



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

9th July 2008

Committee

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), Councillor David Smith (Vice-Chair) and Councillors K Banks, M Chalk, D Taylor and D Thomas

Also Present:

P Hill

Officers:

S Hanley, S Shammon and S Skinner

Committee Officer:

J Bayley and H Saunders

22. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Hartnett and Norton.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or of any party whip.

24. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday the 18th of June be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25. ACTIONS LIST

Officers provided an update on the latest edition of the Committee's Action List.

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Chair

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Officers explained that, in respect of Action 10 on the Actions List (concessionary bus passes), the facility for members of the public to apply for a concessionary bus pass on the internet had been made available on the Council's website on the 2nd of July.

Action 11 on the Actions List (Service Plans), regarding the possible removal of all reference to the Service Plans from the Committee's Work Programme, was discussed by Members. Officers informed Members that as the priorities of the Council were due to change, the Corporate and Performance Plan was not due to be published until the Autumn, which would result in a delay of the publication of the Service Plans until 2009. Officers explained that the Service Plans would be presented for the Committee's consideration following this date. Therefore, Members agreed to retain the reference to the Service Plans on the Committee's Work Programme.

Members were informed that, as detailed at Action 4 (Economic Development and Educational Attainment), the Committee was required to make a decision about how and when to consider economic development and educational attainment levels in the Borough. Members had agreed at a meeting of the Committee on the 27th March 2008 that the Committee would consider what action to take on these topics after the Work Programme Planning Afternoon had taken place. Members decided that these two issues should be considered by the Committee and that, to begin the process, they wished to be reminded of the previous scrutiny report on the subject.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **reference to the Service Plans be retained in the Committee's Work Programme;**
- 2) **the Economic Development and Educational Attainment item be considered at the meeting of the Committee on Wednesday the 20th of August;**
- 3) **the Jobs, Employment and Economy Scrutiny Report be circulated to the Committee; and**
- 4) **subject to these updates, the Actions List be noted.**

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26. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

There were no call-ins and no proposed items for pre-scrutiny.

27. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Committee considered a scoping document from Councillor Chalk proposing that the Role of the Mayor be the focus of a scrutiny exercise.

Councillor Chalk explained that he felt the role of the Mayor at the Council could be utilised in a more effective way to promote the town and that this premise formed the focus of his proposed exercise. Some Members commented that the role of the Mayor was not a priority for the Council or for local people and that there were other potential scrutiny topics that warranted greater attention from the Committee.

Members debated to what degree the proposed focus of the scoping document fulfilled the questions listed in the Scrutiny Scoping Document Checklist. Officers advised that if the Committee felt it was not appropriate to tackle these issues as a piece of Overview and Scrutiny work, Members could request that the issue be added to the Forward Plan for the Executive Committee to consider, on the basis of an Officer report.

The Chair proposed that the scrutiny exercise be accepted for a Task and Finish review on condition that a small group of Members undertake a short, sharp review in accordance with the timescales stipulated in the scoping document. Members agreed to this suggestion.

The Chair explained that he had discussed the potential membership of the Task and Finish Group with the Vice-Chair and they had decided that Councillors Boyd-Carpenter, Enderby and Hunt be invited to take part in the exercise. Councillor Chalk was confirmed as the Chair of the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the proposed scrutiny of the Role of the Mayor be approved for Task and Finish review;**
- 2) **Councillor Chalk be appointed Chair of the Task and Finish Group; and**

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- 3) **Councillors Boyd-Carpenter, Enderby and Hunt be invited to take part in the exercise.**

28. TASK & FINISH GROUP - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered update reports in relation to current reviews. The following oral report was given:

- a) Third Sector Task and Finish Group

The Chair of the Third Sector Task and Finish Group, Councillor Thomas, informed Members that the Group included Councillors Banks, Cookson, Pearce, and Shurmer. She also explained that the Group had agreed to co-opt Ann Sowton, from, BARN (Bromsgrove and Redditch Network), a Voluntary Sector umbrella organisation working in Redditch and Bromsgrove, onto the Group.

Members were informed that the final report was to be written by members of the Group and would be short. The Committee was also informed that a press release was to be sent to the local media in order to publicise the work of the Task and Finish Group and that the paperwork for this Group was to be made available to the public on the internet.

Members discussed the five core third sector organisations funded by the Council. Members enquired if these organisations had been given written notification that the Council was changing its procedures regarding grants to third sector organisations. Officers confirmed that they would check whether the core funded organisations had been given written notice of these changes.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted and the proposed action detailed in the preamble above be agreed.

29. JOINT SCRUTINY EXERCISE ON FLOODING

Members noted the contents of the report produced by Councillor Chalk regarding the previous meeting of the Joint Scrutiny on Flooding Task Group held on Monday the 30th of June.

