

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 25 July 2007

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Colin MacMillan (Chair), Councillor Andrew Fry (Vice-Chair) and Councillors K Banks, J Brunner, J Cookson, B Passingham, D Taylor and D Thomas

Also Present:

Officers:

R Bamford, Deputy Chief Executive, J Smith and C Smith

Committee Services Officer:

Jess Bayley and Helen Saunders

12. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

14. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 20th of June 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15. THE FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED that

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Chair

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no action be taken in response to the Forward Plan.

16. CALL-IN

RESOLVED that

no action be taken to initiate call-in procedures on any of the Key Decisions contained in the Executive Committee Decision Notice.

17. FOURTH QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT – JANUARY – MARCH 2007

Members considered the performance report for the 2006/07 financial year. Officers explained that the figures were for the full financial year rather than for the last quarter as indicated on the agenda. The Chair invited Members to express any concerns or ask any questions about the Fourth Quarter Performance report.

A) Concessionary Charge Scheme

Members discussed the performance indicators listed in the report under Priority Four and sought clarification about the Council's concessionary fare scheme. Officers informed Members that the Council's policy relating to concessionary charges had changed. The Council now had to reimburse the bus companies for the costs incurred as a result of the public use of the concessionary fare system. Officers explained that the Council might need to review the concessionary scheme due to changes proposed in the forthcoming national scheme.

B) Dial-a-Ride Scheme

Clarification was sought from Members about the Dial-a-ride service. Officers were asked whether registration for the scheme was required and who qualified to use the service. Members requested information from Officers about the qualification criteria for the Dial-a-Ride scheme.

C) Household Waste: Recycling

Members discussed Priority Two and the Council's performance in increasing the percentage of household waste that was recycled within the

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Borough. Officers informed Members that good progress had been made in increasing the recycling roles in the Borough and that there had been relatively few issues / complaints about the Council's introduction of alternate weekly collections.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as recorded in the preamble above the performance outturn report for 2006/07 be noted.

18. ANNUAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – 2006/07

Members considered the budget monitoring data for the 2006/07 financial year. Members enquired as to whether it would be possible to identify Council spending in all Directorates using 'activity codes'. Officers explained that there was scope for flexibility in the way that financial information was presented to Members and they welcomed suggestions from Members on how this could be improved.

Members queried the funding sources and arrangements for youth services that had previously been funded via the Community Safety Partnership. Officers agreed to discuss this further in the appropriate forum.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above, the report be noted.

**19. ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT – BACKWARD LOOK
2006/07**

The Committee received a report setting out the Council's Efficiency Statement for 2006/07, which detailed the cashable and non-cashable savings had been achieved during the current financial year.

Officers explained that the Council was required to make a certain percentage of savings each year. Members were presented with cumulative totals in addition to specific 2006/07 savings.

Officers reported to the Committee that the backward looking statement for 2006/07 showed that the Council had met its targets.

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It was noted that the Management Review and procurement efficiencies had contributed to achieving delivery.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above, the report be noted.

20. DIRECTORATE SERVICE PLANS 2007/10

Members engaged in a discussion about the most effective way for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider information provided in the Directorate Service Plans. The Chair suggested four possible options:

- I. Option 1:
Noting each Directorate Service Plan without comment and then referring to the Executive Committee.
- II. Option 2:
Establishing a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise one of the Directorate Service Plans in detail. Members would determine whether the details contained in the Directorate Service Plans reflect robustness and efficiency and are likely to add value.
- III. Option 3:
Establishing a Task and Finish Group that would utilise a cross-cutting approach to review one of the seven themes of the 20:20 Vision: Redditch Community Plan, which was referred to in each of the Directorate Service Plans.
- IV. Option 4:
Establishing a Task and Finish Group that would utilise a cross-cutting approach to review one of the four key priorities for the next three years in the Council's Corporate and Performance Plan. Similarly these key priorities are listed in all the Directorate Service Plans.

Officers noted that there were currently a number of Task and Finish Groups that had either been established or were in the process of being set up. Members were reminded that increasing numbers of Task and Finish Groups would have resource implications. However, Officers concurred that a Task and Finish

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Group exercise would be the most effectual way of considering this item.

After some discussion, Members agreed that the fourth option presented by the Chair would produce a viable Task and Finish Group exercise. Members were asked to specify which of the four key priorities they wanted to investigate further. Concerns were expressed by some Members that establishing a Task and Finish Group to examine these priorities might duplicate the work of some of the Executive Advisory Panels. It was therefore agreed by Members that it would be sensible to examine priorities that did not fall within the remit of any of the Advisory Panels if possible.

Members provisionally agreed that “Improving the reality and perception of community safety” and “promoting best standards and opportunities in housing” were the most appropriate priorities for scrutiny. The Chair suggested that both priorities should be subjected to the scoping process which he undertook to complete. Officers were invited to attend this scoping exercise and to advise the Chair about any issues arising from that scoping that might cause duplication of the work of the Executive Advisory Panels.

