

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 17 October
2007

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillors M Hall and W Hartnett

Officers:

A Heighway, C Smith and J Smith

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and H Saunders

58. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Cookson and Passingham.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

60. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 26th of September 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

61. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

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Chair

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Members received the Decision Notice from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday, the 10th of October 2007, with a view to considering the need for any Call-ins.

RESOLVED that

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

62. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Chair of the Grants Assessment Panel provided Members with information about the work of the Panel in relation to third sector (voluntary sector) organisations. He explained to Members that the Grants Assessment Panel separated its work into three parts:

- a) core funded organisations, or organisations that relied on the Council for existence;
- b) infrastructure groups, or organisations that made grants on behalf of the Council to third sector organisations; and
- c) organisations that requested grants from the Council on a one off basis.

The Chair of the Grants Assessments Panel explained that the Panel had urged the core funded organisations to seek funding from other sources. There was some concern amongst Members on the Grants Assessment Panel that relations with the core funded organisations would need to change. The Chair of the Grants Assessment Panel suggested that the scrutiny exercise would avoid duplicating the work of the Grants Panel if it concentrated on relations between third sector organisations and the Council.

The Committee discussed the proposal. Officers suggested that Members would need to establish the Council's vision of the strategic role for the third sector in the provision of local services. The Members approved the Task and Finish Group exercise and agreed that the Group would focus on relations between the Council and core funded third sector organisations. Councillor Thomas was approved as the Chair of the Group.

Members discussed the appropriate time to start the Task and Finish Group exercise. The Chair informed Members that there were some concerns about the number of Task and Finish Groups in operation and he noted that there would not be enough resources available to

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support another Task and Finish Group at this point in time. Members therefore agreed to postpone introduction of the Group until the start of 2008. Officers were asked to provide updated information about relations between the core funded third sector organisations and the Council for the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2008.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Scrutiny Review of the Third Sector be approved, in the terms indicated; and**
- 2) the launch of the Third Sector Task and Finish Group be postponed until January 2008;**

all as detailed in the preamble above.

63. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee considered update reports in relation to current and pending reviews.

The following oral reports were given:

- a) Communications Task and Finish Group (Stage One)
– Chair Councillor J. Brunner.

The Chair of this Group reported that the Members had made good progress.

Members were informed that the Group would be visiting Stevenage Borough Council to discuss best practice in corporate communications for local authorities representing purpose built towns.

The Chair reported that the Group was preparing to report the initial findings from stage one of the exercise to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 16th January 2008. The Chair requested that this meeting take place in Committee Room Three to suit the style of the presentation. This was approved.

- b) District Centres Task and Finish Group
– Chair Councillor A. Fry

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The Chair reported that there had been few developments since the previous meeting but that the Members would be meeting to consider information produced by Officers.

c) Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group
– Chair Councillor C. MacMillan

The Chair of the Group reported that the Members had made good progress.

Members were informed that the Group was considering fees and charges on a service by service basis. The Group had also agreed to produce recommendations on a service by service basis.

The Chair explained that at the previous meeting Members had received a presentation from Officers in relation to Planning Services and had identified an area where the Council could introduce an additional charge. Members were informed that Members would be considering land charges at the following meeting of the Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group.

d) Housing Priority Task and Finish Group
– Chair Councillor B. Passingham

Members were informed that the second meeting of the Housing Priority Task and Finish Group had been postponed due to the Chair's illness. Officers suggested that the Chair of the Group should be consulted about the progress of the exercise. Members agreed to postpone further consideration of this Review until the following meeting of the Committee.

e) Gypsies and Travellers Task and Finish Group
– Chair Councillor P. Hill

Officers informed Members that the members of the Task and Finish Group would be Councillors Hill (Chair), Brunner, Clayton, Fry and Hunt.

f) Joint Scrutiny on Flooding

Officers informed Members that a Joint Scrutiny exercise into Flooding had been proposed by Worcestershire County Council. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny had been informed of the proposal and agreed that Redditch Borough Council should contribute to the exercise.

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Officers confirmed that the Redditch Borough Council nominees for this exercise would be Councillors Chalk and Fry. Officers explained that a number of the district authorities in Worcestershire were conducting reviews of the floods which could impact on the joint scrutiny exercise.