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Councillor Chalk explained that, at the meeting, consideration had been given as to how the report could be presented to the District Councils. Councillor Chalk asked Committee members to express their opinions on this subject. Members requested copies of the report and a presentation from Councillor Chalk and the Chair of the Scrutiny Task Group. The Committee also requested that all Borough Council members be invited to the meeting of the Committee for the presentation of the final report.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **a presentation of the final report be given to Members of the Committee by Councillor Chalk and the Chairman of the Scrutiny Task Group; and**
- 2) **all Members be invited to the meeting of the Committee for the presentation of the final report.**

30. JOINT POLICY ON UNAUTHORISED GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ENCAMPMENTS - MEMBER DISCUSSION

The Committee had requested an update on the Worcestershire Joint Policy on Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments item that had been considered by the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2008.

Officers explained that this issue had been raised during the previous year by former Councillor Pattie Hill, further to problems she had encountered with unauthorised encampments in her Ward. Pattie explained that she felt there were two issues of importance. In the case of the incursion in her Ward, she felt that the response to the incursion by the Police had been too slow. Secondly, she felt there had been confusion about which partner organisation was responsible for carrying out welfare checks. Members were informed by Officers that the County Council was responsible for undertaking welfare checks with Gypsies and Travellers staying on unauthorised encampments.

Officers explained that when this issue was considered at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting held in March, Members found that partners under the Joint Policy had not consistently fulfilled their responsibilities as set out in the policy. Therefore, the previous Committee had decided to write to the co-ordinating Officer at the County Council to explain Members' concerns and to request that a meeting be held to be attended by all partners.

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Members had requested that the concerns of the Council be presented at this meeting.

Members were informed that a meeting of the partners had taken place in May 2008. A Borough Council Officer had been in attendance at this meeting. He informed the Committee that this meeting had been productive and had been attended by a number of representatives of the Police service.

Members discussed site provision for Gypsies and Travellers in the Borough. Members were informed that the County-wide Gypsy and Traveller Area Assessment had been completed and that estimations had been calculated for the number of sites needed for the County and each of the District Councils. As a result of these findings, a joint approach between Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council to provide authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites had been discussed. Members agreed that the Council should examine this option for providing sites further.

In response to a Member query, Officers explained that the Joint Policy was working and that the Police had become more pro-active in their response to joint working. Members requested that Officers maintain a detailed record of unauthorised encampments, which could be used to assess the effectiveness of the new version of the policy. This record would be presented before Members at a meeting of the Committee in September.

RESOLVED that

Officers maintain a detailed record of unauthorised encampments in the Borough and present the record for the Committee's consideration at the end of September.

31. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

The Committee considered a report that detailed Member responses, provided during the Work Programme Planning Afternoon, on the subject of preferred working relationships between the Council's Executive Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed that the Executive Committee should also consider the report.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the report be noted; and**

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- 2) **the Executive Committee be requested to consider its contents.**

32. SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

The Committee considered a report which detailed the various ideas for scrutiny that had been suggested by Members during the Work Programme Planning Afternoon. Members considered each suggestion in turn and discussed possible action for each item.

Members agreed that item 1 (adult participation in sport) and item 10 (improving the health of people in Redditch) should not be pursued by the Committee at this time. Instead, the Committee agreed that the proposer of item 10, Councillor Banks, in her role as the Council's representative on the County's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, should suggest this item for consideration at the County Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed that Councillor Banks should report back to the Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the autumn if no progress had been made there. In that event, a scrutiny exercise, combining the scope of both items 1 and 10, would be launched by the Committee, to be chaired by Councillor Banks.

The Committee agreed that item 2 (the Borough's carbon footprint), was an issue that had been considered by the Environment Advisory Panel, and that it was therefore not necessary to undertake a separate review of this issue.

Members agreed that, as Councillor Chalk would be engaged on another scrutiny exercise, consideration of the scrutiny exercise he suggested, number 3 on the list (communication), could be deferred.

Members discussed item 7 (Housing Mutual Exchange). The proposer of this item, Councillor Smith, explained that he had completed a scoping document for this item, which was due for consideration at the following meeting of the Committee. Members therefore agreed that this exercise should be considered by the parent O&S Committee and that the item should be chaired by Councillor Smith.

Members discussed item 5 (Fishing Tackle Heritage). Members agreed that, as Councillor Smith had expressed an interest in this item, it should be pursued as a scrutiny exercise when the Housing

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Mutual Exchange item had been completed so that he would be available to Chair the Group.

Items 9 and 11, both relating to the improvement of public transport in the town, were discussed by the Committee. Members agreed that these two items should be merged into one scrutiny exercise and that Councillor Taylor should chair the review. The Chair proposed that Councillor Taylor meet with Officers to complete a scoping document that could be considered by the Committee at a later meeting in the year.

Members considered item 13 (communal areas around Council Flat properties). The Committee agreed that this issue should be tackled by a Task and Finish Group and that Councillor Mould should chair this exercise.

Members recognised that it would be difficult to undertake all of the scrutiny exercises that had been proposed at the same time. Members noted that Member availability and the capacity of Officers to facilitate numerous reviews might mean that not all of the proposed scrutiny exercises discussed would take place.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted; and the future work programme developed in accordance with the outcomes of the discussion as recorded in the preamble above.

33. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

34. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.