Councillor Passingham was nominated as the Chair of the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Directorate Service Plans be noted; and**
- 2) **a Task and Finish Group be established to examine one of the key priorities for the next three years contained in the Council’s Corporate and Performance Plan.**

21. QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING – APRIL-JUNE 2007

The Committee considered the quarterly budget monitoring figures for April-June 2007.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

22. DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

Councillor Thomas provided an oral report to Members about the Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement Task and Finish Group.

Members were informed that this Task and Finish Group exercise had initially been established by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2005 but had not actively investigated the possibility of introducing Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement in Redditch until the following year.

In 2006/07 the Task and Finish Group had investigated existing parking enforcement arrangements. Members were informed that as part of the exercise contact had been made with other local authorities in Worcestershire. Wychavon District Council had offered to operate the Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement scheme for Redditch and had offered to finance 50 per cent of the costs. Worcestershire County Council had offered to finance the remaining 50 per cent of the costs for the first two years. It was noted that the scheme was expected to become self-financing within the first few years and that minimal risks would be incurred by Redditch Borough Council if the scheme was approved.

At the end of the municipal year the members of the Task and Finish Group had been divided over the most appropriate action to take. A report was produced and sent to Members but the recommendations were not recorded in the report or endorsed by the Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee. On the 28th of March 2007 the issue was considered by the Executive Committee and the decision was made to postpone a decision until a period of public consultation had been completed by the Council.

Members were informed that the report attached to their agenda summarised the outcome of this period of consultation. Of the 128 replies received during the consultation, 101 (79%) had been in favour of implementing the scheme.

Members queried the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the resolution of this issue. Officers informed Members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needed to consider whether to endorse both the list of recommendations that had not been fully addressed by the Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee and whether to approve the introduction of Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement in Redditch.

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Members discussed the contents of the report and questioned whether the arrangements with Wychavon District Council and Worcestershire County Council would still be available. Officers informed Members that both offers were still valid. Some Members queried the possibility of delegating powers to Police Community Support Officers (CSOs) in the enforcement of parking measures in the Borough. Officers reported that the consultation with the Police had taken place as part of the Task and Finish Group exercise. Members were informed that the Police did not currently prioritise parking enforcement and had encouraged the Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee to recommend Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement. Officers confirmed that the potential role of Community Support Officers had not been investigated and promised to address this issue.

RECOMENDED that

subject to Officers clarifying the potential role of Community Support Officers (CSOs) in the enforcement of parking measures within the Borough

- 1) **the conclusions and recommendations from the Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement Report (March 2007) be endorsed; and**
- 2) **Redditch Borough Council introduce Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement in partnership with Wychavon District Council.**

23. BUDGET BIDS

RESOLVED that

in view of the fact that it would be necessary to consider exempt matters before reaching a decision, discussion of this matter take place after the Exclusion of the Public.

24. CHURCH HILL SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Officers gave Members an update on the Church Hill Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It was explained that the District Centres Task and Finish Group in 2006 had reviewed four of the purpose built District Centres; Church Hill, Matchborough, Winyates and Woodrow. As a result of this review Church Hill District Centre had been chosen as the focus for possible redevelopment as part of the SPD. It was reported by

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Officers that a period of formal consultation had recently taken place involving partner organisations with an interest in Church Hill. This had been followed by a period of informal consultation based at Church Hill. Members were informed that Officers would be suggesting only a few changes to the SPD as a result of these consultation exercises.

Officers informed Members that if any issues are to be raised about the Church Hill SPD they needed to be noted before the next meeting of the Executive Committee on 5th September 2007.

Members discussed the potential benefits of redevelopment in Church Hill as a result of the SPD. Concerns were raised about possible plans to open up the bus lane. Officers explained that this would provide a link between different ends of the District Centre and would enable people to access the YMCA properties and Church Hill Middle School. Officers were uncertain about how much of the route would be opened up and undertook to come back to Members with clarification.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above, the report be noted.

25. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

26. WORK PROGRAMME

The programme of future work was received and considered by Members, without comment.

RESOLVED that

the Committee Work Programme be noted.

27. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that

"under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the

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following matter on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.”

Minute 23 – Budget Bids

SUMMARY OF CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The Committee discussed the General Fund Budget Bids 2006/07 report and considered whether any areas would be appropriate to review as a scrutiny exercise.

Members discussed possible alternatives to the civic newspaper. The idea of placing a computer terminal in the reception area of the Town Hall was suggested by some Members as a way to ensure that members of the public could easily access information about Council activities. Officers informed Members that this had been done in the past but the equipment in question had been the target of vandalism. Officers agreed to look into the possibility of reinstating the computer in the reception area.

Subject to these comments, Members noted the report.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.55 pm