

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 17 January 2017

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Jane Potter – for Minute No. 68

Officers:

Derek Allen, Ruth Bamford, Jess Bayley, Matthew Bough, Kevin Dicks, Rebecca Dunne, Jon Elmer, Clare Flanagan, Sue Hanley, Sheena Jones, Jayne Pickering, Deb Poole, Becky Talbot, Liz Tompkin and Judith Willis

Committee Services Officer:

Debbie Parker-Jones

63. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Juliet Brunner.

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

65. 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:

- Financial Regulations;
- Council Procurement Rules;
- Engagement Strategy; and
- Shopmobility Service.

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Chair

Additional Papers

One set of Additional Papers had been circulated prior to the meeting. These comprised an extract of the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee meeting held on 10th January 2017, in relation to the pre-scrutiny of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget report at Agenda Item 9. Whilst O&S had pre-scrutinised a number of items on the Executive Committee's agenda that evening recommendations had only been made in respect of the HRA report.

Other Overview and Scrutiny referrals

A report of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group appeared at Agenda Item 6. It was noted that both elements of the report's recommendation were matters which the Executive Committee could resolve. Cllr Potter, Chair of the Working Group, was in attendance to present the report and was accompanied by Jess Bayley, report author.

66. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 13th December 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

67. BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL PLAN NO.4

Members considered a report on the adoption of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No 4 (BORLP4). The report explained the processes around the final stages of the plan production and sought Member approval to formally adopt the BORLP4 as the Development Plan for the Borough.

The BORLP4 had been many years in the making and had been considered by the Council's Planning Advisory Panel on a number of occasions. The Plan had been through its Examination in Public, which had closed with the issue of the Inspector's report on 16th December 2016. The Inspector's report had recommended that, subject to the making of a series of modifications, the BORLP4 satisfied the requirements of section 20(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework, and was therefore sound.

The many benefits of adopting the Plan, as detailed under paragraph 4.1 of the report, were noted. This would provide a clear

planning framework to deliver the vision and development for the future of the area, including helping to meet housing needs, collection of New Homes Bonus and other associated economic benefits. The lack of an up to date plan would make the borough vulnerable to ad hoc planning and “planning by appeal”. An adopted plan would also enable the Council in preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy.

One Member, whilst agreeing with certain elements of the BORLP4, expressed a view that all new house build should take place in the Bordesley area, which he felt was supported by a better road system and which also allowed opportunity for a bypass.

Members expressed their thanks to Strategic Planning Officers for their hard work on the BORLP4 to date.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the content of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No 4 Planning Inspectorate’s Report set out in Appendix 1 of the report, and the associated Schedule of Main Modifications set out in Appendix 2 of the report be noted;**
- 2) the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No 4 as submitted and subsequently amended by the modifications set out in Appendices 2 and 3 of the report be adopted;**
- 3) the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No 4 Policies Map as submitted and subsequently amended by the modifications set out in Appendix 3 of the report be adopted;**
- 4) the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No 4 Adoption Statement and Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement which form Appendices 4 and 5 of the report be noted; and**
- 5) authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration to undertake further minor editorial changes deemed necessary in preparing the adopted Borough Plan for publication, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning.**

68. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE BUDGET SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

Councillor Jane Potter, Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, presented the Working Group’s report. Councillor Potter explained the background to the report and the Working Group’s

recommendation which proposed a review of the recharge process for internal recharges between Council departments.

Members supported the proposed review and requested that this not be over-bureaucratic in nature.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a review of the recharge process be undertaken to ensure that these are accurately recorded in future; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

69. COUNCIL PLAN

Members received a report which asked them to consider the structure, content and design of the draft Council Plan, including actions relating to the Council's Strategic Purposes.

Officers circulated a copy of the proposed foreword to the Plan and highlighted an amendment to the bottom of page 7 (Strategic Purposes), with the removal of the "Being a responsible, customer focused council underpins all our purposes" statement.

