

Executive Committee

9th July 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Rebecca Blake, Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors Andrew Brazier and David Bush

Officers:

R Bamford, M Bough, R Dunne, C Flanagan, S Hanley, T Kristunas, J Pickering and L Tompkin

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

19. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hartnett declared an interest in Item 9 (Selection of Registered Provider for Development of Hewell Road swimming bath site) as detailed separately at Minute 27 below.

21. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements from the Leader.

22. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11th June 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

23. HOUSING DENSITY TARGETS TASK REVIEW - FINAL REPORT

The Committee considered the final proposals of the Housing Density Targets Task Group following their consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The recommendations were designed to help encourage wider housing provision in the Borough as part of the Council's emerging policy on housing as part of the Local Plan.

The Chair of the Task Group, Councillor David Bush, attended the Committee meeting to present the report and narrate a short presentation on housing density around the Borough. Some of the key aspects underpinning the recommendations were a desire to see a greater numbers of bungalows, an increase in the supply of larger properties and opportunities for self-build and a relaxation of the density requirements for smaller sites to provide the scope for local developers to build more distinctive, idiosyncratic properties and compete with the larger developers. To achieve these aims a number of changes had been proposed to Policy 5 of the emerging Draft Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4.

The Committee discussed a number of the assertions within the report and presentation, noting that several bungalow developments had been created in recent years and that Officers did not routinely record the numbers built within the Borough making a rigorous quantification of supply and demand hard to assess, although a need for all types of housing was quite evident. In addition, the need for more executive homes could not easily be divorced from a wider discussion of the Borough's needs in terms of nightlife, restaurant provision and similar issues.

It was also noted that the Borough was short of housing land, hence the need for cross-boundary growth, and there was a degree of flexibility already built into the housing density requirements. However, the Committee did recognise the merit in the work that had been undertaken and acknowledged that greater flexibility might be introduced to achieve some of the mutually agreed aims. To this end it was proposed that Officers do further work on Policy 5 and submit this to the Planning Advisory Panel for consideration.

RESOLVED that

Planning Officers be tasked with developing an amended form of words for Policy 5 of the emerging Draft Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 which would ensure an appropriate level of flexibility in housing density requirements, to be submitted for consideration at a future meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel.

24. COUNCIL PLAN

The draft Council Plan was considered by the Committee. The Plan was a much more concise document than previous versions with the intention of it being a strategic and public-facing document. The key to the Plan was the push to put the customer at the heart of everything the Council does and shaping the Council's services to suit customers' needs.

Members generally welcomed the document but it was suggested that some refinement and re-ordering might be undertaken to address two issues in respect of Areas of Highest Need. These were placing the information around these sites away from the very front of the document and ensuring that the descriptions of the areas more accurately reflected the locations rather than simply repeating the Lower Super Output area designations. It was also noted that the foreword from the Leader of the Council would be prepared in time for the forthcoming Council meeting.

RECOMMENDED that

subject to the amendments in the preamble above, the Council Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

25. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Officers presented a report which detailed a number of options upon which the Council was intending to consult in respect of the Council Tax Support Scheme in place from April 2014. Members attention was drawn to the table in Appendix 1 and they were advised that the number of working age claimants affected should read 4,600 and not 3,749 as indicated.

The Committee was informed that the majority of Councils across the County were intending to consult on a range of measures fundamentally the same as those set out in the report. Members were quite clear that the impact on other public authorities of the Council not collecting at least a proportion of the shortfall left by the Council Tax Support Grant could be very significant and so were minded to approve the consultation options. Members were keen that a full range of options be considered and proposed that Officers draw up proposals which included restricting Council Tax support to Band C equivalent amounts and building in exemptions for disabled persons or those with young children. Officers undertook to draw up further options on this basis.

RESOLVED that

the Executive Director of Finance and Resources be authorised to consult on the options to change the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme with effect from April 2014 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and as amended in the preamble, above.

26. REVIEW OF POLICY FOR LEASES OF COUNCIL LAND AND PROPERTY AT A CONCESSIONARY RENT

Members considered a report which set out a number of proposed changes to the policy for leases of Council land and property at a concessionary rent.

The initial aim of developing a transparent and consistent policy was very much to the fore in Members consideration of the suggested amendments and it was agreed that the Policy, as amended, would meet this aim.

RESOLVED that

the updated Policy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and implemented with immediate effect.

27. SELECTION OF REGISTERED PROVIDER FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HEWELL ROAD SWIMMING BATH SITE.

Members received a report which set out the recommendation for the selection of a Registered Provider from the Council's Preferred Partner list to deliver affordable housing on the Hewell Road swimming baths site.

It was noted that the Panel had reached a consensus based on the scoring matrix employed for the process and Redditch Co-op Homes had been recommended as the preferred partner to develop the site. It was suggested that, in future, the Council might be more prescriptive in detailing the numbers and types of properties it desired on a development site but Officers were of the opinion that, beyond advising of the primary housing need at the time of selection, it would be difficult to stipulate at the outset what was to be built as subsequent surveys might dictate that certain developments were unsuitable.

The loss of the play area was commented upon but Officers confirmed that Ward Members and Officers had consulted with the local community and had determined that the play area on site was poorly used and a focus for anti-social behaviour.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **Redditch Co-op Homes be selected as the preferred partner to deliver affordable housing on the Hewell Road swimming baths site; and**
- 2) **authority be delegated to the Head of Finance and Resources and the Housing Strategy Manager to complete the transfer of the site to Redditch Co-op Homes subject to planning permission being obtained.**

(During consideration of this item, Councillor Bill Hartnett declared an other disclosable interest as a Member of the Board of Redditch Co-operative Homes, appointed by the Council, and vacated the Chair and the Chamber for the duration of this item. The Vice-Chair, Councillor Chance, assumed the Chair in Councillor Hartnett's absence.)

28. LEASE OF THE ANCHORAGE

An opportunity had arisen through the Council's Joined Up Working to allow NEW College access to a property where the skills of its apprentices might be developed alongside those of the Council's own workforce and, as a consequence, a property would be returned to the Council in a refurbished condition at the end of the lease period.

Members were delighted to endorse the scheme as it promised to provide benefits to the local economy, the Council's own workforce and the Council's property portfolio. It was hoped that the present scheme might be adopted as a model for the future.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **"The Anchorage" property be let to the NEW College on a 5 year Full Repairing & Insuring lease which would include the NEW College returning the property in a lettable state;**
- 2) **a "peppercorn" rent only to be charged to the NEW College due to the benefits to the community and the in-house workforce, who would gain long term from the training the College would be able to provide in the building during the lease period; and**
- 3) **authority be delegated to the Head of Housing and Head of Legal Services to finalise the detailed provisions of the Lease and implement this decision.**

29. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th June 2013.

Members were keen to receive updates through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course on the activities of Healthwatch Worcestershire.

Healthwatch Worcestershire

RESOLVED that

the Borough Council make representations to Healthwatch Worcestershire on behalf of local residents.

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

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

31. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The latest update on the activity of the Council's Advisory panels and similar bodies was considered by the Committee.

RESOLEVD that

the report be noted.

32. ACTION MONITORING

The Committee's Action Monitoring report was received by the Committee. It was noted that the action requested at the previous meeting had been undertaken.

RESOLVED that

the Action Monitoring report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.45 pm

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Chair