

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 8th January, 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Simon Chalk (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, David Bush, John Fisher, Pattie Hill, Roger Hill (substituting for Councillor Juliet Brunner), Gay Hopkins, Yvonne Smith (substituting for Councillor Andrew Fry) and Pat Witherspoon.

Officers:

T Kristunas, H Mole and J Staniland

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and M Craggs

123. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Juliet Brunner and Andrew Fry. Councillors Roger Hill and Yvonne Smith were confirmed respectively as their substitutes.

124. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

125. MINUTES

Members requested a further update on progress with regard to providing the Committee with additional information about vacant Council properties, which had been requested at the previous meeting of the Committee. Officers confirmed that this information would be provided in two reports. The first report, focusing on empty business units, was scheduled for the consideration of the Committee on 5th March 2013. No date had been set for consideration of the second report, which would investigate the Council's wider property portfolio in further detail.

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Chair

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29th November 2012 and 11th December 2012 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

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

Members received a presentation outlining the Medium Term Financial Plan for the Council for 2013/14 – 2015/16 (Appendix A).

The following additional points were discussed by Members during the meeting:

a) Voluntary Redundancies

The Committee was advised that staff had been asked to consider whether they would be interested in applying for voluntary redundancy as part of the Council's approach to making savings. Savings accrued from redundancies would apply to the year in which a member of staff left the Council's employment. The Council could apply to the government for financial support, through capital receipts, to help pay for any redundancy packages and thereby limit the impact on the Council's finances.

b) Government Grant Settlement

Officers confirmed that the Council had been notified of the government grant settlement on 19th December 2012. This had been slightly later than originally anticipated and the cut to the grant settlement for the local authority had been greater than expected.

There had been a comparable reduction to the government grant settlement for the other local authorities in Worcestershire, though there had been a slightly greater reduction to the grant settlement for Redditch Borough Council.

c) Budget Assumptions

A number of assumptions had been made about the Council's budgetary position going forward. Each of these assumptions was based on Officers' estimates relating to particular budgets. For example, an assumption regarding the New Homes Bonus

had been based on a calculation that took into account properties that were due to be built in the Borough.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

127. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - BIENNIAL RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

The Committee received a report detailing the response that had been received to recommendations that had been made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the first half of 2012/13. Information had also been provided about the action that had been taken by Officers to implement the recommendations that had been approved by the Executive Committee.

During this period the Committee had made 44 recommendations. A total of 33 recommendations had been approved by the Executive Committee and 2 recommendations had been rejected. Decisions remained to be taken on a further 9 recommendations.

The Committee noted that a map of disabled parking spaces had been provided for Members' consideration. This map had been produced in accordance with proposals that had been made by the Access for Disabled People Task Group in August 2012. Members confirmed that the basic content of the map appeared to be appropriate. However, Members agreed that in the event that the map was used to promote disabled parking bays in the town centre it should always be reproduced in a colour print format. The Committee also suggested that consideration should be given to incorporating the collection and delivery points used by the Dial a Ride service.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

128. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee was provided with an update in relation to the first item listed on the Actions List, concerning arrangements for PAT testing computer equipment that had been issued to elected Councillors. Officers had identified that the computer leads utilised by Councillors, rather than the laptops issued to Members, needed to undergo PAT testing. Replacement leads were being located for use during the testing process and the logistics of organising PAT

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testing for all of the equipment provided to Members was in the process of being investigated further.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Actions List be noted.

129. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted that the Executive Committee had considered the Concessionary Rents Short, Sharp Review Group's recommendations during a meeting on 18th December 2012. The Committee had concluded that the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, Councillor Philip Mould, should consider the recommendations in further detail and determine whether aspects of those recommendations could be incorporated into the Council's Policy for Leases of Council Land and Property at a Concessionary Rent.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 18th December 2012, and the latest edition of the Executive Work Programme be noted.

130. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no draft scoping documents.

131. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

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

a) Arts and Culture Centre – Chair, Councillor Gay Hopkins

Members were advised that the group had received 348 completed questionnaires from local residents as part of an ongoing consultation exercise. Questionnaires had been distributed through a variety of methods including: providing copies to residents at carol concerts in the Borough; publication on the Council's website; and provision to customers visiting the branch of B&Q in Redditch.

The feedback provided by residents in completed questionnaires was due to be considered at the group's

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following meeting, alongside further information about properties that could potentially be used as the base for an arts centre in the town.

b) Redditch Market – Chair, Councillor Andrew Brazier

Members had produced an initial draft of recommendations which were due to be discussed in further detail with a number of expert witnesses at the following meeting of the group. During the review the group had issued a questionnaire. Consistent feedback had been received from residents in completed questionnaires and would be taken into account in the group's final report.

As part of the review the possibility that changes were due to be made to licenses for street trading had been taken into account. The market traders had also been consulted and the chair of the group had responded to many traders in person outside the formal Committee environment.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

132. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee was informed that there had been no meetings of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and there were therefore no updates to provide.

133. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

134. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee training session, Effective Questioning Skills for Members, would be taking place on 17th January 2013.

Councillor Witherspoon volunteered to attend the following meeting of the West Midlands Regional Scrutiny Network on behalf of the Committee, which was due to take place on 21st March 2013.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

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The Meeting commenced at 7.01 pm
and closed at 7.30 pm