

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 January 2019

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor David Bush (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Bill Hartnett, Mike Rouse and Craig Warhurst

Also Present:

Councillor Joe Baker

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering, Deb Poole, Judith Willis, Becky Talbot, Clare Flanagan, Chris Forrester, Paul Spooner and Amanda Delahunty

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Amanda Scarce

68. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G. Prosser.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

70. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair circulated a written update on the Leader's Announcements.

71. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11th December be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

72. HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder for Housing introduced the report and in so doing highlighted a number of areas, including the consultation which had taken place and the responses received, which were detailed within the report. The new policy would ensure that the Council was better able to prioritise its limited supply of social housing, whilst also taking into account changes to legislation. It also included more robust consequences for those tenants who were in breach of their tenancy agreements. The Portfolio Holder for Housing also took the opportunity to thank the management and officers for their support and hard work in delivering this revised policy.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas in more detail:

- Disappointment in the limited number of responses received to the consultation and the ratios of responses used to make amendments to the policy.
- Community Contribution for Key Workers and Volunteers – 65% of respondents supported this proposal.
- Priority for Armed Forces, which was part of the legislative requirements and the inclusion of Domestic Abuse victims. Armed forces personnel are catered for through legislation. Victims of domestic abuse are usually dealt with under homelessness legislation which is the highest priority that can be awarded, however during the consultation period new statutory guidance was issued requesting that those who are placed in a refuge or interim accommodation receive preference in the allocations policy and the proposed policy has been amended to reflect this.
- Groups which may be unfairly disadvantaged by proposals – which included single parents, low income families and care workers, (which were not covered by key work definition). It was confirmed that if these had been included it was likely that it would skew the policy and it had been confirmed that it was justifiable to not give them preference.

Officers confirmed that in order to implement the new policy a new system was required and that this would be procured in the coming months. It was acknowledged that significant work needed to be carried out to ensure the policy was implemented as smoothly as possible and that work would commence shortly to begin this process. This included the introduction of a new form for all new applicants. Revised data would also be gathered for those already in the system.

During consideration of this item an amendment was proposed by Councillor Bill Hartnett, which requested that the policy be monitored to ensure it was fit for purpose and that after 12 months of implementation, or sooner if necessary, it be reviewed and/or amended to enable it to deliver its aims. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

Councillor Hartnett explained that it was good practice to include within any new policy a review and monitoring process to ensure that the changes were working and meeting the needs of those requiring the service. A number of Members responded by stating that this was normal practice for the Council and they saw no need for a specific recommendation to be made to cover this. Should there be a need for further changes to be made then these would be brought back to the Executive as and when necessary. It was also highlighted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could at any time request an update on any Council policy or process, so there were systems in place to ensure that the policy was fit for purpose. It was also argued that with such a major change to the policy and the need for a new system to administer it that it would take more than 12 months to get a true view of how it was working. There was also flexibility within the policy for managers to have flexibility with particular cases should the need arise.

Both Councillors Hartnett and Chance explained that they were not opposed to the policy but believed that such substantial changes required a review and monitoring process to be built in to it in order for those using the service to be able to see that the Council listened to any concerns which were raised and to protect those affected by the changes.

On being put to the vote the proposed amendment was lost.

Following a further brief discussion it was

RESOLVED that

- a) **the results of the consultation on the draft housing allocations policy be noted; and**
- b) **the new housing allocations policy be adopted and implemented by the Council.**

73. DEVELOPMENT PARTNER TO PROGRESS THE POSSIBLE REDEVELOPMENT OF WINYATES AND / OR MATCHBOROUGH DISTRICT CENTRES AND SURROUNDING AREAS

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism introduced the report and took the opportunity to thank officers for their hard work put in to getting to this stage. He

advised that this was a long overdue project, the dated centres no longer met the requirements of the local residents and it was hoped that the improvements would bring a much improved and better outcome to the whole area.

