

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 18th October, 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, Brenda Quinney, Alan Mason and Luke Stephens

Also Present:

Michael Collins (Vice Chair of the Standards Committee)
Mrs S Boyd and Mrs M Morley (petitioners representing the war memorial petition).

Officers:

C Felton, L Hadley, J Staniland and L Tompkin

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and M Craggs

94. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

96. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27th September 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

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97. ACTIONS LIST

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

As requested at the previous meeting, information on the number of affordable housing units that had been provided as part of the new housing development at Windsor Heights had been circulated amongst Members. All actions had subsequently been completed.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Actions List be noted.

98. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee reviewed the contents of the Forward Plan and considered whether any items were suitable for scrutiny.

Members noted that road gritting and snow clearance arrangements had formed the subject of a Short, Sharp Scrutiny review earlier in the year. Under these circumstances the Committee concurred that Members had appropriate expertise in the subject to make a useful contribution to the Executive Committee's decision making process through pre-scrutiny of a report on gritting and snow clearance, which was due to be considered by the Executive Committee on 15th November 2011. Consideration of this item would also provide the Committee with an opportunity to assess progress that had been made in relation to gritting and snow clearance procedures since the review had concluded.

Finally, Members requested further information on the options to be considered by the Executive Committee on 6th December 2011 regarding the Children's Centres Contract.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the report *Gritting and Snow Clearance - Redditch Borough Council Approach* be received at the Committee meeting on 8th November 2011 for pre scrutiny; and**
- 2) **the Executive Committee minutes for 4th October 2011 be noted.**

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99. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no draft scoping documents.

100. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee received the following reports in relation to current reviews.

a) Facilities for Disabled People – Chair, Councillor Alan Mason

The Group was to reconsider the scope of the review following concern that this was too wide.

The Group had not met since the last Committee meeting, however was hoping to meet during the week commencing Monday 24th October.

b) Promoting Sporting Participation – Chair, Councillor Luke Stephens

The Group had recently held a meeting to review what it had learned so far. The Council's Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, had attended the meeting to provide his perspective.

The Council's Sports Development and Physical Activity Manager had been invited to attend the Group's next meeting on 27th October to discuss local provision for disabled sporting participation.

c) Youth Service Provision – Chair, Councillor Simon Chalk

Signage for the Local Democracy Day on 20th October promoting youth participation had been agreed at the Group's most recent meeting.

The next meeting of the Group was scheduled for 19th October.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

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101. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Brenda Quinney provided an update on the work of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), as Redditch Borough Council's representative.

At its most recent meeting on 18th October 2011, the HOSC received a presentation on the performance of the Out of Hours service across the county. The service was said to be performing well in Worcestershire, especially when compared to the national picture. Members subsequently suggested that the greater use of this service needed to be further promoted in Redditch.

Members heard that new procedures had been introduced at the Alexandra Hospital to improve the quality of care for elderly residents. Extra beds had also been provided on a full time capacity for general use.

Councillor Quinney informed Members that she would also be updating the HOSC on the performance of the new stroke service at the Alexandra Hospital.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

102. PETITION - WAR MEMORIAL

The Committee considered a petition regarding the Redditch War Memorial.

The Chair invited lead petitioner and other members of the public to speak to the petition. The invited speakers informed the Committee that in recent months there had been a noticeable increase in anti-social behaviour around the War Memorial. In particular, Members heard that members of the public were regularly sitting on the Memorial itself. This was attributed to a lack of nearby public benches. It was also reported that excess litter had damaged the aesthetic appearance of the area.

It was reported that Skateboarders were often in and around the area whilst others rode quickly through on bikes. The increased noise that had resulted was incongruous to the expectation that the area should be a place for quiet reflection. Members sought clarification on the legality of riding a bike in a pedestrian area.

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Taken altogether it was felt that such anti-social behaviour was not only disrespectful but also potentially upsetting for those who wished to remember deceased loved ones in a quiet and peaceful setting. Furthermore, it was felt that some residents would be especially sensitive to this prior to Armistice Day.

Members were firmly supportive of the principle behind the petition and expressed concerns about anti-social behaviour beside the war memorial. However, it was suggested that many of those who were acting in an anti-social manner could be unaware that their actions would be considered by others to be disrespectful. It was subsequently proposed that some residents needed to be reminded of the Memorial's significance.

Members considered various options developed by Officers for swiftly restoring the area to its full respectability (Appendix A). The first of these options would be to install planters around the war memorial, which could be moved as and when required. The second option would involve installation of chain linked barriers around the war memorial.

