

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 27 February
2008

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

Non-Member:

Councillor G Chance
(Portfolio Holder for Environment, Planning and Transport).

Also Present:

Mr M Chawner (Borough Tenants' Panel Representative).

Officers:

S Hanley and T Kristunas

Committee Services Officers:

J Bayley and H Saunders

122. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

123. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

124. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 7th of February 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

125. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered the Actions List and examined the items identified as "WILL BE DONE SOON". The Chair requested that at following meetings, the Actions List would be presented with additional information highlighting the lead Officer responsible for undertaking the action and an expected date for completion.

Officers explained that they had received a response from Officers regarding Member access to the performance monitoring tool, the TEN system. Officers had requested that two Members volunteer to undertake a trial usage of the system. The Committee agreed that Councillor Taylor would participate and that the E-Government champion, Councillor Robin King should also be asked to take part in this exercise.

Officers explained that they had received a response regarding the performance indicator WM05 that had been questioned when Members considered the performance monitoring data. Officers informed Members that this indicator illustrated the percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds by a person in the contact centre and did not show the percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds using an automated response, as previously thought by Members.

Officers informed the Committee that they had received a response in relation to the performance indicator BVPI179B(i). Officers informed Members that the indicator description had been amended to read "the amount of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered as a percentage of all Housing Benefit overpayments."

Officers informed Members that their request for a further explanation of the traffic light system used when presenting the performance indicators would be made available as part of the performance framework after April.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Action List be amended to present additional information detailing the named Officer(s) undertaking the action and an expected date for completion;**
- 2) **the E-Government champion, Councillor R King, be asked whether he would be interested in undertaking training on the TEN system; and**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 27 February 2008

- 3) the contents and responses to the Actions List be noted.

126. CALL-IN

Members received the Decision Notice from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday, the 20th of February 2008.

No call-ins were required.

127. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no draft scoping documents for consideration.

128. TASK & 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 Two)
– Chair Councillor J. Brunner.

The Chair of the Communications Task and Finish Group explained that the Group had encountered some problems convening meetings due to Member illness. The Chair also explained that the Group would be undertaking further interviews with Officers and external expert witnesses.

The Chair requested that the Group be permitted to present their final recommendations on Wednesday the 9th of April instead of Wednesday the 19th of March, as originally agreed. The Committee agreed to this new timescale.

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

Members determined that it would be necessary to refer to information contained in the confidential report in order to fully discuss the issues involved.

It was therefore agreed to defer consideration of this item until later in the meeting, after the Exclusion of the Public.

(Confidential Minute 137 below refers).

129. JOINT SCRUTINY EXERCISE ON FLOODING

Officers explained that future meetings had been arranged for Members involved in the Worcestershire exercise on flooding. Officers informed Members that these meeting dates would include Monday the 31st of March, Monday the 7th of April and Monday the 28th of April.

RESOLVED that

the Committee note the dates for the next three meetings of the joint scrutiny exercise on flooding.

130. COMMUNITY SAFETY PERFORMANCE DATA – PREFERRED PRESENTATION STYLE

Officers explained that this item had been instigated by Officers in response to the Community Safety performance indicators presentation which took place on Monday the 11th of February.

Officers had requested that further guidance be sought from Members on the most effective methods of presenting community safety data and the frequency with which it should be presented to the Committee by Officers. Members were informed that some of the data was made available for meetings of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) in a graphical format and that these graphs could be made available for the Committee. Members expressed an interest in receiving data in this format and for it to be presented comparatively to data from previous years.

Members agreed that they found the style of the information presented to them useful and requested that in future Officers present the Community Safety performance figures using both template examples provided. Members also agreed that they would like to receive this information alongside the performance reports that the Committee receives on a quarterly basis.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **relevant Officers be requested to present community safety data using both suggested styles of presentation; and**
- 2) **Officers present the information on a quarterly basis**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 27 February 2008

at the same time as the quarterly performance reports.

131. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – DRAFT INTERIM AUDIT REPORT

The Chair informed Members that, in consultation with himself and the Vice Chair, Officers had produced a mini audit report about the Overview and Scrutiny process.

The Chair explained that one of the points raised in the report related to Task and Finish Groups. The Chair had noted that the Council's capacity to support Task and Finish Groups appeared to be much lower than he had expected.

The Chair suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should itself undertake more topic reviews. He added that this would enable that Committee to become more productive as recommendations could be worked up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and forwarded directly to the Executive Committee in the form of short sharp reviews.

Members agreed that Task and Finish Groups would continue to be established for large scale pieces of review work. However, the Overview & Scrutiny Parent Committee would have discussions about proposed Task and Finish Reviews, before a scoping document was produced and the Committee would then be able to decide what issues should be the focus of a review or whether it should be dealt with another way.

Members discussed and approved the suggestion that Directors should present annual reports to the Committee. Officers explained that Members would need to be specific and to provide guidance about what the Directors should concentrate upon presenting to the Committee.

Members agreed that, as indicated in the report, there was a need to develop further relations between the Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive Committee. Officers were informed that some Members had attended training on this topic and could provide further information for the consideration of other Members. Members agreed that they would discuss this item further at a following meeting.

Members discussed the proposed planning day for the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. Members agreed that the planning day should occur in May and what action needed to be taken to organise the event.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 27 February 2008

Members also queried how the Committee monitored the progress of recommendations made to the Executive Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chair admitted that the Committee was not as effective at doing this as it might be. The Chair requested that this to be added as an item to the audit for the Committee's further consideration.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Committee discuss at a following meeting ways in which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can further develop their relationship with the Executive Committee;**
- 2) **Officers be requested to add an item to the Overview and Scrutiny audit addressing how the Committee monitors the response of the Executive;**
- 3) **Members discuss dates and locations for the proposed Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme planning day at a following meeting; and**
- 4) **the Committee note the report and agree the proposed action, all as detailed in the preamble above.**

132. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORT - LOCAL ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT (CLLR GREG CHANCE)

Councillor Chance gave his Portfolio Holder report to the Committee, illustrated by a PowerPoint presentation.