The Interim Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) provide Members with a summary of the report, which included the following areas:

- The aim of the soft market testing, with the support of Homes England would be to refine the proposals and scheme that could be delivered.
- The need to attract new investment in the areas to mitigate the costs to the Council.
- The One Public Estate (OPE) bid for £200k to support the costs of the initial process.
- The Homes England Delivery Partner Panel and the experience they had in delivering similar projects.
- The importance in setting out the Council's proposals and being clear about the terms of any proposals moving forward.
- Consultation with residents would take place following completion of this initial stage.

Members raised concerns around the number of new market and affordable homes suggested and what proportion of Council Housing Stock would be included, as currently there was the potential loss of 29 Council Houses. It was highlighted that this was something which had been discussed in detail at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that a recommendation had been put forward following its pre-scrutiny exercise. The Chair advised that the project was at its earliest stage and that such detail would follow on from this. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism advised that the Council's ambition was to improve the area and the housing through the project; however it was difficult to be prescriptive at this early stage. It was confirmed that any developer would be expected to support the Council's current planning policy in respect of housing stock.

The Chair drew Members' attention to the additional papers pack 2, which contained the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Hartnett proposed the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Chance.

The proposed additional recommendation stated the following:

“assurances be given that no Council housing stock or business unit assets would be lost from the redevelopment of the Winyates and Matchborough district centres.”

The Chair invited Councillor Joe Baker, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to speak. Councillor Baker thanked the Chair for the opportunity to do so and advised that the Committee had discussed the report in detail and had expressed concerns regarding the re-development, as they had been mindful of mistakes which had been made in previous projects; particular reference being made to Church Hill. It was important that Ward Members were consulted and listened to as they had a wide local knowledge of the centres. Mistakes which had been made with previous projects had been costly and it was therefore also important to protect the Council from any unexpected additional costs at a later date. However, Councillor Baker went on to say that the Committee's major concern had been the loss of Council housing stock and any income from other sources such as retail units in the centres. Whilst the inclusion of affordable housing was welcomed this covered a wide spectrum and it was important to ensure that the current Council housing stock numbers were retained at best, but hopefully improved upon. Anecdotally, a Member commented that there had been involvement in previous projects by the relevant Ward Councillors through a number of meetings.

Whilst the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism understood the sentiment behind the recommendation it was felt that it would be difficult at this early stage to support such a restriction. He suggested that he would support an alternative wording, which did not include reference to business unit assets.

Councillor Baker reiterated that the Committee had simply asked for assurances that there would be no loss, whilst accepting that it was difficult to predict what the final project outcome would look like, although it was the housing stock which was the most important area for consideration. Councillor Hartnett also commented that it was important that the Council maintained any income stream available from the business units, particularly in light of the difficult financial times the Council was currently facing.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was lost.

Councillor Hartnett proposed a further addendum to (i) of the recommendations included within the report in agenda pack, that "protects and enhances the number and quality of RBC Housing stock currently provided at both sites and further protects and replaces the income generated by RBC business units existing currently." This was seconded by Councillor Chance.

The comments that had previously been made to explain why this was not possible were reiterated and after further discussion and with the agreement of Councillor Hartnett, his proposed addendum was withdrawn, and the addition of (b) below was made to the recommendations within the report. It was

RESOLVED that

- a) the proposal for a comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of Matchborough and Winyates District Centres and the creation of up to 400 new market and affordable homes as part of the development be noted;**
- b) assurances be given that there will be no net loss in Council housing stock in the future development of the Matchborough and Winyates District Centres;**
- c) the bid for One Public Estate (OPE) funding to support the Council in the feasibility study and the options appraisal for such a development as detailed in Appendix 1 be noted;**
- d) the Council agrees to work with Homes England and its Delivery Partner Panel to 'soft market test' its proposals with members of the panel at no additional cost to the Council, and with no ongoing obligation; and**
- e) the establishment of a partnership board involving Redditch Council, Homes England, Worcestershire County Council and Arrow Vale Academy to oversee the continuing work on all aspect of the project be noted.**

74. JOINT DISCUSSION - A JOINT PAY SCALE

Members considered a report which provided them with an update in respect of the current position regarding the National Pay Award which introduced changes to the National Pay Spines and the impact of this on the Council.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager explained the background to the report and in so doing highlighted a number of points, including the following:

- As part of the two year pay award agreed nationally new national pay spines needed to be implemented from 1st April 2019.
- In order to close the significant gap this had created new spinal column points in some cases.