The Committee concluded that they were keen to ensure that any measures taken to deter people from sitting on the War Memorial and reduce anti-social behaviour in general did not compromise public access to the area nor reduce its aesthetic appeal. Under these circumstances Members favoured the installation of planters around the War Memorial.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) that planters be installed around the war memorial to deter people from sitting on the war memorial;**
- 2) a campaign of education about the war memorial be launched to increase awareness of the purpose of the war memorial;**
- 3) the Executive Committee ask Officers to investigate the possibility of introducing improved signage for the war memorial;**
- 4) the Executive Committee ask Officers to investigate the possibility of introducing seating in the area;**
- 5) the Executive Committee ask Officers to investigate the possibility of installing an extra litter bin in the area and**

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RESOLVED that

- 1) Officers provide an update to the Committee in approximately six months on the effectiveness of the actions taken to tackle anti-social behaviour around the War Memorial; and**
- 2) the petition be noted.**

103. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORT - HOUSING, LOCAL ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The Committee received a written report which detailed the performance of services within the remit of the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Local Environment and Health, Councillor Brandon Clayton.

On the basis of the information contained within the report Members requested that the following questions be addressed by the Portfolio Holder in his Annual Report to the Committee, which was scheduled to be delivered on 8th November 2011.

- 1) What action has been taken to provide more social housing in Redditch?
- 2) What are the current trends in relation to:
 - a) homelessness enquiries to Redditch Borough Council?
 - b) the number of statutorily homeless people being housed by Redditch Borough Council?
- 3) What affect on the capital programme will the purchase of the housing stock have?
- 4) What action is Redditch Borough Council taking to reduce the number of empty properties within the town to as close to zero as possible? What obstacles, if any, are there in relation to reducing the number of empty properties?
- 5) What initiatives are you considering to increase the rates of recycling in Redditch?

RESOLVED that

the content of the written performance report be noted.

104. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORT - COMMUNITY SAFETY AND REGULATORY SERVICES WRITTEN REPORT

The Committee received a written report which detailed the performance of services within the remit of the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services, Councillor Juliet Brunner.

On the basis of the information contained within the report Members requested that the following questions be addressed by the Portfolio Holder in her Annual Report to the Committee, which was scheduled to be delivered on 29th November 2011.

- 1) What affect will the cuts in Police numbers have on crime and disorder in Redditch?
- 2) What will the future provision of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) be in Redditch?
- 3) To what extent have the location of CCTV cameras in Redditch been reviewed and, in particular, how possible would it be to relocate CCTV cameras from existing locations to areas of greater need if considered necessary?
- 4) What action, if any, is planned to address the noise caused by scrap metal dealers? To what extent can this be addressed through licensing processes?
- 5) What will the implications of the introduction of directly elected police commissioners for community safety budgets? What implications, if any, will there be for CCTV systems in the town?

RESOLVED that

the content of the written performance report be noted.

105. MEETING OF THE CHAIR WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - FEEDBACK

The Chair expressed concern that the quarterly meetings with the Leader of the Council had not been as productive as initially hoped and commented that the discontinuation of these meetings would not prevent dialogue as and when necessary.

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It was suggested that inviting Officers to officially record the meetings could increase their productiveness. However, the Chair suggested that this would be unlikely.

Members were informed that as the meetings were now a requirement as part of the Council's constitution, any proposal for its termination would need to be approved by the Constitutional Review Working Party.

RECOMMENDED that

the quarterly meetings between the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Leader of the Council be removed as a requirement from the Council's constitution.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

106. JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE SCRUTINY CHAIRS' AND VICE CHAIRS' NETWORK MEETING - FEEDBACK

The Chair provided feedback from the Worcestershire Scrutiny Chairs' and Vice-Chairs' Network meeting on 3rd October 2011 at Malvern District Council.

Members were advised that a number of issues were discussed at the meeting, including the effectiveness of local scrutiny in relation to health, and crime and disorder. The meeting reaffirmed the Chair's view that scrutiny was working well in Redditch. In particular, Redditch Borough Council's arrangements for Crime and Disorder Scrutiny and for receiving regular updates from the Council's representative on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee were considered to be representative of good practice.

The Committee debated the feasibility of attending a county-wide scrutiny training session. It had been commented that Members had already received two scrutiny training sessions at the start of the municipal year. However, the Committee was keen to work with other Councils over the delivery of joint scrutiny training where appropriate. It was therefore suggested that the Council should offer to be involved in scoping training session to help make it more worthwhile and that further consideration be made after the costs involved had been confirmed.

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RESOLVED that

- 1) the subject of joint scrutiny training be considered at a following meeting of the Committee, following confirmation of the financial costs involved; and
- 2) the report be noted.

107. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

108. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were advised that the written performance report for services within the remit of the portfolio for Leisure and Tourism would be received at the Committee meeting on 29th November 2011 at the request of the Chair. The meeting scheduled for 3rd January 2012 had subsequently been cancelled due to lack of business.

At its next meeting on 8th November 2011, the Committee was due to receive an appeal to the decision of Council on 5th September 2011 regarding the petition to preserve green belt land in Brockhill. An explanation for the appeal would be provided in the agenda pack for the meeting.

The Committee would also receive at a meeting on 29th November 2011 a presentation on the implementation of the housing trailblazers' scheme. The scheme had links to the scrutiny review of homelessness that was completed in 2006.

Finally, Members were advised that a series of provisional dates had been set in early 2012 for parliamentary scrutiny seminars. Expressions of interest were to be submitted to relevant Officers.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.23 pm