



# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Thursday, 6 November 2008

## MINUTES

**Present:**

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), and Councillors K Banks, M Chalk, W Hartnett, D Taylor and D Thomas

**Officers:**

S Hanley, S Skinner

**Committee Services Officer:**

J Bayley and H Saunders

**97. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R King, Norton and Smith.

**98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP**

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

**99. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday 15 October be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

**100. ACTIONS LIST**

Councillor Banks referred to item two on the Actions List, relating to her role on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She presented a report on her work on the Health

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Members' consideration (Appendix A).

Councillor Banks explained that as part of her work on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members had been examining the progress of Worcestershire's Primary Care Trust (PCT) bid for Foundation Trust status. If the PCT achieved Foundations status, health services in Redditch would experience greater autonomy with the result that it might be possible to attract increased levels of funding. She urged all Members to encourage as many people as possible living in Redditch to sign up to be a member of the Foundation Trust.

Councillor Banks also explained that she had a role on the Corporate Parenting Committee. Members questioned whether corporate parenting was the responsibility of both County and District Councillors. Councillor Banks explained that she believed that corporate parenting was the responsibility of all Councillors. Members generally were confused about their responsibilities on this issue and requested that a briefing for Members be organised to address knowledge gaps on this issue

In response to action ten on the Actions List regarding the progress of the Communications Task and Finish Group report, Officers informed Members that they had contacted the lead Officer for the Communications Task and Finish Group, the Head of Human Resources and Communications. She was due to discuss the recommendations of this review with the new Communications and Marketing Manager who was due to commence employment with the organisation.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) **Officers to organise a briefing for Members on Corporate Parenting; and**
- 2) **the Actions List be noted.**

## **101. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY**

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

## **102. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS**

There were no draft scoping documents for consideration at this meeting.

## 103. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee received update reports in relation to current reviews.

a) Council Flat Communal Cleaning – Chair, Councillor P Mould

The Chair explained that the Group had been on a visit to some of the Council flat communal areas which were cleaned as part of the contract and other Council flat communal areas that were not cleaned as part of the contract. The Committee heard that there were several different arrangements for different council flat communal areas as part of the contract. Residents in the majority of the Council flat areas not covered by the contract were expected to clean the communal areas themselves. However, it was considered by the Chair that this arrangement had not worked. Members noted that it would be a useful exercise to address these variations in the contract.

b) Third Sector – Chair, Councillor D Thomas

Councillor Thomas explained that the Group had completed its evidence gathering and was in the process of considering its recommendations for the consultation event taking place with third sector organisations. Members asked how the Group were planning to overcome concerns of third sector organisations that the recommendations were already decided. Officers explained that it would be made clear during the event that the recommendations were in the draft stage. The sections of the work where the Group were inviting input from the third sector would be made clear and they would be invited to comment. Councillor Thomas added that the whole process had been as transparent as possible, and the Group had endeavoured to make agenda papers available to the public to ensure that the third sector had been able to follow the progress of the Group.

The Chair of the Group confirmed that the Group would report back as planned on 17 December.

**RESOLVED that**

**the Task and Finish Group update reports be noted.**

## 104. **ROLE OF THE MAYOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP - DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

The Committee received the draft final report of the Role of the Mayor Task and Finish Group. Councillor Chalk explained that the report had been kept deliberately short, with the recommendations contained on the front and further supporting information for these recommendations inside the report.

The Chair began by asking if it would be physically possible to build an entrance to the balcony from the Mayor's Parlour as detailed in recommendation F. Officers advised that planning for this type of work would require a survey to be undertaken and the costs calculated. Members voiced their general concern about the report as they felt that the report lacked information on costs for all of the recommendations.

Reservations were raised about the viability of Recommendation C regarding using the Mayor to promote the town to local business. Members were concerned about the possible conflict of interest and danger of favouring some business over others. Members were also concerned about the cost and staffing implications of arranging for Officers to make refreshments when the Mayor decided to entertain guests, as detailed in Recommendation B.

Members queried how many hours had been spent on the scrutiny exercise. Officers clarified that the Task and Finish Group had adhered to its original timetable approved by the Committee and had taken approximately 13 hours of meeting time. Councillor Chalk pointed out that it had been very difficult to undertake the whole scrutiny process and gather the costs during the time allocated.