Officers confirmed that, if approved, the next stage would be to put in place the relevant action plans and operational plans which would underpin the Plan. It was noted that this would be a developing process which Members would be kept fully informed of.

RECOMMENDED that

subject to the inclusion of the foreword and the minor amendment to page 7 as detailed in the preamble above, the Council Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

70. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE STRATEGY

The Committee were asked to consider the content of the Corporate Performance Strategy, including how performance was reported across the Council.

Officers explained why data was important to the Council in understanding the needs of residents. Using data also enabled the Council to understand if it was working towards its Strategic Purposes and delivering the priority actions set out in the Council Plan.

A Member queried why the Strategy had not been referred to the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee for pre-scrutiny. It was

confirmed that O&S had the opportunity to pre-scrutinise whichever Executive Committee reports they wished to, and that a copy of the Executive's Work Programme was referred to all O&S meetings to facilitate this. In this instance O&S had opted not to pre-scrutinise the report.

RECOMMENDED that

the Corporate Performance Strategy attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

71. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INITIAL BUDGET 2017/18 - 2019/20

Members were presented with the initial Budget for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the proposed dwelling rents for 2017/2018. Members considered with the report the minute extract and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee's meeting of 10th January 2017, which had been circulated as Additional Papers, in relation to the pre-scrutiny of this report.

Officers explained the background to the report recommendations and the impact of the 1% rent reduction that had been imposed by central government. As a 2% rent increase would have applied in 2017/18, were it not for the Welfare Reform and Work Bill, there was a loss of rent income for 2017/18 of £1.26m compared with the HRA Business Plan model. Over a 30-year period the loss of rent income was estimated at £120.873m, which was almost equivalent to the Council's £122.158m housing borrowing debt. The Council therefore needed to identify ways of replacing HRA funding and the following report on the agenda (Council Housing Growth Programme) identified a number of options the Council could take to increase its housing stock, and to mitigate against the impacts of changes to the HRA.

Officers explained the breakdown of the HRA figures detailed at Appendix A to the report and agreed to set out details of the reserves position in the final report to full Council.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the draft 2017/2018 budget for the Housing Revenue Account attached to the report at Appendix A be approved;**
- 2) the three year budget projections 2017/18 to 2019/20 incorporating the 1% rent reduction be approved;**

- 3) the actual average rent decrease for 2017/2018 be 1%; and
- 4) £780,614 be transferred to the capital reserve in 2017/18 to fund the future Capital Programme and/or repay borrowing.

72. COUNCIL HOUSING GROWTH PROGRAMME

Further to the meeting of the Executive Committee in January 2016, Members were presented with a report setting out the available options in light of the significant financial implications on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) following Central Government's decision that rents within the social housing sector be decreased by 1% each year from 2016 to 2019. The report identified a number of options for the Council to take in increasing its housing stock and to mitigate against the impacts of changes to the HRA and meet affordable housing need in the Borough.

Officers highlighted an amendment to recommendation 2.1 of the report to remove the list of options detailed as the Executive Committee could resolve on these. The same options also appeared under recommendation 2.2 for resolution. The financial element only of recommendation 2.1 was a matter which required a full Council decision. For clarity, it was also agreed that recommendation 2.1 would state that the funding would come from HRA Capital Receipts and Reserves.

Officers set out the key elements of the report and in doing so stated that there was no single solution that would address the issue. If approved all options would therefore be implemented to increase the Council's housing stock.

