Manager confirmed that the scheme had been designed to maximise support.
- The types of excluded premises.
- Air B&B premises and any future inclusion. The Financial Support Manager explained that bed and breakfast premises were rateable when accommodation for six or more people was provided.

Following further discussion the Committee

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the criteria for allocation of Discretionary Revaluation support as appended to the report at appendix 1 are adopted; and**
- 2) **the Executive Director of Finance is provided with delegated authority, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and leader of the opposition, to adjust the percentage relief awarded in years 2018/19 and onwards in order to ensure that the maximum level of support is provided to businesses and that the Government funding meets the overall costs of the relief.**

41. STAFF SURVEY JOINT SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT (COUNCILLOR JANE POTTER)

The Chair, as Vice Chair of the Staff Survey Joint Task Group, delivered a short presentation which covered the following areas:

- Background information – it was highlighted that this had been the first piece of joint working between the scrutiny functions of both Bromsgrove and Redditch.
- The staff survey had been an area of concern, particularly at Bromsgrove over a number of years, and it was noted that little progress appeared to have been made since the first survey was carried out in 2013.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 26th October, 2017

- The recommendations had focused in particular on the importance of staff being aware of Members' concerns and desire to ensure that staff were being listened to and actions were being put in place to address the concerns which had been raised. It was also important for staff to understand that Members would monitor those actions.
- The group had acknowledged the importance of joint working and that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group (in Redditch) and Measures Dashboard Working Group (in Bromsgrove) would work together to ensure that performance management processes and performance targets were considered jointly.
- A number of observations and conclusions had been reached including the need to ensure that 1-2-1s and team meetings took place regularly and that communication and the aims of a team were clear at all levels.
- The need to ensure that the corporate dashboard was fit for purpose and accessible, particularly to Members – it was noted that improvements had been made and that Members were able to access the dashboard more readily.
- It was questioned whether the strategic purposes continued to be relevant, particularly as each Council had very different demographics, and whether these should be realigned to each Council.

Following the presentation, it was

RESOLVED that

- 1) **a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny function be appointed to the role of Leader Councillor for Supporting Staff;**
- 2) **a quarterly update on the Programme Board's Action Plan be received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and**
- 3) **the Performance Scrutiny (RBC) and Measures Dashboard (BDS) Working Groups' terms of reference be updated to include an area covering performance management processes, performance targets and objective setting across both authorities.**

RECOMMENDED that

the Lead Councillor for Supporting Staff and the relevant Portfolio Holder from each Council assist in the formulation of all future staff surveys and attend staff briefings.

Following further discussion it was agreed that the appointment of a Lead Councillor for Supporting Staff would be deferred until the next meeting in order for Members to consider whether they would like to put their names forward for this role. Members were asked to contact the Senior Democratic Services Officer and the Chair of the Committee if they wished to be considered for this role.

47. FUTURE LEISURE SERVICE PROVISION (COUNCILLOR POTTER AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES)

The Chair welcomed Mr Steve Morton and Mr Chris Malkin from V4 who gave a presentation in respect of Management Options for Leisure and Cultural Services. She explained that the majority of the presentation would be in public session, but for commercial reasons the final three slides would need to be considered in private session.

Mr Morton thanked Members for being given the opportunity to present V4's findings and advised that the presentation was an overview of the full report which Members could find within their agenda packs. The presentation (attached at appendix 1) covered a number of key areas including:

- Background information in respect of V4 and the experience of the company in this field, which included successfully facilitating the establishment of 23 new operating models across the UK for local authorities.
- A client base which included the public sector – Councils, the NHS and social enterprises, together with private sector clients.
- Details of the specific requirements of the Council, which were typical of those of any local authority, with the key drivers being “more people more active” and efficiency savings whilst ensuring staff protection.
- The response rate to the consultation which had been carried out by the Council, which showed the high level of interest among local residents.
- The scope of work that V4 had worked to – this included which model would best meet the needs of the Council, what was possible within the new procurement regulations, the potential financial savings of each model and the best fit to make it work for the future.
- How future arrangements could meet the Council's strategic purpose ‘provide good things for me to see, do and visit’, which brought with it competing and complementary issues. It

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 26th October, 2017

was highlighted that it was the Council's decision as to how that balance would be achieved.

- Options available – this was broken down into two categories, Council controlled and Outsourced. Details were provided in respect of each option.
- The criteria and weightings which had been applied to each option as part of the work that had been carried out.
- By applying those weightings the option which was best suited to the needs of the Council based on the information V4 had been provided with was a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC).
- An LATC would satisfy the bulk of the needs of the Council. The other 3 options were of a similar score, with the LATC being 15% higher than these.

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which relates to the financial and business affairs of the local authority].

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.45 pm