

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 8 April 2009

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), Councillor David Smith (Vice-Chair) and Councillors M Chalk, W Hartnett, R King, W Norton and D Thomas

Also Present:

Councillor D Hunt

Officers:

M Bough, S Hanley and T Horne

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and H Saunders

197. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Banks and Taylor.

198. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

199. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were submitted for consideration of their accuracy.

Under this item Councillor King referred to the Committee's decision at that meeting to reject the proposed review of the Overview and Scrutiny process. The record of the subsequent discussion is included under the relevant Minute (No. 202) below.

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Chair

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RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday 8 April be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

200. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered its agreed list of actions and specific mention was made of the following matters:

a) Flooding Working Group

Members were informed that the Officer Working Group, established to respond to the recommendations of the Worcestershire Joint Scrutiny into Flooding Task and Finish Group, had met several times since February. Officers on this Group had also met with colleagues at the County Council and at other District Councils to discuss how to progress the recommendations from the review. Generic and local flood plans were programmed to be produced. These would contain individual sections for each District and would also include reference to the local resilience forum. The Committee was informed that these plans would not be available until May. However, work was being undertaken by Officers to address the Task and Finish Group's recommendations and the resource implications for the Council. The Officers' findings would be reported to the Executive Committee in due course.

b) National Angling Museum

Members referred to the Committee's approval of the National Angling Museum Task and Finish Group. Members requested that the website domain for National Angling Museum be bought by the Council in advance of the launch of this Task and Finish Review.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **Officers arrange for the website domain name of 'National Angling Museum' be bought by the Council; subject to which,**
- 2) **the Actions List be noted.**

201. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

Members discussed possible items for Call-in and also items from the Forward Plan for pre-scrutiny, in particular referring to the Redditch Economic Development Strategy. This strategy was due to be presented for the consideration of the Economic Advisory Panel followed by the Executive Committee on 1 July. Members requested that the Redditch Economic Development Strategy be considered at the following meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that

the Redditch Economic Development Strategy be considered at the following meeting of the Committee on 30 April.

202. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The following matters were considered under the heading of 'Draft Scoping Documents':

a) Overview & Scrutiny Committee Review

Under the minutes item, as recorded above, Councillor King had referred to the Committee's decision to reject his proposed review of the Overview and Scrutiny process.

Cllr King asked the Committee to reconsider this decision, as he felt that the reasons given for rejecting the review were not valid. The Vice Chair, who had chaired the meeting in question, explained that Members had debated and voted on whether to approve each of the three reviews that had been proposed during that meeting and that the majority of Members present had voted to reject the proposed review of the Overview and Scrutiny process.

The Chair suggested, however, that, if Councillor King wished to resubmit the scoping document for the reconsideration of the Committee, he was free to do so.

b) Dial-a-Ride

The Committee considered a draft scoping document for the proposed Dial-a-Ride review. The proposer of this item, Councillor Robin King, explained that the Audit Committee had recently received a report regarding the Dial-a-Ride service written by Officers from the internal Audit Team. This report had highlighted issues regarding the value for money of the service.

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Councillor King informed the Committee that an internal review was being undertaken by Officers which was due to be completed over the following four weeks. Officers had advised Councillor King to wait until the outcome of this review was known before embarking on a scrutiny review of the service. However, Councillor King felt that it was important to begin this review as soon as possible.

Members questioned the timeframe set for the review. It was felt that nine to twelve months was too long, especially as other recently completed detailed reviews had only taken six months. The Committee agreed that this review could be completed within six months.

Officers explained that the remit of the Officer review included examining issues of funding, in particular, the level of funding provided by Worcestershire County Council to deliver the service. A further aim of this review was to consider ways in which the cost of the service to the Council could be reduced. Members agreed that the focus of the scrutiny review was slightly different in that it would consider ways of improving the day-to-day running of the service. It was also deemed important for Members to be given responsibility for setting the long-term vision for the service.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a Task and Finish Group be established to review the Dial-a-Ride service;**
- 2) Councillor Robin King be appointed to Chair the Task and Finish Group;**
- 3) subject to the agreement of the Conservative Group Leader, Councillor Norton be appointed as Vice Chair of the Task and Finish Group; and**
- 4) Councillors King and Norton be requested to meet with relevant Officers as soon as possible to refine the terms of reference of the review.**

203. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee received reports in relation to current reviews.

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

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Councillor Mould informed the Committee that the rescheduled Council Flat Communal Cleaning Consultation meeting was due to take place on Tuesday 14 April at 8pm.

b) Housing Mutual Exchange – Chair, Councillor D Smith

Councillor Smith explained that the first meeting of the Group had been arranged to take place on Wednesday 15 April at 7pm.

c) National Angling Museum and Neighbourhood Groups Reviews

Officers explained that a Chair needed to be appointed for both of these reviews which had been approved at the previous meeting. The Committee also had to set the timescales for each of the reviews.

