

Executive Committee

20th November 2012

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

K Dicks, C Flanagan, S Jones, J Pickering and M Stanley

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

92. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Carole Gandy.

93. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

94. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the following item of business, scheduled on the Executive Work Programme to be dealt with at this meeting, had been rescheduled to a later meeting of the Committee:

- Concessionary Rents Policy.

95. MINUTES

It was noted that answers to the questions requested in respect of the Concessionary Fares Item (Minute 84) had now been circulated to members of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

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Chair

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 16th October 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

96. SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY AND DISCIPLINARY POLICY - REVIEW

The Committee received a report which proposed revisions to the Sickness Absence Policy and the Disciplinary Policy. Members' attention was also drawn to the report and recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in this regard. The Sickness Absence Policy was designed to support staff and be effective as a management tool. One aspect of the Policy to be reviewed was the process for the management of long-term sickness absence and the Disciplinary Policy had been amended as a consequence to ensure the two Policies were consistent with each other. Following some consideration it was proposed that Members retain their involvement in the Appeals process that was open to Officers who were aggrieved at a decision taken under either of these Policies that they be dismissed.

The Committee welcomed and supported the report and the proposed Policies. The Committee also thanked the Sickness Policy Pre-Scrutiny Short Sharp Review Group for its report. Members were content to support the recommendations made by that Group in the report which had been submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6th November as detailed below.

In response to an enquiry from Members, it was reported that the concept of 'duvet days', or 'network days' which were apparently available in some employment sectors, was known to Officers, but Officers were not convinced that any additional time off for staff was warranted, given the relatively generous leave entitlement already offered. Members were keen that the point made at Paragraph 3.8 g) in the report be extended to cover conditions that were as similarly life-threatening as cancer.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the revisions to the Sickness Absence Policy and Disciplinary Policy attached to the report at Appendix 1 and 2, and detailed at 3.7 and 3.9 be approved and adopted;**
- 2) the additional procedural guidance proposed for inclusion in the Sickness Absence Policy as detailed in the report at 3.8 be noted, subject to the extension of the description in Paragraph 3.8 g) to include conditions "such as" cancer;**

- 3) authority be delegated to the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to make the necessary changes to the scheme of delegations required to implement the proposed changes; and

RESOLVED that

- 4) the Council's Sickness Absence Policy be updated and reduced in length, in order to clarify the structure and process for managing both short-term and long-term sickness absences;
- 5) the terminology used in the policy be sensitive to the needs of staff experiencing sickness;
- 6) an A5 laminated guide to the Council's Sickness Absence Policy be provided for the use of managers and staff;
- 7) all changes to the Council's Sickness Absence Policy be communicated to managers and staff;
- 8) the Sickness Absence Policy be included in the induction process for new staff and managers employed by the Council;
- 9) staff and managers receive regular refresher training;
- 10) the Sickness Absence Policy be applied consistently to staff across all service areas, and managers be encouraged, recognising individual circumstances and different working environments to apply the policy appropriately;
- 11) the occupational health service available to staff experiencing sickness be reviewed; and
- 12) communication form an integral part of the transformation process to ensure that staff understand the reasons for changes made to services as part of the transformation process and how transformation may impact on them.

97. ACCESS TO INFORMATION RULES - REVIEW

A report was considered which detailed a number of changes that had recently come about as a result of Regulations issued under the Localism Act 2011. The more obvious changes were with respect to the Council's obligations in connection with what had

formerly been called the Forward Plan of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive Committee.

Officers proposed that measures be adopted in such a way that the change to current practices would not be too significant whilst still doing enough to comply with the Regulations. Members generally supported the approach that was being taken by Officers and were content that there were not reported to be any direct financial implications arising from the proposals.

RECOMMENDED that

the revised Access to Information Rules be approved for inclusion in the Council's constitution.

98. QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SERVICE MONITORING - QUARTER 2 - JULY TO NOVEMBER 2012

The Committee received a report that provided Members with details of customer feedback data for the second quarter of 2012/13.

The Committee was very pleased with the report, noting that the numbers of both compliments and complaints had increased compared to both the same quarter the previous year and the previous quarter this current year. Members were very much of the opinion that complaints were a useful tool for driving improvements and noted the positive measures that had taken place in Housing Repairs and Maintenance as a result of Transformation.

In response to a Member query as to the proportion of payments detailed in the table on page 68 of the report which had been received electronically, Officers undertook to report back to the Committee in due course with that information.

RESOLVED that

the update for the period 1st July – 30th September be noted.

99. QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 2 - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2012

The Committee received the report on the previous quarter's Budget position. Officers highlighted the fact that this was the first occasion on which Members were being presented with a projected year-end position. Current indications were that there was expected to be a shortfall of £48,000 by the end of the current year. Heads of Service were tasked with identifying means of addressing this

shortfall prior to the year-end. Capital spending was reported to be in line with projections.

Members were updated on the spend on the Disabled Facilities Grants. It was noted that there was going to be a significant underspend on this budget although this did not reflect a fall-off in the numbers of applications for Grants but rather a drop in the value of the Grants being sought.

RESOLVED that

the current financial position on Revenue and Capital be noted, as detailed in the report.

100. QUARTERLY MONITORING - WRITE OFF OF DEBTS - QUARTER 2 - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2012

Members considered the quarterly report detailing the action taken in relation to the write off of debts and the collection of outstanding debt.

The Committee was heartened to see that the level of debt from previous years was falling consistently quarter by quarter. There was some concern that the introduction of Universal Credits would have an adverse impact on these figures and Members questioned whether there was a contingency in place. Officers confirmed that no such contingency existed at the present time but that Members would be required to make a judgement on the level of bad debt provision in due course. In addition, a report was due to be submitted to the January meeting outlining plans for providing crisis loans to local residents.

It was stated that the Citizen's Advice Bureau had not yet made any approaches to the Council for additional grant funding for an increased workload. It was hoped that Council Officers might be equipped with the necessary skills to pick up some of the expected burden.

RESOLVED that

the contents of the report be noted.

101. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9th October 2012. It was noted that there were two outstanding recommendations.

The Chair of the Economic Advisory Panel undertook to ensure that meetings of this body be recommenced after a short break as proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In this respect it was noted that the Manager of the shared Economic Development team had been head-hunted by another local authority and the three Councils that made up the shared service were currently in the process of appointing a successor.

It was suggested that the recommendation in respect of the Choose How You Move project be strengthened to reflect concern that money should be targeted to the most appropriate activities.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **Redditch Borough Council Officers ensure that the most effective use be made of Choose How You Move monies in Redditch; and**
- 2) **the Economic Advisory Panel meet more frequently, the scope of the Panel be expanded and more active participation of elected Members at meetings of the Panel be promoted.**

102. SHARED SERVICES BOARD

The Committee received the Minutes arising from the most recent of the Shared Services Board.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 11th October 2012 be noted.

103. WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes arising from the most recent of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 27th September 2012 be noted.

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

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

105. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received the most recent report on the activity of the Council's Advisory panels and similar bodies.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

106. ACTION MONITORING

The Committee received the latest Action Monitoring report.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.12 pm

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Chair