

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 10 September
2019

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Julian Grubb, Bill Hartnett, Mike Rouse, David Thain and Craig Warhurst

Also Present:

Councillor Roger Bennett

Officers:

Derek Allen, Mark Cox, Kevin Dicks, Clare Flanagan, Jayne Pickering and Guy Revans

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

29. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A list detailing the Leader's announcements was circulated at the meeting.

32. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 9th July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

33. CLIMATE CHANGE CROSS-PARTY WORKING GROUP

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) presented a report proposing that Members should establish a Climate Change Cross-Party Working Group.

The subject of climate change had been raised by a resident in a question that had been addressed to the Leader of the Council at a meeting of Council in June 2019. In response to the question the Leader had indicated that the Council would be prepared to declare a climate emergency. Following this meeting the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for climate change, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, had approached Officers and asked them to draft a report setting out the requirements to introduce an Executive Advisory Panel that would focus on climate change. Should Members agree to introduce this Executive Advisory Panel it would operate in a similar manner to the Planning Advisory Panel, whereby whilst there would be specific Members of the group all Members would be welcome to attend.

The membership of the group was briefly discussed and it was noted that there would be five members appointed to the group, in accordance with the standard membership number for an Executive Advisory Panel. The political party group leaders would nominate Members to sit on the group and the Chair indicated that a member from each party could sit as the Chair and Vice Chair of the group respectively.

During consideration of this item Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed an amendment to the draft terms of reference for the group. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance. The amendment called for the meetings of the a Climate Change Cross-Party Working Group to be open to the public to attend.

In proposing the amendment Councillor Hartnett commented that climate change was an increasingly serious problem on a national scale and action needed to be taken to tackle this. It was likely that many residents and groups would be interested in the discussions at meetings of the group.

In seconding the amendment Councillor Chance suggested that by opening meetings of the group to the public this would demonstrate that the Council was taking the subject of climate change seriously.

Members discussed the amendment in detail and in so doing noted that the purpose of the group was to provide elected Members with an opportunity to discuss climate change issues in detail prior to reporting to the Executive Committee. This arrangement was already in place for the Council's previous Climate Change Advisory

Panel that had ceased to exist some years ago as well as for the Planning Advisory Panel, meetings of which took place in private. As the group did not have decision making powers any findings arising from the meetings of the group would be reported to the Executive Committee, meetings of which were held in public. Committee meetings held in public were subject to the Access to Information rules, which required various arrangements including that agenda packs should be published at least five working days in advance of a meeting. As an alternative Members could decide to invite representatives of interested groups to provide evidence to specific meetings of the group and could choose to convene particular meetings to consult with the public. It was suggested that the local authority was already demonstrating that the Council took the subject of climate change seriously by establishing a Climate Change Cross-Party Working Group.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **a Cross Party Working Group on Climate Change be established in accordance with the Terms of Reference at Appendix 1;**
- 2) **the Council appoint a Chair and Vice Chair of the Cross Party Working Group on Climate Change; and**
- 3) **the Council approve nominations from the political group leaders to the places on the Cross Party Working Group on Climate Change.**

34. AMENDMENT TO THE REDDITCH HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Housing Strategy Manager presented a proposed amendment to the Redditch Housing Allocations Policy. Members were advised that this amendment was required to increase the savings and equity level required of applicants from £50,000 to £90,000.

RESOLVED that

the Housing Allocations Policy 2019 be adopted.

35. WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES (WRS) ENFORCEMENT POLICY - REFERRAL FROM THE WRS BOARD

The Technical Services Manager from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented a report detailing proposed changes to the WRS Enforcement Policy.

The Committee was informed that the WRS Board, which comprised elected Members from all of the partner authorities in receipt of WRS's services, had already considered and endorsed the proposed changes to the policy. The six Worcestershire District Councils needed to consider and approve the policy before it could be enforced. The proposed changes to the policy took into account intelligence that had been received as well as a range of experiences across the county.

RECOMMENDED that

the Council adopt the Worcestershire Regulatory Enforcement Policy 2019.

36. BUDGET FRAMEWORK REPORT 2019

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Budget Framework Report 2019.

During the presentation of the report the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The report outlined the overarching objectives for the Council's budget moving forward.
- The Council had been issued with a Section 24 notice in July 2019 by the authority's external auditors. This had raised concerns about the local authority's financial sustainability.
- During a meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee that was due to take place on 26th September, Members would be invited to consider the contents of an action plan that would set out the Council's strategy to address the issues that had been raised in the Section 24 notice.
- In 2019/20 the Council was on track to achieve projected savings that had been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- There was a gap of £1.2 million in the Council's budget for 2020/21 and the figure increased in subsequent years.
- The Council needed to demonstrate to the authority's external auditors that there was a realistic financial plan in place for 2020/21. Officers were working hard to ensure that there was a clear savings plan in place for this year and the subsequent three years of the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- As part of this work to produce a clear financial strategy Officers were aiming to ensure that all spend related to the Council's strategic purposes.
- Officers were aspiring to identify more investment opportunities for the Council and these would continue to be reported to Members.