As the Council Flat Communal Cleaning Review was due to be completed in June 2009, Councillor Mould explained that he would be available to Chair the National Angling Museum Review. However, Members agreed that members of the Committee that had not previously chaired a review should be offered the opportunity to do so before appointing a Member who had experience of chairing. Councillor Mould noted that he would ask Councillor Taylor if she wished to chair the National Angling Museum review.

The Chair suggested that the Neighbourhood Groups Review be scheduled to begin after the completion of the Council Flat Communal Cleaning Review to ensure that there was both the Member and Officer capacity available to support this review. Councillor Smith offered to Chair this Task and Finish Group. However, it was pointed out that he would still be the Chair of the Housing Mutual Exchange Review. Therefore, the Committee agreed that Councillor Banks should first be offered the opportunity to Chair this Group.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **The Chair contact Councillor Taylor to offer her the opportunity to Chair the National Angling Museum Review;**

- 2) **Officers contact Councillor Banks to offer her the opportunity to Chair the Neighbourhood Group Review; and**
- 3) **the Task and Finish Group update reports be noted.**

204. PASSENGER TRANSPORT IN REDDITCH

The Committee considered a written update provided by Officers from Worcestershire County Council's Integrated Passenger Transport Unit. Officers explained that Officers from Worcestershire County Council had been unable to attend the meeting. They had, however, offered to attend a future meeting of the Committee to provide further information to Members, if required.

Members considered the report and noted that there had been issues regarding Worcestershire Primary Care Trust's (PCT) engagement in resolving the problems with public transport access to the Alexandra Hospital. Members agreed to invite a representative from the PCT to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss this matter further. This meeting would take place after the Annual Meeting of the Council in May due to the busy agenda for the meeting that was scheduled to take place on 20 April.

Members discussed details provided regarding the Taxi-Bus service and requested further information regarding the bus company Red Diamond's takeover of this service. Members also noted that at a previous meeting of the Committee, which had been attended by Officers from Worcestershire County Council, Members had requested that they look at the viability of providing a bus stop at the Arrow Valley Park. The Committee requested that Officers provide a written update to the Committee on progress in relation to this issue.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **an item regarding the public transport interchange at the Alexandra Hospital be added to the Work Programme;**
- 2) **Officers at Worcestershire County Council be asked to provide further information as detailed in the preamble above; and**
- 3) **the report be noted.**

**205. THIRD SECTOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP - STAGE ONE
MONITORING UPDATE**

Members considered the contents of a draft Grants Policy and a draft Shopping, Investing and Giving Policy. Officers explained that, as part of the Overview and Scrutiny monitoring process, these draft policies had been presented to provide an opportunity for Members to scrutinise the implementation of a number of the Third Sector Task and Finish Group's recommendations.

The former Chair of the Third Sector Task and Finish Group, Councillor Thomas, thanked Officers for drafting the two policies within such a short timeframe. She explained that she had studied the policies and was pleased to see that all recommendations made by the Group had been incorporated within them. She pointed out, however, that it was important that all of the Group's recommendations should be monitored. In particular, she was concerned to find out about whether there would be any action in relation to the Group's sixth recommendation, which had requested the introduction of a clerical support post.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

206. DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2008/09. Officers explained that this was the Committee's opportunity to make any changes to the structure, format and content of the report before it was presented to the full Council on 20 April.

Officers explained that they had tried to incorporate quotes from Officers and Members involved in the scrutiny process throughout the report. It was suggested that any further quotes that Members wished to have incorporated into the report be forwarded to Officers as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Council be asked to consider the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

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207. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

208. WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme. Officers reminded the Committee that at the meeting due to be held on 30 April, a presentation by Officers from Worcestershire County Council was scheduled to take place regarding the emergency planning procedures in place in the County. At the same meeting, the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services would be present to provide Members with information regarding the Community Call for Action (CCfA) process.

Officers drew Members' attention to an opportunity that had arisen for Members to learn more about the Comprehensive Area Agreement (CAA) and its implications for scrutiny. A workshop session had been organised for Members which was due to be held on Friday 24 April from 9.45am until 1pm. The Chair volunteered to attend this workshop.

Members suggested that an item be added to the Work Programme regarding the recently approved Budget Strategy. This would require the Committee to examine the Budget Strategy, the projected deficit, and how this deficit could be resolved.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **an item regarding the Budget Strategy and deficit be added to the Committee's Work Programme for the consideration on 17 June 2009;**
subject to which amendment,
- 2) **the Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.30 pm