

Executive Committee

15th January 2013

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

Also Present:

Councillors Joe Baker, Roger Bennett, Andrew Brazier, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Simon Chalk, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Adam Griffin, Pattie Hill, Roger Hill, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Alan Mason, Brenda Quinney, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon

Officers:

A Darroch, K Dicks, C Felton, S Hanley, S Jones, J Pickering and J Willis

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

126. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

127. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

128. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

- Home Energy Conservation Act.

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Chair

129. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee meeting held on 18th December 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

130. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013/14 - 2015/16

Officers provided the Committee with a presentation detailing the anticipated financial pressures facing the authority over the coming three year period. It was demonstrated that the level of financial support from central Government was falling quite dramatically and, as a result, the Council had to deal with anticipated budget shortfalls over the next three years.

Members were informed that the current financial predictions were based upon there being no revenue bids from services over the next three years, no increase in Council Tax and anticipated reductions in Formula Grant during this period. The shortfall for the current year was anticipated to be £350,000 - £400,000.

Savings were being made through service transformation and staff were being encouraged to share any ideas they had for saving money with management. Staff had also been invited to apply for voluntary redundancy in a bid to avoid making staff compulsorily redundant.

Members expressed their disappointment at the poor grant settlement received by the Borough, given the efforts that had been made in recent years to push down costs through measures such as the sharing of services. It was recommended that the Leader write to the Department for Communities and Local Government to complain at the level of grant settlement.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the presentation of the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources on the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted and Officers be tasked to continue to try to identify savings through systems thinking and the transformation programme in order to protect front line services and balance the budget; and**

RECOMMENDED

- 2) the Leader writes to DCLG in the strongest possible terms in response to the Finance Settlement as the**

Borough Council has received the worst settlement in the County and given that it had already been innovative in its approach to shared services and systems thinking.

131. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Members received a report which set out proposals for administering a local replacement for the existing national Council Tax Benefit scheme. The Council was expected to be facing a shortfall as a result of these changes of around £90,000 which would have to be met from savings.

Proposals had been developed through joint working between billing authorities in Worcestershire, with the exception of Wyre Forest District Council, and in consultation with the major precepting authorities. Consensus had been reached countywide that the billing authorities would only look to gain 50% of the shortfall back through local replacement schemes. The greatest overall loss of revenue would be suffered by the County Council.

A consultation exercise had been undertaken on draft proposals but very few responses had been received. The changes that were proposed comprised changes to Council Tax exemption, whilst the Council needed to be mindful of a duty to protect vulnerable groups from adverse impacts as a result of such changes.

Officers undertook to provide all members of the Executive Committee with the details of the one consultation response received.

RESOLVED that

- 1) there will not be a replacement scheme for Council Tax Benefit from April 2013; and**
- 2) the financial impacts and the requirement for a more fundamental review of local Council Tax support from 2014/15 be noted; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 3) the exemption scheme be amended to limit discount in respect of short term empty property Class C to 50%; and**
- 4) the discount on second homes be removed.**

132. COUNCIL TAX AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NDR) BASE 2013/14

The Committee considered a report that would enable it to recommend the level for the Council Tax Base for 2013/14 and the NNDR1.

Officers explained the impact of the Council Tax Support Scheme on the Council Tax Base, noting that the Base had dropped by a significant amount as a result. However, the shortfall that would result was expected to be offset by a grant for the financial year allocated for this reason.

Members were also asked to approve the NNDR1, a new requirement of the Local Government Finance Bill 2012. It was noted that there were potential financial benefits that could accrue to the Council through the changes to the collection of NNDR. However, members' attention was drawn to the fact that Redditch was a tariff authority and would henceforward be subsidising other local authorities whose NNDR base was not sufficient to meet local needs.

Members discussed the connection between the NNDR and the pooling arrangements with Local Enterprise Partnerships. The view was expressed by Officers that the decision to be part of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP Pool still appeared to be of the greatest potential benefit to the Council.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2013/14, as detailed in the Appendices to the report, be approved;**
- 2) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the figures calculated by the Redditch Borough Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2013/14 be 23,787.62 and for the parts of the area listed below be:**

Parish of Feckenham	362.08
Rest of Redditch	<u>23,425.54</u>
	<u>23,787.62</u>

- 3) the Calculation of the NNDR1 as detailed in Appendix B to this report be approved.**

133. COMMUNITY CARE GRANTS AND CRISIS LOANS

The Committee was asked to take an 'in principle' decision to localise the administration of Community Care Grants and Crisis loans following the replacement of the discretionary Social Fund with local assistance schemes. The Social Fund was administered by the Department of Work and Pensions but, as a result of recent legislation, this fund had been abolished and a non-ringfenced grant was to be paid to upper-tier authorities, such as the County Council.

