

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 19 December
2007

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor M Chalk

Officers:

A Heighway and J Cooper

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and H Saunders

90. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

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

91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

92. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 28th
of November 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed
by the Chair.**

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Chair

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93. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

Members received the Decision Notice from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday, the 12th of December 2007, with a view to considering the need for any Call-ins.

Members commented on the format of the Decision Notice which was sent to Members by email.

Members informed Officers that when Members printed the decision notice it was difficult to identify confidential information. The Chair suggested that “confidential” should be recorded as a background text on the confidential pages when emailed to Members.

RESOLVED that

- 1) no action be taken to initiate call-in procedures on any of the Key Decisions contained in the Executive Committee Decision Notice; and**
- 2) Officers consider recording “confidential” as a background text on pages of the Decision Notice containing confidential information.**

94. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no draft scoping reports for consideration.

95. 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.

Members were informed that the Group were considering final recommendations. The Chair explained that the Group would be ready to present the initial findings from Stage One of the exercise back to Members at the following meeting.

Members agreed that the following meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would start at 6.00pm to allow extra

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time for the Communications Task and Finish group presentation.

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

The Chair of the District Centres Task and Finish Group explained that the Group would be meeting on the 20th December. Members were informed that the Group was working towards making recommendations and aimed to complete the exercise by March 2008.

The Chair asked that where Members identify significant recommendations they should bring these forward, via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for consideration by the Executive Committee at the first opportunity.

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

The Chair explained that the exercise was proceeding slowly due to difficulties arranging meetings. The Chair suggested that to prevent this problem from recurring, the Group should agree multiple meeting dates in advance.

The Chair reported to the Committee that the Head of Leisure and the Arts had been invited to the next meeting of the Group to discuss fees and charges in that service area.

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

The Chair reminded the Committee that the Task and Finish Group had been postponed, pending a report regarding the initial findings of the visioning event to the Executive Committee.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee explained that he had intended that the Task and Finish Group would review how the Service Plans, performance and budget monitoring reports should be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members discussed the Chair's comments and concluded that this issue should be considered by the Committee. Members agreed that the Chair should submit a scoping document focusing on how to consider these strategic

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documents. The Chair agreed to liaise with relevant Officers as part of this process.

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

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reminded Members that the start date for meetings of this Group had been postponed until 2008.

The Chair suggested that reference to the Housing Priority Task and Finish Group and the Gypsies and Travellers Task and Finish Group be removed from Item six on the agenda.

Members agreed that because these items had been postponed over a period of meetings they would only be re-introduced to the Agenda and Work Programme following a specific request from either Members or Officers.

Members discussed the progress of the Task and Finish Groups. Members agreed that the majority of Groups were scrutinising strategic issues that required long-term work. Members agreed that in following years the Committee should establish a mix of both long-term strategically focused groups and short sharp review projects. Members agreed that in following years the Committee should limit the number of Task and Finish Groups to approximately three at any one time.

RESOLVED that

the Committee note the reports and agree the proposed action, all as detailed in the preamble above.

96. JOINT SCRUTINY EXERCISE ON FLOODING

Officers explained to Members that the purpose of this item was to consider the outcome of the first meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Group and to discuss arrangements for this exercise.

Councillor Chalk provided the Committee with a report about the first meeting of the Joint Scrutiny exercise on Flooding held on Monday the 26th of November. Members agreed that Councillor Chalk should be the primary Redditch Borough Council representative on the Group and that Councillor Fry would act as his substitute. Members also confirmed the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officers as the Officers from Redditch Borough Council

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who would liaise with Worcestershire County Council during the exercise. The Committee requested that the Borough Director be kept informed of developments in this review.

Members discussed the most effective mechanism for reporting developments in the joint scrutiny exercise to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members agreed that Councillor Chalk should produce a one page report after each joint scrutiny meeting and that these should be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members also agreed that the joint scrutiny exercise should be added as a permanent item on the agenda for the Committee.

Members queried what impact the floods had had on Worcestershire fire and emergency services.

Councillor Fry explained that he was involved in a Worcestershire Fire Authority exercise scrutinising the way in which different public bodies had worked together in response to the floods in July 2007.