Councillor Chance began by explaining his roles and responsibilities as a Portfolio Holder. He informed Members that his main responsibilities included monitoring Council performance and the development of policy, and acting as a spokesperson on behalf of the Council. He explained the activities he undertook in order to fulfil these responsibilities which included chairing relevant meetings; disseminating information about his portfolio to the community; and developing working relationships both internally and with external bodies.

Members were informed that the portfolio area was very large and covered a range of regulatory, statutory, and discretionary services including many "front line" services. Councillor Chance went on to highlight the key issues covered by his portfolio area.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 27 February 2008

These included the Regional Spatial Strategy; operational and service standards; the waste agenda; making improvements to the current recycling service; the cleaner, greener, safer agenda; town centre improvements; monitoring sustainability issues; economic development; the Landscape Capital programme; and issues surrounding public transport in the town.

Members questioned Councillor Chance about the physical state of the Town's Railway Station and the low frequency of train services. Councillor Chance explained that a consultation exercise was due to take place on the railway service in the region and that Redditch would have an opportunity to make its views known through this process.

Members also raised concerns about the buses in Redditch, explaining that newer buses appeared to be being taken out of circulation and replaced with older vehicles. Councillor Chance explained that he would pass on these concerns to the bus company. He added that residents could express their views about the bus services in Redditch by participating in a consultation exercise taking place on Church Green on Friday the 29th of February.

Members discussed recycling and the waste agenda and expressed concern about the issues facing the Council of assisting hard to reach groups with their recycling. Officers explained that much had been done to promote the assisted collection service but that more publicity and promotion was needed. Officers explained that the Council intended to carry out more face to face assessments with residents but that there was not one clear solution to this problem.

Members queried the date when the Council would incorporate other materials, including category 5 and 6 plastics, into the recycling collections service. Councillor Chance explained that this facility would be available shortly. Officers offered to provide Members with an update on what types of materials would be recycled in the future and information on the timescales for implementation.

Members questioned Councillor Chance about the Abbey Cemetery. Members requested further information regarding; timescales for use of the current cemetery; whether new land had been identified for a new cemetery; and information regarding the current level of mercury emissions. Officers reported that land had been identified to site a new cemetery but asked to postpone discussion of this issue to allow Officers time to prepare answers to these questions.

The Chair thanked Councillor Chance for his presentation.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **Officers be requested to provide an update to Members at a following meeting on the types of new materials eligible for recycling and the timescales for implementation;**
- 2) **Officers be requested to provide an update at a future meeting about the land that has been identified for a new cemetery and whether planning permission has been secured; and**
- 3) **the Committee note the report and agree the proposed action, all as detailed in the preamble above.**

133. QUARTERLY BUDGET REPORT – OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2007

The Committee considered a quarterly budget monitoring report for the third quarter.

Members discussed the figures for Economic Development and commented on the vacant Officer position within this Service. Officers explained that the Council was considering what approach to take in the long term to economic development at the Council and would be considering the future of this post in light of developments in the Worcestershire Economic Strategy.

Members commented that the recent scrutiny work on jobs and the economy could be referred to as this report recommended that an additional economic development post be established at the Council. Members expressed concern at the lack of Officer support in this area, especially given that the Business Link service had been centralised and moved from Redditch to Worcester.

Members agreed that they would like to discuss issues surrounding economic development at the following meeting. Members requested that a representative from Worcestershire County Council and from Business Link attend the next meeting to discuss these issues further. Members also requested that the lead Officer with responsibility for the Worcestershire

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 27 February 2008

Economic Strategy attend the meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) economic development be discussed at the following meeting of the Committee; and**
- 2) the Committee note the report and agree the proposed action, all as detailed in the preamble above.**

134. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

135. WORK PROGRAMME

Officers explained that at the previous meeting, Members had agreed to defer a discussion on the proposed Gypsies and Travellers and Third Sector Reviews.

Members suggested that there were capacity issues that would prevent Members from undertaking these reviews at the present time. In addition, the Chair of the Third Sector Task and Finish group added that she would not be able to commence this exercise at the current time. Members therefore agreed to defer this Review until after the election.

The Chair explained that the Chair of the Gypsies and Travellers Task and Finish Group was unavailable to begin the exercise. The Chair suggested to Members that the O&S Committee itself should discuss the issues concerning Gypsies and Travellers in the Borough to enable the Committee to decide how to progress with Member analysis of this topic.

Officers explained that there were two issues that could be discussed that would require input from two different sets of Officers. Issues of enforcement and unauthorised encampments would require input from Officers in Environmental Health. Issues surrounding site provision in the Borough would require attendance from Planning Officers. Officers reminded Members that the original scope of the Review was to examine issues pertaining to unauthorised encampments. Based on this information, Members decided that the relevant Officers from Environmental Health should be invited to the next meeting of the Committee and a representative from Worcestershire County Council's Gypsy and Traveller Team should also be invited to discuss relevant issues.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 27 February 2008

RESOLVED that

- 1) the start of the Third Sector Task and Finish Group be deferred until after the May elections;**
- 2) unauthorised encampments of Gypsies and Travellers be added as an agenda item for the following meeting;**
- 3) representatives from the Borough Council's Environmental Health Enforcement Team and a representative from Worcestershire County Council's Gypsy and Traveller Team be invited to attend the next meeting; and**
- 4) subject to the above adjustments, the Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.30 pm