

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 27 May 2009

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), and Councillors G Chance, R King, W Norton, J Pearce, D Taylor and D Thomas.

Also Present:

Councillor M Braley

Officers:

A Marklew, J Smith and E Storer

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and H Saunders

1. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

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

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Thursday 30 April be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered the latest version of the outstanding Actions List.

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Chair

In relation to item 3 (National Angling Museum), Officers reported that the Council's IT Services Officers had submitted an order to purchase the four versions of the National Angling Museum domain name.

RESOLVED that

subject to the update in the preamble above, the Actions List be noted.

5. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

Officers referred to Decision 10 of the Executive Committee Decision Notice of Wednesday 20 May 2009 (Housing Mutual Exchange Task and Finish Group recommendation).

Officers informed Members that this recommendation had been approved by the Executive Committee. An item would therefore be scheduled onto the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme to enable the Committee to monitor the implementation of this recommendation.

There were no Call-ins or suggestions for pre-scrutiny.

6. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

Sheltered Housing Schemes - Review of Parking Arrangements

Officers advised that Councillor A Clayton, who had been due to attend the meeting to suggest a review of parking arrangements for sheltered housing schemes, had withdrawn the proposal.

Members were informed that the Council had a policy for parking at sheltered housing schemes. Officers would therefore be working with Councillor Clayton to review parking arrangements at Chiltern House. There was the possibility that this review might result in the identification of issues that would be suitable for an alternative scrutiny review.

There were no draft scoping documents for pre-scrutiny.

7. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee received reports in relation to current reviews.

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

Councillor Mould informed Members that the Group had recently met to agree their recommendations. The Group would present their final report and recommendations at the following meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday 17 June.

b) Dial-A-Ride – Chair, Councillor R King

Councillor King informed Members that the first meeting of the Group had taken place and had been attended by relevant Officers. The Group had agreed to shadow staff who delivered the Dial-A-Ride service to observe delivery of the service in action. The Group had also been informed that a long-serving Manager of the service would be leaving the Council. The Group had therefore arranged to interview this Officer on Thursday 28 May to ensure that they could consider the important evidence that could be provided by this expert witness.

Members were informed that a questionnaire was sent to customers of the Dial-A-Ride service on an annual basis. The Group would be considering the information provided in response to these questionnaires in 2009 as part of their review.

c) National Angling Museum – Chair, Councillor P Mould

Councillor Mould informed Members that one meeting of the Group had already taken place. During this meeting Members had discussed an ongoing project to establish a National Angling Museum at a National Trust property: Mottisfont Abbey. A consultancy firm, JD Consulting, had been commissioned to review suitable arrangements for establishing a National Angling Museum in the country and had identified Mottisfont Abbey as a possible location for this site. The Chair explained that this would have implications for the review.

He informed Members that a further meeting of the Group would be taking place at the beginning of June. During this meeting relevant Officers from Leisure and Property Services

would be interviewed to discuss options for establishing a National Angling Museum in Redditch.

d) Neighbourhood Groups – Chair, Councillor K Banks

Officers explained that the first meeting of the Neighbourhood Groups Task and Finish Group would be taking place on Tuesday 23 June. At the request of the Chair an article would be appearing in the June edition of Redditch Matters promoting the launch of the review. The Chair had also arranged for basic information about the launch of the review to be discussed as a corporate item during the June / July round of Neighbourhood Group meetings.

RESOLVED that

the Task and Finish Group update reports be noted.

8. COMMUNICATIONS TASK AND FINISH GROUP - UPDATE

Officers presented a written report outlining the responses of the Council's Communications Team to the Communications Task and Finish Group's final recommendations (Appendix A).

Officers explained that corporate branding related not just to the Council's logo but also to other practices which impacted on the Council's corporate identity, such as letterhead styles. Recently Officers had identified the impact of the footers, that were listed on the end of staff emails, upon corporate identity. The Council would be introducing a corporate standard for these footers which would require members of staff to list their name, job title and contact details in a specified manner. Furthermore, these footers would contain reference to the Council's priorities.

Members discussed the Council's relations with representatives of the local press. The local press had been adversely affected by the economic climate. The amount of advertisements placed in the local press by advertisers generally, had decreased which had had an adverse impact on the financial position of many newspapers. A number of local journalists had unfortunately been made redundant. However, relations between the local press and the Council remained largely positive and articles about Council business tended to feature prominently in local media reports.

Members discussed the different corporate branding arrangements that were utilised by some sections of the Council, such as Leisure Services. They questioned the impact that this had on the Council's corporate identity. Officers explained that some services did have slightly different branding known as co-branding. An example of this would be the branding used for the Palace Theatre. However, Members were advised that it was fairly common for co-branding arrangements to be utilised by local authorities. In all cases, Redditch Borough Council ownership should be made clear through secondary use of the Council's logo.

Members noted that one of the problems which had been identified by the Communications Task and Finish Group was that some people had poor perceptions of the town. Members suggested that to address these perceptions the Council could produce a calendar containing images of the attractions that were based within the Borough. Moreover, in order to encourage civic pride, Members suggested that the images for this calendar could be provided through a local competition. Residents could be invited to submit photographs of local attractions for this competition. Officers were asked to consider this option in further detail.

Members praised the Communications Team for the work they had undertaken to address the recommendations contained in the Task and Finish Group's report.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

9. COUNCILLOR CALLS FOR ACTION (CCFA)

The Chair explained that, owing to ill health, the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services had been unable to attend the meeting. He therefore proposed that the Committee postpone consideration of details about the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) procedures adopted at other local authorities until the following meeting of the Committee.