In response to a Member question regarding recommendation 2.5, Officers stated that if there was a firm proposal around setting up a housing company/development body as part of the housing growth approach then it was their intention, should this constitute a Key Decision, to take the proposal to Executive Committee for consideration.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the capital budget agreed for 'Buy back' and Mortgage Rescue Scheme be named the Council Housing Growth Programme and increased to £12.5m for a 3 year period, to be funded from HRA Capital Receipts and Reserves; and

RESOLVED that

- 2) the strategic approach (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) be approved and the Council undertakes a Council Housing Growth Programme implementing all the following options:
 - purchasing properties;
 - commissioning the construction of housing stock;
 - purchasing units from developers through S106 bidding;
 - purchasing properties “off plan” on developments;
 - regenerating existing housing stock;
 - purchasing stock from other Registered Providers; and
 - buy backs and mortgage rescue schemes;
- 3) all financial and development appraisals proposed for the construction of new stock be taken through the Executive Committee for approval;
- 4) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to appoint the necessary delivery agents for commissioning the construction of new HRA stock from the Council Housing Growth Programme budget; and
- 5) Officers explore the merits of developing a housing company/ development body as part of the Council’s housing growth approach.

**73. VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANT
PROGRAMME - FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS 2017-18**

Members considered the Notes and recommendations of the Grants Panel Meetings held on 19th and 20th December 2016 for the award of major grants to voluntary sector organisations for 2017/18.

The Panel considered a total of 43 applications and one Concessionary Rent application that had been received from a variety of Voluntary Sector organisations in line with the Council’s five themed Strategic Purposes. Each application had been scored in accordance with the Council’s Grants Programme requirements, with recommendations then made to either approve or reject each of the applications.

The Panel also considered the unallocated sums of money, which it was suggested be retained and re-advertised alongside the Stronger Communities Grant applications in January 2017, and that Officers liaise with those applicants who had submitted bids but who had been unsuccessful to look to submit a further application, where relevant. It was further recommended that any unallocated sums of money under £1,000 relating to the themes be included in the Stronger Communities Grants funding theme for 2017/18. The Panel had also requested that Officers provide feedback to those applicants who had been unsuccessful in securing a grant due to not enough information and/or relevant details having been included in their application.

In relation to the proposed grant for Redditch Mental Health Action Group, it was noted that the information on Reserves held would be requested should the Executive approve the grant in principle. It was also noted that organisations could make a maximum of one grant application under each of the five themed Strategic Purposes.

RESOLVED that

1) the following grants for 2017/18 be awarded:

Organisation	Project Name	Amount
Help Me to be Financially Independent - £10K		
Compass Community and Education Group Limited	'Money Matters'	£3,930
Help Me to Live My Life Independently - £35K		
REACH CIC	Building Families	£18,841
Help Me to Live My Life Independently - £30k		
Acorns Children's Hospice	Face to Face Service	£5,000
Relate Worcestershire	Counselling Services	£5,964
Onside Independent Advocacy	Redditch Community Advocacy Project	£6,000
Redditch Mental Health Action Group	Mental well-being coaching	£6,000
Bromsgrove and Redditch Network	Volunteering and Employability	£5,863.62

Provide Me with Good Things to Do, See and Visit - £6K		
Jestamminute Community Theatre CIC	'Shared Voices'	£2,610
Your Ideas	Growing The Games Club	£3,000
Keep My Place Safe and Looking Good - £15K		
REACH CIC	Domestic Abuse Awareness Sessions	£4,057.75
Jestamminute Community Theatre CIC	'In Someone Else's Shoes'	£4,950
Bromsgrove and Redditch Network	BROS: Green Redditch	£4,978.46
Help Me Run a Successful Voluntary Sector Business - £50K		
Carers Careline	Carers Telephone Support Service	£9,675.92
Touchstones Child Bereavement Support	Supporting Bereaved Children	£10,000
Bromsgrove and Redditch Network	Volunteer Centre	£5,000
Home-Start North East Worcestershire	Supporting parents who are struggling to cope	£10,000
IDC Sewing Café CIC	Old Needle Works Community Hub	£9,920

- 2) the unallocated sums of £6,000, £16,000, £1,000, £1,000 and £5,000 relating to the Themes detailed in the table at 3. of the Grants Panel Meetings Notes, be retained and their availability be re-advertised in parallel with the Stronger Communities Grants applications in January 2017;
- 3) any unallocated sums of money under £1,000 relating to the Themes detailed in the table at 3. of the Grants Panel Meetings Notes, be included in the Stronger Communities Grants funding theme for 2017/2018; and