- That although this Council and Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) had the same Job Evaluation Scheme, the pay models differed, which resulted in a level of risk of equal pay claims.
- The introduction of the National Pay Spines gave the opportunity to combine both authorities' pay models and therefore reduce that risk.
- The proposals before Members had been informally discussed with the Trades Unions, but formal consultation would take place once agreement at full Council was achieved.
- Councillor Chance made the point that normally when consultation was undertaken this was on more than one option which was not the case in this instance. Notwithstanding this the Labour Group would support the recommendation as long as the unions were in agreement.
- The main differences between the schemes of each authority were highlighted, with an example of the differing levels of pay.
- A new joint pay scale would go towards meeting some of the issues raised in the Peer Review.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas in more detail:

- Implications of the current differing schemes on staff morale.
- The preferred option was to bring this Council's scheme in line with that used by BDC.
- The matter would be considered at BDC Cabinet and Council on 16th and 23rd January respectively.
- The importance of having the Trades Unions' support and holding meaningful consultation with them.
- The importance of staff relations and morale.

Following a further brief discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that

- a) Model 1 be adopted and implemented with effect from 1st April 2019;**
- b) the commencement of formal consultation with the Trade unions with a view to reaching a Collective Agreement to implement a joint pay model across both Councils in lines with the revised National Pay Spine be agreed; and**

- c) the commencement of a Dismissal and Re-engagement process in the event that a collective agreement is not achieved be agreed.

75. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2019/20

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources explained that this report was the statutory calculation of the Council Tax Base for the equivalent Band D property, which needed to be notification to major precepting bodies. This needed to be agreed and taken forward to full Council.

RECOMMENDED that

- a) The calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2019/20, be approved; and
b) 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 2019/20 be 26,096.0 and for the parts of the area listed below be:

Parish of Feckenham	370.1
Rest of Redditch	<u>25,725.9</u>
Total for Borough	<u>26,096.0</u>

76. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INITIAL BUDGET 2019/20 TO 2021/22

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources presented the report and in so doing highlighted the following:

- The report covered the budget and rent setting for the HRA account.
- The impact of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and the reduction in rents, together with details of the income that would have been generated.
- The average rent decrease and the impact of the 1% rent reduction over four years, together with the reduction in working balances as a result of this.
- Expenditure, including an increase in repairs and maintenance. It was anticipated that this would improve further following management and procurement changes.
- The need to increase the housing stock and funds set aside for this purpose.

Members commented on the work that had already been undertaken in respect of return void properties to stock and a small

number of new housing stock purchases, which would begin to improve the Council's position.

RECOMMENDED that

- a) **the draft 2019/20 Budget for the Housing Revenue Account attached to the report at Appendix A be approved;**
- b) **the actual average rent decrease for 2019/20 be 1%;**
- c) **the £5,729k allocated to Major Repairs Reserve in 2019/20 be applied to fund the HRA capital programme; and**
- d) **£4,619k be allocated to the acquisition of new dwellings funded from earmarked capital receipts (£1,386k) and the HRA capital reserve (£3,233k).**

77. FEES AND CHARGES 2019/20

Members' attention was drawn to the additional papers 1 agenda pack which contained revised fees and charges in respect of the crematorium and associated charges, which had been calculated with a higher percentage increase in error. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Working Group had scrutinised the report, in some detail, the previous evening.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management reiterated that the revised figures for the crematorium and associated charges now reflected the Council's view that this was not an area which should be increased any more than was necessary. It was also clarified that this service was able to cover its operating costs. The reduction in income from this would be covered within other areas to ensure that the Council had a balanced budget. It was also highlighted that a more sensible approach had been taken in respect of the Shopmobility services and no increase had been proposed.

