

Executive Committee

1 July 2009

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Michael Braley (Vice-Chair) and Councillors J Brunner, B Clayton, W Hartnett and M Shurmer

Also Present:

Scarlet Ashwin and Kelly Louise Johnson (Students, Trinity High School) and Ms J Neale (Teacher, Trinity High School)

Officers:

S Hanley, Jackie Smith, E Storer, R Kindon, L Bellaby, R Bamford, D Wheeler, P Stirling, A Baldwin, J Staniland, T Kristunas, T Beech and S Mullins

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

31. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anderson, Gandy, Hicks and MacMillan.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

33. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following item of business, scheduled on the Forward Plan to be dealt with at this meeting, had been rescheduled to a later meeting:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Chair also advised that he had accepted the following matters as Urgent Business:

Item 9 – Appendix B to the Redditch Economic Strategy; and

Item 12 – Appendix 1 to the Local Validation Checklist Review.

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Chair

The Chair further advised that a Redevelopment Update on the Church Hill District Centre would be submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 12 August 2009.

34. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 June 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

35. PROPOSALS FOR RE-INVESTMENT - ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

The Committee considered a range of proposals to assist and support individuals and the communities of Redditch affected by the economic downturn using the funds received from the Department of Work and Pensions as a retrospective benefits subsidy. In response to questions the Committee was informed by Officers that all bids received and considered by senior management had been included within the report before it. In part this was due to an additional £36,000 Administration Grant received over and above the initial subsidy which provided a small surplus once the cost of all competing proposals had been taken into account.

Officers undertook to respond to Councillor Hartnett following the meeting in respect of a proposal to establish a Service Level Agreement with Registered Social Landlords to enable them to act as verification agencies on behalf of the Council. However, Officers identified that this action had been included in the Benefits Service Improvement Plan at a later point in the meeting.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the proposals and projects contained within Appendix 1 be funded for the relevant periods;**
- 2) the funding for the projects/posts be met from the £255,000 currently set aside; and**
- 3) the £32,500 remaining balance be held for any future bids.**

36. INSURANCE PREMIUM SAVINGS - CONSORTIUM TENDER

Members were advised of the outcome of a consortium tendering exercise in respect of the Council's insurance contracts. Considerable savings had been achieved and it was recommended that a proportion of this be set aside for risk management purposes.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the success of the tendering exercise be noted;**
- 2) **a sum of £15,000 per year for the duration of the Insurance contract be set aside for risk management purposes; and**
- 3) **authority be delegated to the Head of Financial, Revenues and Benefits Services, in consultation with the Risk Monitoring Group and the relevant Portfolio Holder, to utilise these monies.**

37. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Members considered a report which outlined the proposed new Performance Management Framework for the Council.

The move was generally welcomed although assurances were sought that the appraisal of staff would not prove a burden to the efficient running of the Council or to the detriment of service delivery.

RECOMMENDED that

the Performance Management Framework document attached to the report at Appendix 1 be approved.

38. BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME NO 3

The Committee considered the Local Development Scheme (LDS) No. 3 for the Borough. Officers highlighted the work that had been undertaken through the Planning Advisory Panel and the reasons behind the need to revise the LDS at this point in time.

RECOMMENDED that

the timescales within the Local Development Scheme No.3 for a range of Development Plan Documents be agreed and Local Development Scheme No.3 be submitted to the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) for approval.

39. REDDITCH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Committee welcomed representatives from Trinity High School, part of the Team that had triumphed in the competition to develop an Executive Summary for the Council's Economic Development Strategy. The students presented a video-clip that had been devised and created to support the Summary and introduced the recommendation to the Committee pertaining to the video-clip and Summary.

Members were very keen to hear the views put forward by the school-age generation and congratulated the students on their work. The importance of gaining an insight into the needs and aspirations of the future workforce within the Borough was stressed and there was discussion on perceptions of the town. In this context a Member posed a series of questions, as set out below, for consideration at some later date by the students who had attended the meeting to present the Executive Summary and video clip:

- i) what is good about Redditch;
- ii) what is not so good about Redditch; and
- iii) in which direction ought the Council go in respect of further economic development in the Borough.)

The teacher accompanying the students outlined the further steps that were to be undertaken in respect of the Economic Development Strategy and the effect that it might have on young people in the town.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **subject to the outcome of a separate budget bid, the Redditch Economic Development Strategy as detailed in Appendix A be endorsed;**
- 2) **the video clip for the Redditch Economic Development Strategy as prepared by students of Trinity High School, and as presented at the meeting, be endorsed for inclusion on the Council's website and other related forums; and**
- 3) **authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to produce final versions of the Executive Summary and Action Plan based on the ideas in the documents prepared by the students of Trinity High School.**

40. SCHEDULE OF BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST

The Committee received an update on the Schedule of Buildings of Local Interest as developed by the Council as a supporting document to the Local Development Framework and Core Strategy Development Plan Document for the Borough.

It was made quite clear that inclusion on the list did not afford any statutory protection to the buildings in question, but it was anticipated that the local listing would have some significance in the development control process.

