

Executive Committee

18th September 2012

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Rebecca Blake, Michael Braley, Carole Gandy, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer, Luke Stephens and Debbie Taylor

Officers:

K Dicks, C Felton, J Godwin, D Hancox, S Hanley, J Heyes, S Horrobin, T Kristunas and S Sellers

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

62. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

64. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the following items of business, scheduled on the Forward Plan to be dealt with at this meeting, had been rescheduled to a later meeting of the Committee:

- Concessionary Rents Policy; and
- Sickness Policy – Review.

65. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 21st August 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

66. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

A report was received which set out proposals for the Localisation of Council Tax Support and the measures which might form the basis of a consultation exercise during coming months. The Council needed to consider such a course of action as a Council Tax billing authority.

The Committee was informed of the expectation county-wide that only around half of the anticipated shortfall would be collected in Worcestershire, with the most significant impact being to the revenue of the major precepting authority, the County Council. The Borough Council, the West Mercia Police Authority and Hereford and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority would also experience cuts to their revenue. Officers explained that the lack of a county-wide consensus on the approach to bridging the shortfall had resulted from Wyre Forest District Council adopting a unilateral approach in response to its particular financial situation.

Members noted that a body of measures had been compiled for the purposes of the consultation which, for Redditch, had the potential to fund the total shortfall should they be implemented in their entirety. Members regretted that they were placed in a position by central Government whereby they needed to impose this additional expense on local residents. It was generally accepted that those who were in a better position to pay should bear the majority of the burden. Officers undertook to provide Councillor Gandy with additional information on second-home ownership in the Borough following the meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) consultation on a local Council Tax support scheme and technical reforms to Council Tax commence with key stakeholders for a minimum 8 week period on the basis set out in the report be approved; and**
- 2) the submission of a further report on Council Tax support and technical reforms to Council Tax for Executive Committee consideration following the consultation be noted and that recommendations on this will be made to full Council.**

67. SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE AND HEALTH FOR PERIOD ENDING 30TH JUNE 2012

The Committee considered the latest quarterly monitoring report which provided details of the Council's performance with respect to sickness absence. Officers informed the Committee that the Council

was in a favourable position compared to the same period the previous year and that sickness absence was now lower than for the average across the public sector. It was noted that sickness absence was approaching levels to be found in the private sector and Members expressed the desire that the recent improvements be continued and built upon.

RESOLVED that

the data relating to the first quarter (April – June 2012) be noted.

68. FLY-POSTING ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY

Members received a presentation and report detailing the key points to be introduced through a new Fly-Posting Enforcement Strategy which was being jointly introduced with Bromsgrove District Council. It was noted at the outset that Bromsgrove District Council Cabinet had recommended approval of the Joint Strategy, whilst suggesting that adequate publicity measures be in place and that non-commercial organisations be treated in a fair manner.

Officers highlighted that this was the first time the Council had actively targeted this problem in a coordinated manner, bringing together the disparate legislative strands into a common strategic approach. Members warmly welcomed the focus on this aspect of anti-social behaviour and wished it success. In response to a specific query around the 48 hour notice period for removal of adverts containing the details of the advert owner or beneficiary, Officers undertook to investigate whether there was any scope to deal with instances of short-term advertising or whether the notice period was prescribed through legislation.

RECOMMENDED that

the Joint Fly-Posting Enforcement Strategy and associated policies attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

69. ROUNDABOUT SPONSORSHIP POLICY

The Committee considered a report which set out proposals for engagement with local businesses and commercial organisations to realise sponsorship opportunities within high profile locations across the Borough. The background to submission of this report was the need to achieve income targets for Leisure and Cultural Services and a long-standing desire by Members and Officers to use the various roundabouts in the Borough for this purpose.

Members were informed that the Council had previously held detailed discussions with external parties with a view to achieving sponsorship of various roundabouts, but Officers were now of the opinion that internal control of the process was the most effective and beneficial way to proceed. The Committee warmly welcomed the progress that was being made in this regard and expressed the wish that Officers and potential sponsors adopt an imaginative approach to this opportunity, for instance by exploring the potential for good quality public art.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the policy on Sponsorship and Advertising on roundabouts be approved and adopted; and**
- 2) **authority be delegated to the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism to agree the sponsorship fees with a maximum 20% plus/minus variance of approved charges.**

70. DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY - SALOP ROAD COMMUNITY CENTRE AND 132 OAKLY ROAD

A report was considered which was requesting the Committee to declare two properties, the former Salop Road Community Centre and 132 Oakly Road, as surplus to requirements and thereby available for disposal.

Members were informed that both properties had been offered to Housing Services which had declined in both instances as neither property was deemed suitable for letting as part of the Council's housing stock. In addition, the Salop Road property had been available for a number of years but Officers had been unable to let it to any other organisation.

Whilst the disposal of these two properties was supported on this occasion, there was some concern expressed that the Council develop a proper ongoing property strategy to avoid the possibility of an incremental diminution of the Council's property assets. Officers confirmed that a review was taking place of wider public and community sector assets with a view to the development of a strategy in due course.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the site of the former Community Centre at Salop Road; and**

- 2) the former refuge, 132 Oakly Road

be declared surplus to requirements and available for disposal.

**71. VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS
PROGRAMME 2013/14**

A report containing recommendations as to the funding split and themes for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) grants process for 2013/14 was considered by Members. Following an audit of the VCS Grants Policy, a number of proposals were also being recommended in order that the policy might be strengthened.

The Committee highlighted the levels of support to the VCS which had been provided by the Council over a number of years and praised the support provided to the grants process and local organisations by the Council's Voluntary Sector Grants Coordinator. In response to a query regarding disagreements over the provision of adequate financial information by VCS organisations following requests from the Council, Officers commented that the strengthening of the Policy was being undertaken for reasons such as this.

RECOMMEND that

- 1) the following themes and percentages of funding be allocated for the 2013/14 voluntary and community sector grants process:
- i) Independent Communities = £135,000 – see 3.3.1
 - ii) Community Development = £ 55,000 – see 3.3.2
 - iii) Thriving Communities = £ 20,000 – see 3.3.3
 - iv) Community Welfare = £ 20,000 – see 3.3.4
 - v) Stronger Communities Grant Programme = £ 15,000 – see 3.3.5
 - vi) £1,000 be allocated from the Grants budget for the use by the Grants Team to deliver:
 - a) networking and promotional events;
 - b) advertising and communication support;
 - c) newsletters;

(See paragraph 3.3 of the report for background & full breakdown of theme splits and key project support areas);

- 2) **delegated authority for final approval in respect to the Stronger Community Grants to the Head of Community Services be continued; and**
- 3) **the changes detailed at paragraph 4.4 of the report designed to strengthen the Voluntary & Community Sector Grants Policy be approved.**

72. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14th August 2012 were considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14th August 2012 be received and noted.

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

There were no minutes or referrals to consider under this item.

74. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The most recent report on the activity of the Council's Advisory Panels and similar bodies was received and noted.

75. ACTION MONITORING

The latest Action Monitoring report for the Committee was received and noted.

76. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that

under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

Item 16 – Unit 7, Woodrow Centre – Concessionary Rent.

77. UNIT 7 - WOODROW CENTRE - CONCESSIONARY RENT

The Committee received a report in respect of the proposed letting of Unit 7, Woodrow Centre to a VCS organisation at a concessionary rent. Members had deferred a decision on this matter at the previous meeting of the Committee pending the receipt of additional information.

[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 relating the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).]

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.20 pm

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Chair