- The capital budget was also in the process of being reviewed to ensure that all projects included on the programme would be delivered on time. The Council had to borrow to fund capital spending and this had implications for the authority's revenue budget, particularly when expenditure did not take place according to deadline.
- The recent Spending Round 2019 statement had indicated that limits might be placed on the level at which Council Tax could be increased. It was possible that the maximum increase would be either 2 per cent or £5 per household. It was also stated that there might not be a change to the New Homes Bonus but the Council would have to wait until the settlement to get the detail on this fund.
- The Council's funding settlement from the Government was expected in December 2019. This would provide greater clarity in respect of the local authority's financial position moving forward.
- Whilst action was being taken in relation to the Council's budget, a freeze had been placed on central spending costs and recruitment in business critical cases. Staff would also not be able to allocate any expenditure involving costs outside of available budgets and all such cases would be referred to the relevant Head of Service for review.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the various reasons why the Council had been issued with a Section 24 notice. Reference was made to decisions that had been taken both in 2018/19 and in previous years which had impacted on the Council's budget position.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Section 24 notice be noted and the regular reporting of the action plan once approved by the Audit, and Governance and Standards Committee through to the Executive Committee be agreed; and**
- 2) **the overarching financial objectives and framework, to be used in developing the detailed financial plan, to enable the Council to realise savings and additional income whilst delivering the strategic priorities of the Council, be noted.**

37. FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 2019/20

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Financial Monitoring Report for the period April to June 2019.

The figures provided for this quarter of the financial year indicated that there had been an underspend. Essential spend only was being permitted, following the publication of the Section 24 Notice. The Council had received some additional income already and new commercial opportunities to secure additional income were being explored.

The Committee was advised that at this stage in the financial year a detailed forecast in respect of the Council's budget for the year end did not tend to be provided. However, a forecast had been provided for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). In the following Financial Monitoring Report information would be provided about both overspending and underspending on budgets as well as an overarching forecast in respect of the Council's budget.

The HRA was receiving the level of income that had been anticipated. Whilst the budget for Repairs and Maintenance had been overspent in 2018/19 expenditure appeared to be on target in 2019/10. Savings had also been achieved in relation to vacant management posts within the Housing Department. There was a significant amount of capital expenditure scheduled to take place, however, £18 million of this related to updating the Council's housing stock.

Further savings would be made from combining the Council's insurance premiums with other local authorities in a group. A review was being undertaken of the authority's minimum revenue provision. In addition, the Council's assets were being reviewed and Officers were aiming to learn lessons from other Councils.

RESOLVED that

the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the period April – June 2019 be noted.

38. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 4th July be noted.

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

The Chair proposed that the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5th September 2019, in respect of the disposal of the HRA asset located at Green Lane, Studley, should be considered under the relevant item on the agenda.

There were no further recommendations arising from that meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Members' consideration.

40. **ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT**

The following verbal updates were provided in respect of the Executive Advisory Panels:

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

Councillor Dormer explained that a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party was due to take place on 1st October 2019.

- b) Corporate Parenting Board – Councillor Representative, Councillor Juliet Brunner

Councillor Brunner advised Members that a meeting of the group was due to take place later in the month.

- c) Members Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer informed the Committee that a meeting of the group was due to take place on 8th October 2019.

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

The Committee was advised that there were no scheduled meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel due to take place.

41. **DISPOSAL OF HRA ASSET AT GREEN LANE, STUDLEY**

The Head of Environmental Services presented a report in respect of the disposal of an HRA asset at Green Lane, Studley.

The property at 64, Green Lane, Studley was no longer considered to be habitable and the report proposed that it should be demolished. A railway bridge, which was owned by the Council, was located close to this property. The bridge was in a state of disrepair and it would require significant financial investment to secure the structure and then on an ongoing basis due to the requirement for an annual inspection. Officers were proposing that the bridge should be demolished and the site levelled. This would increase the size of the plot and allow for two four-bedroom properties to be built at that location, subject to planning permission. The Council had discussed the plans with Stratford-on-

Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council, in relation to the planning and highways implications of the works.

Members noted that the proposed works would help to make the site safer for the public. The planned works would not impact on the sustrans route that traversed the site. There was also the likelihood that this approach to managing the property and bridge would help to reduce the financial costs to the Council in the long-term.

During consideration of this item Members noted that the report had been pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a meeting on 5th September 2019. At the end of their discussions scrutiny Members had endorsed the recommendations detailed in the report. The Leader thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their hard work in respect of this item.

RECOMMENDED that

- i) No. 65 Green Lane, Studley be declared surplus to requirements and officers to dispose of the site;**
- ii) any HRA capital receipt achieved based on the current market value of No. 65 Green Lane, be used to increase the HRA stock;**
- iii) Option C - The Capital Engineering Scheme be approved, with Authority be delegated to the Head of Environmental Services to submit a detailed planning application to Stratford-on-Avon District Council, for the complete scheme. If successful, the Planning consent will include an outline approval for the erection of 2 No. 4 bed houses;**
- iv) the sites for the 2 No. 4 bed houses be marketed and the received monies, after deduction of the amount as described in ii) above, shall be used as Capital funds towards the cost of the Engineering Works;**
- v) the additional funds required to complete the Engineering Works be taken from the Capital Locality Scheme Capital Programme 2019/20, as the proposed works are of the nature that the budget was set up for in the first instance; and**
- vi) the estimated cost of the Engineering Works cannot be finalised at this time, as Officers are currently endeavouring to determine the most cost effective method of disposing of the extensive surplus material from the excavated embankments. However, subject to**

**the satisfactory outcome of this analysis the total
Engineering Works should not exceed £200k.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.44 pm