

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 12 July 2016

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith and Debbie Taylor

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Mike Dunphy, Sue Hanley and Jayne Pickering

Committee Services Officer:

Debbie Parker-Jones

10. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Pat Witherspoon.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

12. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Work Programme

The following reports which were due to be considered, or possibly considered, at the meeting had been deferred to a later date:

- Applying Article 4 directions to the Council's schedule of locally listed buildings;
- Health and Safety Policies; and
- Finance Monitoring Quarter 1, April – June 2016/17.

Leisure Intervention Update

It was noted that the Leisure Intervention Update was currently included in the Executive Work Programme for presentation no earlier than 13th September. As the Council Plan was currently being developed it was proposed that the work around leisure

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interventions to deliver the strategic purpose be addressed within the Council Plan for Members' consideration in September/October.

13. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 7th June 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

14. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd June 2016.

It was noted that there were no recommendations to consider.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd June 2016 be received and noted.

15. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2017/18

Members considered a report which set out proposals for the Authority's Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 following the outcome of public consultation on options for changes to this. If the current proposals were approved there would be further public consultation prior to submission of the final scheme to Executive, in time for the final scheme to be published by 31st January 2017.

Officers explained the outcome of the consultation and Members noted, with disappointment, the very low response to this. Only 19 responses had been received despite all current 4,900 claimants having been directly contacted by the Council, and with press and social media publicity also taking place on this. The technical elements of the assessment process, eligibility and income taken into account had not helped with people's ability to answer some of the questions, however Officers felt that they had done everything possible to make the questions as clear as possible in light of the complexities involved.

It was noted that the proposals were not intended to reduce the overall cost of support provided to residents but to streamline the system, ensure there was consistency for claimants in the calculations between Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, reduce the administrative burden wherever possible, and bring the Scheme in line with national changes to welfare support.

Any changes introduced would apply in respect of new claimants only and Officers would continue to provide support to residents on their personal finances and debt management. Discussions took place on the Family Premium element and questions were raised in relation to the Council's Hardship Fund, which Officers agreed to check and provide further information to Members on outside of the meeting.

The consultation on the draft scheme would be published and key stakeholders, including existing working age claimants, would be directly contacted in writing. Feedback would be used to inform any changes to the draft scheme before the final scheme was considered by Members.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the outcome of the initial statutory consultation on options for changes to the Local Council Tax Scheme be noted;**
- 2) the current Scheme be changed as follows, with effect from April 2017/18:**
 - 2.1) reduce backdating of Council Tax Support to 4 weeks in line with the changes in Housing Benefit announced by Central Government;**
 - 2.2) enable claims to be processed based on information provided by the DWP without the need for further information; and**
 - 2.3) removal of the Family Premium for new claims to bring the Council Tax Support Scheme in line with the changes in Housing Benefit announced by Central Government,**

and that the amended version shall become the proposed Draft Scheme for 2017/18;
- 3) authority be delegated to the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support to carry out the next phase of consultation on the Draft Scheme; and**
- 4) the final Scheme be presented to the Executive to make recommendations to Council to allow for the necessary regulations to be published by 31st January 2017.**

16. BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL PLAN NO.4 - PROPOSED MAIN MODIFICATIONS

The Committee considered a report which identified the Main Modifications proposed by the Planning Inspector and explained the required public consultation process on these. Members were reminded of the stages which the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 had already been through, which had included a lengthy Examination in Public, as part of the adoption process.

Members had already been made aware, in detail, of the Main Modifications. Officers reminded them that, at this stage, the Executive was only being asked to approve the public consultation on the Modifications. An extended consultation period running between 27th July and 21st September was being proposed given that this would be taking place over the summer holiday period.

Officers responded to questions/issues raised by Members on the Inspector's Modifications. It was noted that all consultation responses would be sent to the Inspector and that the Council would not comment on, or respond to, representations received as it was for the Inspector to consider these.

RECOMMENDED that

the recommended Main Modifications of the Inspector, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be noted, and that Officers be authorised to proceed with an 8-week consultation on the Main Modifications, to run from 27th July 2016 to 21st September 2016. Details of the method of consultation are set out in paragraphs 3.19 to 3.22 of the report.

17. REDDITCH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME JULY 2016 AND DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT 2016

The Committee considered a report which outlined the proposed revision of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), both of which formed part of the suite of documents that the Development Plans Team were required to publish and maintain. Both of the documents were updated versions of the versions which had previously been approved.