The recommendation made by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group in respect of an investigating the potential to introduce special discount fees for frequent use of the Shopmobility service was noted.

RESOLVED that

The fees and charges as included at Appendix 1 to the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED that

Council approve all fees and charges that are included in Appendix 1 to the report.

78. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20 TO 2022/23 - UPDATE REPORT

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources provided Members with an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan and confirmed that the final report would be received at the February meeting, and go forward to Council for approval. It was a four year plan which contained a number of assumptions for future years. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had had the opportunity to pre-scrutinise the report at its meeting on 3rd January 2019. It was explained that a new approach had been taken this year in the planning and a table was included within the report which demonstrated the changes in the financial projections and budget gap for 2019/20 based on the original estimation of a £475k gap as presented in February 2018. This also included explanatory notes as to the reasons behind the changes, which resulted in the current gap of £496k. It was confirmed that since the report had been published this gap had further reduced. A number of areas were highlighted, including:

- Efficiency savings and unidentified pressures – these had been stripped out and only those which could be identified included.
- Negative
- Additional pay and inflation – this included additional costs from the National Pay agreement and Joint Pay Scale, which Members had already discussed at this evening's meeting.
- Negative Revenue Support Grant – this figure had originally been built in, however clarification had been received that this would not now be payable.
- Concern around the impact of changes to the New Homes Bonus scheme and the loss of funds in future years.
- Unavoidable costs and a number of small revenue bids. The majority of the capital bids referred to Section 106 funding.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management thanked officers for their hard work and reiterated the need for the Council to look at working in different more innovative ways and was keen to ensure that savings were identified the unidentified savings no longer including within the figures provided. Discussions had been held with Central Government to raise concerns over future funding and lack of certainty moving forward. In the meantime the report set out the basis for delivering a balanced budget.

A number of areas were discussed by Members, including:

- The inclusion of the assumption that Model I would be the route taken in respect of the Joint Pay Scale model.
- The shortfall in respect of the revised fees and charges for the crematorium and associated charges would need to be met through other means.
- The reduction of £20k with the implementation of the new grants scheme format.

RESOLVED that

the issues and the medium term financial plan gap be noted and that officers continue to review the position to enable a balanced budget to be presented to Executive on 5th February 2019.

79. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Whilst the Chair confirmed that the minutes were provided for information, it was highlighted that a recommendation at page 235 of the agenda had been overlooked at the previous meeting of the Executive. Members were therefore asked to consider this recommendation, which was in respect of the Enterprise System and recommended that there should be an all Member briefing on the subject of the new Finance System before council makes a decision on this subject on 28th January 2019.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management responded that whilst he did not have any objection to such a briefing he felt that as the exact system had now been decided upon as yet, that a briefing on 28th January would be too early at this stage. He explained that as part of the procurement process it had become apparent that the original system that was being considered would become obsolete in the not too distant future and it had therefore been agreed that a further procurement exercise would be carried out with a view to a further, more advanced system being obtained.

RESOLVED that

arrangements for an all Member briefing on the subject of the new Finance System be made at the appropriate time.

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

The Chair confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made a recommendation in respect of the Development Partner to

progress the possible redevelopment of Winyates and/or Matchborough District Centre and Surrounding Areas, at its latest meeting on 3rd January 2019 and this had been considered by the Executive Committee during the debate this evening.

81. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORTS

- a) Constitutional Review Working Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

There was no update since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

- b) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative Councillor Gareth Prosser

As Cllr Prosser had sent his apologies there was no update for this item.

- c) Grants Panel – Chair, Councillor Greg Chance

It was confirmed that this item would be removed from future agendas.

- d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

There was no update since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

There was no update since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.53 pm