Officers explained that some work had already been undertaken on some of the recommendations. Recommendation A instructing that a picture of the Mayor be placed in the Town Hall had already been initiated. With regards to recommendation E that the Mayor's booklet be updated, Officers informed the Committee that work was undertaken on a yearly basis to refresh this document. Officers informed the Committee that some work had already taken place to assess the Council's Mayoral web pages.

Members agreed that more work was needed on the cost implications for all of the recommendations. They requested that this work be done and that the report be resubmitted for the

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consideration of the Committee at their meeting on 14 January 2009.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **costs for the recommendations contained within the Role of the Mayor Task and Finish Group draft final report be calculated and the report be amended accordingly; and**
- 2) **the amended Role of the Mayor Task and Finish Group draft final report be resubmitted to the Committee at their meeting on 14 January 2009.**

## **105. JOINT SCRUTINY EXERCISE INTO FLOODING**

Councillor Chalk explained that at the last meeting, the Group had reviewed the final draft report and considered the comments from Expert Witnesses. Most of the changes to the report were agreed and the report had been signed off by the Group. Councillor Chalk explained that it was at each District Council's discretion as to how the report was to be presented to them.

Members questioned if the emergency planning committee was still in existence. Officers explained that this had changed under new arrangements and in a state of emergency the Executive Committee would be convened.

Members requested that Officers liaise with Officers at Worcestershire County Council to make arrangements for the report to be presented at a future meeting of the Committee.

The Chair thanked Councillor Chalk for all his hard work on the Group.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **Officers to contact Officers at Worcestershire County Council to arrangements for the report to be presented to the Committee; and**
- 2) **the report be noted.**

## **106. UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM TRAINING - OVERSIGHT AND SCRUTINY**

Officers explained that they had wanted to bring to Member's attention the module offered by the Institute of Local Government

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Studies (INLOGOV) at Birmingham University on Oversight and Scrutiny. Members were informed that this module would require attendance at the University for several days and there would be several assignments to complete. Members agreed they would be unlikely to give the amount of time required to complete this course.

The Committee was informed about a further potential training opportunity. INLOGOV was offering the seminar 'Scrutiny of Performance' for Officers and Members due to be held on 18 November. Officers enquired if Members wished to attend this seminar. The cost was £350 each but if three Members attended then the cost would decrease to £300 per person. Officers suggested that as there were a number of Members who wished to attend the seminar it would be possible to arrange for the facilitator to run an in-house version of the seminar. An in-house delivery option would cost £1850 for the day or £1,350 for a half day. Members agreed that the Chair should attend the seminar in the first instance to evaluate its potential and then if deemed useful, the facilitator would be invited to present the seminar in-house to Members of the Committee.

Officers explained that Members had requested to be made aware of opportunities to attend the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Parliamentary Select Committee training. Officers informed the Committee that there were several dates available to undertake this training. Members requested that Officers book a place on the training due to take place on either 11 February or 4 March 2009.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) **the Chair to attend the 'Scrutiny of Performance' training due to be held on 18 November 2008 with a view to assessing its suitability to be delivered as an in-house course;**
- 2) **Officers contact the CfPS to book places on the Parliamentary Select Committee training offered for 11 February and 4 March 2009; and**
- 3) **the report be noted.**

## **107. REFERRALS**

There were no referrals.

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## 108. WORK PROGRAMME

Members discussed the review of business centres, which was scheduled for consideration at the following meeting of the Committee on Wednesday 26 November. Officers explained that this subject would be considered by the Economic Advisory Panel. Councillor Gandy, who had originally proposed this item for consideration by the committee, had been consulted about this arrangement and agreed that it would be appropriate for the Economic Advisory Panel to review the subject of business centres instead of a Task and Finish Group.

Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could scrutinise any reports and recommendations produced by the Economic Advisory Panel in relation to the business centres in the future.

The Committee discussed the arrangements for the update report on the Joint Policy for Unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller Encampments, which was scheduled for consideration at the following meeting of the Committee. Members agreed that no Officers would be required to attend the meeting to present this report.

The arrangements for the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management's Annual Report before the Committee were also considered by the Committee. Members agreed a number of questions for this Portfolio Holder to address during his Annual Report (Appendix B).

### **RESOLVED that**

**subject to the preamble above, the Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.35 pm