It was noted that the LDS set out the key Development Planning Documents which would be produced by the Council. The main changes to the LDS were amendment of the timetable for the Local Plan No.4 and the Allocations Plan to reflect the ongoing process of the Examination in Public. Whilst authority to start working on a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had been approved in June

2014, the timetable for development of the CIL had been removed from the latest LDS whilst the Local Plan remained unadopted, for the reasons detailed in the report.

The SCI set out how the Council would engage with communities and other consultees in the planning process, in both plan-making and development control. A number of the changes made to the SCI related to out-of-date references to Local Development Framework processes, and included a section on neighbourhood planning.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the revised Redditch Local Development Scheme (LDS), as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted as the Council's current LDS;**
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning and Regeneration Services, in conjunction with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to review and publish amended LDS timetables for the publication of the Development Plan Documents;**
- 3) the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2016, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved for publication as part of a 6-week period of public consultation in September – October 2016; and**
- 4) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning and Regeneration Services, in conjunction with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to consider the response to the public consultation and, subject to no significant issues arising, to amend and adopt the SCI.**

18. CONSOLIDATED REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN AND FINANCIAL RESERVES STATEMENT 2015/16

Members considered the Council's final financial position for 2015/16 for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. Officers advised of an amendment to recommendation 2.1 of the report in that the transfer to balances of £40k would be a recommendation to full Council and not a matter for noting by the Executive.

Officers advised that the draft Statement of Accounts had been submitted to the external auditors on 30th June 2016 and that the auditing of these was due to commence towards the end of July. No issues had been raised by the external auditors during their draft audit work.

The £1.031m underspend on the revenue budget was noted, together with the required adjustments to this as detailed in the report, which resulted in a net underspend of £150k. There was an expectation that £110k would be drawn down from balances in 2015/16. As this transfer had not been required it was intended that a further £40k would be allocated to balances, which would give a resulting final position for 2015/16 of £2.024m; £1.3m higher than the minimum level for reserves. The Senior Management Team would now be challenging Heads of Service to see if they could base their 2016/17 budgets on the 2015/16 budgets to maintain savings.

The £3.967m underspend on the capital budget was noted, which Officers explained the reasons for as detailed in the report. This was in part due to a large underspend on the vehicle replacement programme, which had been delayed until the Place Team implementation was stabilised.

The Financial Reserves Statement at Appendix 2 to the report was noted and Officers stated that it would be helpful if future quarterly reports could advise which reserves were being drawn down on. The £300k Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reserves for Job Evaluation (JE), which were separate to the £755k General Fund JE reserves, were noted and questions raised on this, particularly the separate HRA element which some Members had been unaware of. The £572k underspend on the HRA was also noted. Officers advised that work was being undertaken on the HRA underspend and JE element and that further information on these elements would be provided to Members. The new terms and conditions under JE were due to be implemented in September, together with any applicable back-pay. Officers undertook to confirm to Members how many staff had not signed up to the new terms and conditions, in which case dismissal and re-engagement would apply.

In relation to the Housing Support element of the Reserves Statement, and reference to a Government Specific Grant, Officers clarified that this should have stated £243k Government Grant and £180k RBC. A query was also raised on the Income element of the HRA and increase in tenants' charges and variance in dwelling rents, which Officers agreed to look into and to report back to Members on.

A Member queried the position in relation to vacant posts and a review which Officers had previously confirmed they would be undertaking on this. Officers apologised that this piece of work had not yet been completed as the accounts had taken priority. Members were advised that Heads of Service reviewed all

vacancies to ascertain, on an individual basis, if these were required and that only those that were deemed business-critical were filled. Officers had spoken with Human Resources the previous week and work was due to be undertaken, across both Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils as some of the vacant posts impacted on both authorities, which Members would be receive details of.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the financial position on Revenue and Capital for the financial year 2015/16, as detailed in the report, be noted; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) **the transfer to balances of £40k be approved; and**
- 3) **the movement in reserves, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.**

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

There were no outstanding referrals to consider.

20. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

It was noted that the meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel scheduled to take place earlier in the evening had been cancelled as the Local Plan No. 4 Proposed Main Modifications were being considered by the Executive that evening.

The Member Support Steering Group, which had been due meet the previous evening, had also been cancelled in view of a clash with a Local Transport Plan Briefing for Members the same evening. A further date for the Group was to be arranged.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.15 pm

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Chair