Members discussed the joint scrutiny exercise and agreed that Redditch Borough Council scrutiny Members would be in favour of a joint exercise. Councillor Fry was asked to convey the sentiments of the Committee to the joint Scrutiny Group.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Committee note the reports and agree the proposed action; and**
- 2) adjustments to reporting deadlines and Committee meeting room arrangements be accepted;**

all as detailed in the preamble above.

64. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORTS – COUNCILLOR HARTNETT PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Councillor Hartnett, attended the meeting to provide the first Annual Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

As specified by Members, Councillor Hartnett produced a ten minute presentation on the subject of Community Safety. Members were informed that Councillor Hartnett liaised with Officers, Members and relevant local partnerships, such as the County Safer Communities Board, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Community Safety. Councillor Hartnett explained to Members that the Council had launched various activities during his tenure as Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, such as the introduction of the secure access system for the residential units at Woodrow district centre. Councillor Hartnett concluded that the Council had performed positively in the area of community safety.

Councillor Hartnett detailed to Members a range of initiatives that would be considered by the Community Safety Team in the following months. These initiatives would include the organisation of a seminar to disseminate awareness of good practice learnt during a trip to Cardiff and the development of a response to the

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crime and disorder version of the Community Call for Action (CCA). Members were also informed that the Executive Committee had agreed in principle to the installation of mobile Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) although the budget had not been available to fund their provision.

Councillor Hartnett explained to the Committee that he had visited Cardiff with relevant Officers, representatives from the Worcestershire County Trading Standards and representatives of the local Police to learn from an example of best practice in action on licensing.

Members asked Councillor Hartnett whether extending the remit of Portfolio Holders, especially with regard to greater responsibility for relevant budgets, would enhance the ability of a Portfolio Holder to secure action on issues within their area of interest. Councillor Hartnett reminded Members that increased responsibility for Portfolio Holders would entail greater accountability.

Councillor Hartnett also suggested that this development of the role of a Portfolio Holder would have implications which would require consideration by the full Council.

Members requested clarification of the different forms of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and the impact of these arrangements in Redditch. Officers explained the differences between the various types of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and informed Members that Dispersal Orders had proved to be the most effective method for tackling anti-social behaviour amongst young people within the Borough.

Members discussed Councillor Hartnett's report and the implications for future Portfolio Holder annual reports. The Chair suggested that Members would need to reduce the number of questions addressed to Portfolio Holders to enable the Portfolio Holders to express all prepared comments at Committee meetings.

Members agreed to ask Portfolio Holders to prepare answers relating to four themes at following meetings. These themes would be the Portfolio Holder's responsibilities; key issues for the Portfolio; the Portfolio Holder's role in relation to budget and resource allocation; and a specific focus on the remit of the individual portfolio.

Councillor Hartnett was thanked for attending the meeting and was asked to provide a copy of his written notes for reference purposes (Appendix A). Members requested that Officers provide a copy of

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Councillor Hartnett's notes for consideration at the following meeting.

RESOLVED that

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

65. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – APRIL – JUNE 2007

The Committee received the first quarterly performance report for consideration.

Officers informed Members that the report reflected positive performance across the Directorates and that no areas of performance had been identified as a cause for concern. Instead, a number of services were surpassing their targets. Members were reminded that the performance of services was subject to seasonal variations so that the figures would fluctuate during the year.

The Chair suggested that the reports could provide comparative data from the same quarter in the previous year to facilitate scrutiny of the figures. Members also suggested that Officers produce visual references such as bar charts reflecting performance over five months when presenting this data.

Officers agreed that improvements needed to be made to the Council's presentation of the quarterly performance data and that this issue would be addressed.

RESOLVED that

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

66. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

67. WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted that some other local authorities set a work programme at the beginning of each year, thereby enabling the Committee to plan Task and Finish Group work on an annual basis. The Chair noted that there would be both advantages and disadvantages to this approach to setting the Work Programme and

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that consideration of this issue would require a balanced Member debate.

It was agreed that the process involved in setting the Work Programme would be debated at a following meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **Members to consider the process involved in setting the Work Programme at a meeting of the Committee; and**
- 2) **the Committee Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.15 pm