- 4) **the Concessionary Rent application from the Oasis Christian Centre in respect of their charity shop in Winyates be awarded 70% discount of the market rental value with a three year tenancy agreement.**

74. STAFF SURVEY PRELIMINARY ACTIONS

The Committee received a report which updated Members on the results of the Staff Survey and the action which was being undertaken to address the issues identified. The Survey, which covered staff across both Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council, had provided an opportunity to gauge employee morale, culture, workplace relationships and communication.

The survey outcomes had highlighted areas where further work was needed as well as areas of good practice that the Council wished to build on. The report outlined the approach that had been adopted to address the top three issues arising from the Survey at both a service and corporate level.

A total of 246 employees had completed the survey which equated to a response rate of 25%. Whilst this was lower than the last survey response rate of 33%, it was still sufficient to provide meaningful results as it included a good mix of staff across the organisation. A breakdown of the percentage response rate by service area was included in the report. For comparison purposes the 2016 survey had used the same questions as the previous survey.

A Staff Survey Programme Board, chaired by the Chief Executive and supported by the Head of Business Transformation, representatives from Human Resources, Organisational Development and the Councils' three Trade Unions, had been established to take forward the results of the Survey. Relevant Heads of Service had also received a copy of the full results of the 2016 Survey to enable them to address issues at a departmental level.

Members noted that some of the lowest response rates had come from service areas which employed the highest number of staff, for example Environmental Services, and it was hoped to see a bigger take up in the future to give a better indicator of the position. Officers advised that the Head of Service had been speaking with staff in this regard and was working to remove any barriers which may have prevented staff from completing the Survey.

RESOLVED that

the report and its attachments be noted.

75. ECONOMIC PRIORITIES FOR REDDITCH - ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

Members were presented with the first Annual Report detailing progress against delivery of the economic themes and priorities for Redditch which had been agreed by the Council in September 2015.

The themes and priorities had been developed in close consultation with the Redditch Economic Development Theme Group, which comprised a number of Council and business representatives and partner organisations. It was intended that the themes and priorities would help provide a roadmap for the Council's economic development and regeneration activities, and to the operational activities of the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) shared service to which the Council contributed financial resources. Mr Jon Elmer, Economic Development and Regeneration Manager (Place) at NWEDR, was in attendance and presented the report.

Mr Elmer highlighted the key issues and achievements detailed in the report. The Council had, in working with both the NWEDR and other key partners such as Worcestershire County Council and Local Enterprise Partnerships, made significant progress in delivering against the priorities and the associated Action Plan which had been drawn up to support the delivery of the themes and priorities.

There were still a number of challenges to address with there being significant opportunities available to the Council to further support economic growth through its continued investment in the NWEDR service, partnership working with the County Council, and memberships of the West Midlands Combined Authority and Greater Birmingham and Solihull and Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Addressing the skills agenda remained one of the top priorities for the Council, with a significant milestone having been achieved in 2016 with the announcement that a new £1.5m Engineering Centre of Excellence was to open in Redditch, which would be run by private training provider Midland Group. Members were pleased to note that 1040 new Apprenticeships had started during 2015/16. The anticipated development of the Redditch Eastern Gateway, now called the Redditch Gateway, was also noted.

Members highlighted the lack of signage within the town as an issue, particularly in relation to historical sites and places of interest, which they wished to see addressed sooner rather than later. Mr Elmer stated that NWEDR were lobbying the County Council on this and would see where they were at with moving this forward.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Annual Report setting out progress against the delivery of the economic themes, priorities and Action Plan be endorsed; and**
- 2) a second Annual Report be brought back to the Executive Committee in 12 months' time.**

76. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2017/18 - 2020/21 - UPDATE

Members received an Officer presentation on current progress against the Medium Term Financial Plan. The financial details presented at the previous meeting were included in the main agenda papers as background information to this item.