It was proposed that the Borough request delegation from the County Council for the provision of this service as it was considered that local knowledge would lead to more effective use of this funding and it was anticipated that the County would have no interest in administering this service itself. Members were reassured that all Worcestershire Districts were keen to take on this responsibility because of the potential benefit for local residents that could result.

Members were keen that such grants and loans be provided quickly and efficiently given their nature and Officers were also asked to ensure that staff safety be given adequate priority as some people seeking these loans could be in desperate situations. Officers were also keen to highlight the link between the benefits of the administration of these loans and recent Joined Up Working that had been undertaken in Winyates.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the request for delegation of this scheme from the County Council to the District be approved; and**

RESOLVED that

- 2) Officers develop a detailed scheme for individuals to access the scheme and that this be reported to be Members in March; and**
- 3) Officers report to Members the level of funding available once the final allocation is made available.**

134. JOINT WORKING AGREEMENT WITH WORCESTERSHIRE TELECARE

Officers reported that the County Council would shortly be retendering for Call Alarm provision through the Supporting People Programme. Under the new contract the County intended to contract with one Telecare provider that could deliver services across the whole of the County.

At the present time there were three providers within the County, Redditch Borough Council, Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire Telecare, hosted by Wyre Forest Community Housing Trust. It was proposed that a joint tender be submitted between Redditch Borough Council, which provided the service across Redditch and Bromsgrove, and Worcestershire Telecare. The major perceived risk identified by officers in pursuing this course of action was uncertainty over future levels of Supporting People funding.

Members were aware that the Lifeline service was a very popular and successful service provided to local residents and reassurances were sought that the Redditch monitoring station might be maintained.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Council, through its shared service with Redditch and Bromsgrove, should enter a joint working agreement with Worcestershire Telecare and an equipment provider partner if required in order to bid for a contract with Worcestershire County Council for the provision of Telecare Services across Worcestershire;**
- 2) if successful to enter into an agreement with Worcestershire Telecare and an equipment provider if required, one of which will take the lead role in the arrangement;**
- 3) authority to be delegated to the Acting Head of Community Services and to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to finalise the terms of the above agreement and enter into them; and**
- 4) authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to make any consequential changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.**

135. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th December 2012.

A Member expressed some concern at the inability of Members to properly appreciate the meaning of the recommendations on the Concessionary Rents item at the previous meeting of the Executive Committee and requested that those presenting reports fully understand the proposals being brought forward. A slight

inaccuracy in English usage was also noted at one point on the same item.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th December 2012 be noted.

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

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

137. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

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

The Chair of the Economic Advisory Panel invited all members of the Council to attend meetings of his Panel henceforward, in addition to the standing membership.

The Vice-Chair of the Member Support Steering group informed the Committee that the forthcoming meeting on 18th January had been postponed and would now be held on 15th February.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

138. ACTION MONITORING

The Committee received the latest Action Monitoring report.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

139. SERVICE REVIEW FOR PRINT, DESIGN AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Committee received a service review which was the result of the print and design team going through the Business Transformation process. The current structures and recent changes were outlined by officers. The proposed structure, which would result in a reduction of two posts and savings of around £70,000, was reported to more accurately reflect the amount and level of each of the services needed to fulfil customer demand in a rapidly changing context.

It was suggested that the service might consider the use of internships or apprenticeships rather than trainees to fill the lower graded post in the proposed structure, a suggestion that was taken on board by Officers. In response to a query over the maintenance of the website, it was explained that this was currently undertaken by the individual services, although there was an increasing need for Communications staff to focus on the use of social media.

It was noted at the outset that the majority of this report, aside from those sections of the appendices which identified individual Officers of the Council, could be considered in open session as discussions had now taken place with the staff concerned and they were aware of the proposals.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the content of the Print, Design and Communications Service Review attached at Appendix 1 to the report be noted; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) **the proposals arising from the Service Review be approved for implementation.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.28 pm

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Chair