

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 14th June, 2011

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), Councillor Mark Shurmer (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Peter Anderson, Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Gay Hopkins and Luke Stephens

Also Present:

Councillor Robin King and Michael Collins

Officers:

W Beard, H Bennett and L Tompkin

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and M Craggs

16. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brenda Quinney.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th May 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. ACTIONS LIST

Members considered the latest version of the Committee's Actions List.

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Chair

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A number of actions remained outstanding. The Committee was informed that the issue of presenting information about service performance to the public was to be discussed by the Budget Jury during its forthcoming meetings in July. Members were also informed that Council policy regarding Members' ICT facilities was now expected to be completed in July.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Actions List be noted.

20. CONSIDERATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE FORWARD PLAN

There were no call-ins and no items were identified on the Council's Forward Plan as suitable for further scrutiny.

The Committee was informed that a meeting had been arranged in July between the Leader of Redditch Borough Council, Councillor Carole Gandy, with Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport, Councillor John Smith, at which it was expected that the final report of the Road Gritting Short Sharp Review would be discussed.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 31st May 2011 be noted.

21. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no draft scoping documents for consideration.

22. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE

The Chair of the Redditch Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Bill Hartnett, delivered an update on matters regarding alcohol related hospital admissions that had been addressed by the Panel. The Committee was asked to determine whether any action should be taken following the receipt of a responding letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health, Anne Milton MP, to Councillor Bill Hartnett regarding hospital admissions procedures for intoxicated young people.

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The letter stated that the decision on whether to admit an intoxicated young person overnight is made on a case-by-case basis in Worcestershire. This was broadly consistent with the approach taken across the country.

Members expressed concern about the implications of excessive alcohol consumption for individual wellbeing and its wider affects on the local community. It was felt that alcohol was a prime cause of crime and disorder in society and that a softer stance was being taken in the UK to tackle excessive alcohol consumption compared to its European neighbours. However, it was suggested that UK governments were generally reluctant to impose stringent measures on excessive alcohol consumption due to the general popularity of the drug.

Following discussion, it was felt that further time should be given to consider an appropriate way forward.

RESOLVED that

the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee on 5th July 2011.

23. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Members were advised that the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to take place on 21st June 2011.

24. EXTERNAL REFURBISHMENT OF HOUSING STOCK - ACTION UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report containing an update on a number of additional actions requested by the Executive Committee in January 2011 in relation to the work of the External Refurbishment of Housing Stock Short, Sharp Review that was completed in December 2010. Officers provided an update on each of the three recommendations.

Regarding recommendation 2, Members were informed that the lintels on a block of 12 garages in Rushock Close had been painted as part of a trial. Photographic evidence was provided to illustrate the improvement to the appearance of the garages. However, no budget was currently in place for extending this work to the remaining garages on both Rushock Close and Ombersley Close.

There was general support amongst committee members for the inclusion of the works for painting garage lintels in the capital

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programme. However, Members concurred that it was important to establish at what stage in the 30 year capital programme these works would be undertaken. Indeed, preference was expressed for this work to be completed in the first few years of the programme.

In relation to recommendation 4, Officers undertook a review on the maintenance of small strips of land located close to private properties and public spaces in Woodrow. Officers felt that the majority of strips of land in the area were already being effectively maintained by Council Officers.

Regarding recommendation 10, Members were informed that a consultation with Council tenants and owner occupiers to find out whether they would support repainting of the pebbledash properties on Ombersley Close and Rushock Close had been added to the Housing Services' consultation plan that was to commence in March 2012.

Figures tabled during the meeting indicated that the works requested by the group, to redecorate the pebbledash facades of Ombersley Close and Rushock Close, could be delivered at a cost of £218,443.00. These works could apply to a total of 85 properties located in these closes including 35 council properties and 49 owner occupied properties. However, there was currently no budget available for repairing and repainting the rough case on all applicable properties if this was to be requested by residents.

The Committee noted the considerable financial costs involved in undertaking the suggested works. Members commented, though, that the mood and atmosphere of the areas concerned would be lifted if the appearance of the properties was enhanced. It was also understood that many residents were in favour of any improvement work taking place. Therefore, Members suggested that further work should be undertaken to identify improvement works that could be completed at a lower financial cost to the Council on the properties.

RESOLVED that:

Members agreed to defer further consideration of the report and requested that the following actions be taken prior to reconsideration:

- 1) Members of the Greenlands ward be personally consulted over Officers' proposals;**

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- 2) Officers provide an estimate of the time during the Capital Programme when the lintels located on garages could be decorated; and
- 3) Officers to investigate alternative and less expensive methods for decorating the pebbledash facades of the houses located on Ombersley Close and Rushock Close.

25. SCRUTINY TOPICS - BRAINSTORM

The Committee undertook a brainstorming session to identify suitable subjects for scrutiny in 2011/12. The following topics were proposed:

a) Provision of Youth Services

Members proposed that a Task and Finish Review be undertaken into the provision of youth services for young people in Redditch. It was felt that action should be taken to mitigate the affects of potential funding cuts at Worcestershire County Council to youth services. The Committee agreed that no scoping document should be submitted for the consideration of members on this subject until a meeting had taken place to discuss youth issues with the Worcestershire County Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Young People's Social Care, Councillor Elizabeth Eyre, later in the summer. The committee agreed that if launched, the review would be led by Councillor Simon Chalk.

b) Young People in Sport

On a similar theme, it was suggested that a review be undertaken into opportunities for young people to participate in sporting activities in Redditch. It was felt that this topic was particularly timely given the forthcoming 2012 Olympics in London. It was agreed that this subject would be suitable for a Short, Sharp Review. Members agreed that, if launched, the review would be led by Councillor Luke Stephens.

c) Energy Consumption

The Committee discussed a proposal to review energy consumption and ways to encourage greater energy efficiency. Councillor Anderson, who proposed the review, requested time to undertake independent research before submitting a scoping document on the subject.

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d) Improving recycling

It was also proposed that a Short, Sharp Review be undertaken into Identifying ways to improve recycling rates in Redditch. Relevant officers were praised for the work that was already undertaken to encourage recycling. However, the Committee agreed that further progress could be made to increase recycling rates across the Borough and that this review would correspond with a number of the Council's priorities. Members concurred that if launched, the review would be led by Councillor Gay Hopkins.

e) Equalities and Diversity

The Committee also discussed a proposed equalities and diversity review, focusing on staff employed at the Council. It was agreed that this review would encompass consideration of age, ethnicity, gender and disabilities in relation to recruitment and career progression within the organisation.

However, the Committee recognised that due to the ongoing Shared Services Programme both the Council's Human Resources and the Unions might not have the capacity to support the review at this stage. Therefore it was agreed that the proposal would be reconsidered later in the municipal year.

f) Members' IT provision

The Committee discussed the possibility of reviewing IT provision to Members, though discounted the topics as a suitable subject for scrutiny. However, Members expressed concerns about the removal of the courier service for the delivery of Members' post. The Committee suggested that improvements first needed to be made to Members' IT support to ensure that Council papers could be accessed effectively by members in an electronic format. Members also questioned the environmental impact that would result from the withdrawal of the courier and the requirement for Councillors to collect their papers from the Town Hall.

RESOLVED that:

relevant Members and Officers meet to develop scoping documents for the proposed reviews for consideration at forthcoming meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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26. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

27. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were informed that the Quarterly Budget Monitoring Report for January to March 2011 would now be received at the Committee meeting of 26th July 2011.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.50 pm