Officers advised that there was still no clarity from central government on Business Rate Localisation. A final response had been received in relation to the New Homes Bonus (NHB) for 2017/18, however the decision on NHB appeals had been delayed. Officers provided further details on the NHB position, key to which was a 'Deadweight' (the % increase for growth in the Borough that would not be eligible for NHB) of 0.4%. Initial consultation on this had referred to a figure of 0.25%, with the upshot being that the first 126 properties built would be 'disallowed' for the purpose of NHB. This represented a loss of grant of £154k in 2017/18 and a £784k loss over the 4 years to 2020/21. The 0.4% had not been confirmed as the basis moving forward and might change in the future. The NHB scheme would also reduce from 6 years to 4 years, the impact of which was a £143k loss of grant in 2017/18 and £1.2m to 2020/21. Additional work needed to be undertaken with Planning in this regard.

Latest Efficiency Plan figures were detailed with the current gap in funding for 2017/18 standing at £700k and £1m in 2020/21. This figure changed daily and detailed information on identified savings and additional income generation would be presented to Members in February, along with a detailed rationale to demonstrate growth and to balance the financial projections to 2020/21.

One positive was that councils now had the option to increase Council Tax by up to 2% or £5 (Band D equivalent) for 2017/18, without the need for a referendum, which equated to £15k - £20k.

In light of the ever-changing financial picture from central government, the Leader stated that he would shortly be writing to the MP for Redditch and the Local Government Minister to request that the funding figures be put back to what had originally been promised.

RESOLVED that

the Medium Term Financial Plan update position be noted.

77. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2017-2018

A report enabling Members to set the Council Tax Base for 2017/18 was considered.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2017/18, be approved; and**
- 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 2017/18 be 25,509.11 and for the parts of the area listed below be:**

Parish of Feckenham	363.26
Rest of Redditch	<u>25,145.85</u>
	<u>25,509.11</u>

78. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Members received a report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) which recommended the level of allowances for Councillors for 2017/18. Whilst the Council was required to "have regard" to the Panel's recommendations it was not obliged to agree to them, and could choose to implement them in full or in part, or not to accept them.

Members noted that if accepting the Panel's recommendations in full, the budget for Members' basic and special responsibility allowances for 2017/18 would be approximately £194,500. This would see an increase of £58,500 on the projected total expenditure for the same allowances in the current year.

Members were supportive of the IRP's recommendations in relation to travel, subsistence and Dependent Carer's Allowances and noted

the proposed Parish Council's travel and subsistence rates. However, as in previous years, and whilst noting the valuable and important role undertaken by councillors, Members did not support the IRP's proposed increases to the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances, which were felt to be particularly inappropriate in light of the current financial climate.

RECOMMENDED that

having regard to the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP):

- 1) the Basic Allowance for 2017/18 not be increased and this continue at the current level set for 2016/17, as detailed in the final column of Appendix 1 to the IRP's report;**
- 2) the Special Responsibility Allowances remain at the current levels set for 2016/17, as detailed in the final column of Appendix 1 to the IRP's report;**
- 3) travel allowances for 2017/18 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance;**
- 4) subsistence allowances for 2017/18 remain unchanged;**
- 5) the Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged; and**
- 6) the recommendation in relation to the Parish Council be noted (it being the Parish Council's responsibility to make a decision on this).**

79. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th December 2016.

It was noted that there were no recommendations to consider as all of the recommendations in the minutes had either been considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 13th December 2016 or earlier in that evening's meeting.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th December 2016 be received and noted.

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

Minute extract of 10th January 2016 Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

A minute extract and recommendations arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10th October 2016 (circulated as Additional Papers) were considered along with agenda item 9 – Housing Revenue Account Initial Budget 2017/18 – 2019/20 – Minute No. 71 refers.

81. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

Members received an update report on the work of the Executive Committee's Advisory Panels.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.02 pm

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Chair