Councillor Chalk requested that information gathered through this scrutiny exercise should be shared with the joint scrutiny group and suggested that the Fire Authority should be kept informed of the group's progress.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor Chalk be approved as the Redditch Borough Council representative and that Councillor Fry be approved as the substitute representative;**
- 2) the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officers be approved as Redditch Borough Council Officers to liaise with Worcestershire County Council for this exercise;**
- 3) the Borough Director be informed of developments on this joint exercise;**
- 4) Councillor Chalk to provide one page reports regularly updating Members about developments in this exercise; and**
- 5) the 'Joint Scrutiny Exercise on Flooding' be added as a permanent item on the agenda for the Committee**

all as detailed in the preamble above.

97. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – JULY-SEPTEMBER 2007

The Committee received the half year quarterly performance report for consideration.

Members discussed performance indicators relating to Community Safety, and were particularly interested in data relating to violent crime. Members asked Officers to explain which crimes constituted 'violent crime'. Members also questioned Officers about the differences between the Council's figures and the data reported in the British Crime Survey. Members agreed that Officers should provide a briefing session where Members could be provided with more detailed information about the Community Safety figures. Members requested that Officers should provide simple definitions of relevant terminology as part of this presentation.

Members discussed performance indicator ET09 relating to the dial-a-ride scheme and questioned the 2007/08 target. Members commented that the target figure appeared to be lower than for the previous year and asked Officers to provide an explanation about why this had occurred. Members also asked Officers to explain whether the Council was likely to achieve the new target and whether the Council monitored concessionary use of the Dial-a-Ride scheme. Officers explained that the relevant Officer would need to provide Members with this explanation. Members requested that a written explanation should be provided by the relevant Officer for the consideration of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members considered the performance data for priority three, Housing, and expressed concern that the Council appeared not to have performed according to target. The Chair requested that the relevant senior Officer provide a brief, written explanation of the figures for priority three for the next meeting.

Members discussed the wording for the Indicator Description for BVPI79b(i) relating to Housing Benefit. Members felt that this wording was not clear and requested that Officers reword the indicator description for the next time that the Committee considers the performance information.

The Committee considered the figures for indicator WM05 relating to the performance of the switch board and contact centre. Members suggested that the target appeared unusually high for this indicator. Officers explained that WM05 was a local indicator but

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that more detailed figures could be provided to explain the length of time it takes for a phone caller to be transferred from the Switchboard or Contact Centre to speak to a person.

As part of the item, Officers presented information about the computerised performance management system used by the Council. Members and Officers discussed methods that could be used for presenting performance management data to Members at following meetings of the committee. Officers provided Members with an example of how the performance data could be presented at following meetings. Members discussed the example and agreed that the new presentation format would be useful. However, Members requested that the year's performance figures should be placed before data for preceding years (detailed from left to right on the page). Members also requested that Officers refer to 'average' rather than 'median' under the benchmarking column. Members agreed that it would be useful for the information to contain a glossary.

Members welcomed the practice of assigning indicators in accordance with a traffic light system. However, Members requested clarification about how Officers would interpret indicator figures as being 'red', 'amber' or 'green'. Officers agreed to provide an explanation of what constituted 'red', 'amber' or 'green' performance. Members asked Officers to gradually introduce this style of presenting the performance figures for Member consideration. Members also agreed that when Officers had developed the proposed style for presenting performance data to a further stage they should report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Officers provided Members with a demonstration of the performance management software system. Members agreed that Member access to the Ten system would be useful and questioned whether access would be possible using their own IT equipment. Officers agreed to provide more information about how Members might access the Ten system using their own equipment at a future meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a Member Briefing session be organised to explain Community Safety figures and terminology in greater detail; and**
- 2) Officers be requested to**

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- a) provide an explanation of the 2007/08 target for the Dial-a-Ride scheme and how the Council monitors concessionary use of the scheme;
 - b) provide a brief explanation of the Priority Three Housing figures for the next meeting;
 - c) rephrase the indicator description for BVPI79b(i);
 - d) provide more detailed figures about the length of time it takes from somebody to be transferred from the Switchboard or Contact Centre to a person;
 - e) make minor changes to the presentation of the performance indicators as detailed in the preamble above;
 - f) provide an explanation of the traffic light system used in the proposed new presentation of performance indicators; and
 - g) provide further information about how Members might access the Ten system using their own equipment;
- all as detailed in the preamble above.

98. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

99. WORK PROGRAMME

The programme of future work was received and accepted without comment.

Officers informed Members that the following meeting of the Committee would take place in Committee Room Three.

RESOLVED that

the Committee Work Programme be noted.