Officers confirmed that, as requested at the previous meeting, Officers had utilised copies of the CCfA request forms that had been produced by Worcestershire County Council and Birmingham City Council, to produce a draft form for Redditch Borough Council. This had been sent to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee for consideration. Confirmation of the contents of this form would

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occur on the return of the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services.

Members noted that a large amount of paperwork had been issued containing details about the CCfA processes utilised at other local authorities.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the contents of the Councillor Call for Action form for Redditch Borough Council be finalised for use as soon as possible;**
- 2) Members consider details about Councillor Call for Action processes at other local authorities at the following meeting of the Committee; and**
- 3) Members retain the paperwork relating to the Councillor Call for Action processes at other local authorities for consideration at their following meeting.**

10. BRAINSTORM - QUESTIONS FOR WORCESTERSHIRE PRIMARY CARE TRUST (PCT)

As previously requested by the Committee, Officers from Worcestershire County Council had provided further information about public transport access to the Alexandra Hospital. Following consideration of this information the Committee had concluded that representatives of Worcestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT) should also be invited to provide evidence on this subject.

Members proposed a number of questions for the consideration of Worcestershire PCT (Appendix B). They agreed that these questions should be forwarded to representatives of Worcestershire PCT. Officers were asked to advise the PCT of the dates of forthcoming meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to invite representatives of the PCT to attend one of these meetings. Officers informed Members that recent legislation had created a duty to co-operate which would require Worcestershire PCT to respond to this request for information. However, this response might not entail attendance at a meeting of the Committee but, rather, receipt of written information.

Members were informed that, as requested by the Committee, Officers from Worcestershire County Council had also provided details about the potential to install a bus stop beside the Arrow

Valley Countryside Centre. Officers had advised that a suitable site for a bus stop had been identified on Battens Drive for the inbound route, which would operate northwards towards the Town Centre. The installation of a bus shelter on this site would need to be funded by Redditch Borough Council. However, no suitable location had been identified for a bus stop to be located on the outbound route, which would face southwards in the direction of Ipsley. A bus stop could only be installed on the outbound route at a cost to Redditch Borough Council in excess of £100,000.

Officers from Worcestershire County Council had requested further guidance from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as to whether they should pursue the option of installing a bus stop for the inbound route. Members agreed that this option would not be feasible and requested that Officers advise Worcestershire County Council accordingly.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **representatives of Worcestershire Primary Care Trust be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to answer questions regarding public transport access to the Alexandra Hospital; and**
- 2) **Worcestershire County Council be advised to take no further action regarding the installation of a bus stop close to the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre.**

11. REFERRALS

There were no referrals for consideration at this meeting.

12. WORK PROGRAMME

Members discussed a number of items in relation to the Committee's Work Programme.

a) Portfolio Holder Annual Reports

Members discussed arrangements for Portfolio Holder Annual Reports for 2009/10. They agreed that Portfolio Holders should be invited to deliver answers to questions proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Portfolio Holders could also produce separate reports if they considered it to be

necessary. The Portfolio Holders would be invited to deliver their reports in a style with which they felt comfortable.

Members discussed the frequency of Portfolio Holder Annual Reports during the year. However, Members agreed that for Portfolio Holders to report more than once annually might be excessive.

b) Budget Strategy and Budget Deficit – Discussion

The Chair advised Members that the Committee was scheduled to consider the Council's Budget Strategy and Budget Deficit in further detail at a meeting of the Committee on 17 June. As requested at a previous meeting of the Committee, Officers had circulated copies of the reports relating to the budget strategy and deficit amongst Members of the Group. This arrangement had been put in place to enable Members to identify whether they would require any further information when discussing the issue at the Committee meeting. The Chair informed Members that Officers had received no responses from Members regarding this matter. He suggested, therefore, that the reports should be re-circulated and that consideration of the item be postponed until the following meeting of the Committee on 8 July.

c) Member Training – Crime and Disorder Scrutiny

Officers advised Members that a conference, focusing upon scrutiny of crime and disorder issues, was scheduled to take place in London on 15 June. Members were advised that both Officers and Councillors could attend this conference. A place had already been booked for one of the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officers.

Members were advised that the fee for attending this conference would be £265.00. Consideration would also need to be given to paying the travel expenses for any Members who attended the conference. Officers informed Members that each Councillor had a personal allowance of £300.00, which was provided for individual support needs. In addition to this sum £5,800 was held centrally for Member Development purposes.

Members discussed the costs involved in booking a place on the conference. They agreed that any Councillor who was interested in attending this conference should not be expected to use all of their personal development funds. Instead, they

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agreed that £100.00 should be contributed from individual member's budgets and the remainder should be paid for using funds from the general Overview and Scrutiny budget.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Portfolio Holders be invited to indicate the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to which they would prefer to deliver their Annual Reports;**
- 2) copies of the reports relating to the Council's Budget Strategy and budget deficit be circulated for Members' consideration;**
- 3) consideration of the Council's Budget Strategy and deficit be rescheduled for a meeting of the Committee on 8 July;**
- 4) Councillors Norton and R King would attend the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Conference on 15 June;**
- 5) the Councillors' attendance at the conference be funded using £100.00 from each Councillor's personal support budget, together with funds from the general Overview and Scrutiny budget; and**
- 6) the Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.50 pm