It was noted that there were two buildings that had been removed from the previous version of the list, one through demolition and the other through a re-appraisal of the age and history of the building in question.

RECOMMENDED that

the Schedule of Buildings of Local Interest as updated in 2009 be endorsed as a background document to the Borough of Redditch Local Development Framework.

41. PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING DISCUSSION PROTOCOLS

A report was received that recommended the adoption of a protocol for the engagement of Members in pre-application planning discussions whilst providing a clarity and fairness to the process.

Officers stated that good practice guidance now indicated that this was a positive move for the Borough. Members would receive initial training to highlight the major danger points and further issues would be picked up through ongoing member development.

Officers highlighted two minor amendments to be made to the Protocol:

Page 48 – Criteria for Member Involvement in Pre-Application Planning Discussions – deletion of Point 4 as this factor was replicated elsewhere (Point 8) ; and

Page 49 – Replacement of the words “Appendix Two” with “Section One” in the first sentence headed “**Either**”.

It was noted that, once the scheme got underway, the timescales of the development control process would be the major determining factor in terms of establishing these pre-application discussions rather than them being organised around the availability of Members.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the protocol and information at Appendix 1 be adopted for use and added to the Constitution's associated documents subject to the minor amendments noted in the preamble above;**
- 2) **the implementation of the protocol be reviewed jointly by Officers and Members after 12 months;**
- 3) **training for all Members and Officers involved be provided; and**
- 4) **the resultant amendments to the Constitution, proposed at Appendix 2, be adopted.**

42. LOCAL VALIDATION CHECKLIST REVIEW

An updated and revised local validation checklist was considered by the Committee. As part of the process for improving the checklist additional and improved guidance had been developed to assist in the provision of information provided in support of planning applications to the authority.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the revised checklist at Appendix 1 be adopted for use from 1 September 2009 in replacement of that currently in circulation; and**
- 2) **authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder to make minor alterations to the document as set out in the proposed framework at Appendix 2.**

43. DELEGATION TO OFFICERS - ENFORCEMENT POWERS

A series of minor changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Planning Officers was proposed in order to assist Officers in carrying out their role.

Members were broadly supportive of the proposals but were keen to ensure that they were still made aware of significant planning issues, particularly within their wards, of which they may no longer be made aware. It was proposed that the Delegations be altered to take these concerns into account.

Officers undertook to propose arrangements, prior to Council, so as to take account of Members' ward interests and matters of potential wider interest in respect of the additions to the Scheme of Delegation.

RECOMMENDED that

the proposed additions to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, as detailed at Appendices 1 and 2 to the report, be adopted, subject to the comments in the preamble above.

44. LEISURE AND ARTS SERVICE - SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S POLICY UPDATE

Officers presented a new, enhanced Safeguarding Children's Policy for the Leisure and Arts Service which built upon the existing policy in that Service.

Members were very supportive of the proposal and noted that the Policy was intended to provide protection not only to Children but also to Council staff and that the obligations on staff and children were complementary. Officers confirmed that there no provisions within the Policy that were particularly dictated by local to the Borough

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the attached Safeguarding Children's Policy be adopted for the Leisure and Arts Service; and**

RESOLVED that

- 2) a working group of Officers be set up to progress a corporate safeguarding policy for Redditch Borough Council.**

45. ABBEY STADIUM SPORTS CENTRE - FITNESS SUITE

Members considered a proposal to extend the current contract for fitness suite provision at the Abbey Stadium Sports Centre for a period of two and a half years.

Officers highlighted that this was not the first occasion on which this Contract had been extended but took the Committee through the special circumstances in existence at the Abbey Stadium that made the possibility of obtaining a comparable or better service from an alternative provider extremely unlikely. The Committee was complimentary about the current service provision at the Abbey

Stadium and were content, under the present circumstances, to extend the contract.

RESOLVED that

the current contract for fitness suite provision, in partnership with Competition Line (UK) Ltd, at the Abbey Stadium Sports Centre be extended for a period of two and a half years to the end of 2011 in accordance with Standing Order 46 E.5. (c) (i) (ii).

46. HEWELL ROAD SWIMMING POOL - REALLOCATION OF CAPITAL FUNDING

The Committee received a request that a sum of money which had been committed to the refurbishment of filters at the Hewell Road Swimming Pool within the Capital Programme be reallocated to a more urgent priority, that of an electrical upgrade at the same facility.

Members acknowledged that there was little alternative to the recommended course of action in order to keep the facility in operation and were pleased to note that disruption to the users of the facility would be kept to a minimum during the course of the works.

RECOMMENDED that

approval be given for the reallocation of the previously approved sum of £44,000 for filter refurbishment to the more urgent priority of electrical upgrade at Hewell Road Swimming Pool within the Capital Programme; and

RESOLVED that

approval be given to incur up to the expenditure detailed above, in accordance with Standing Order 41.

47. ASSET MANAGEMENT AND DISPOSAL PROGRAMME - UPDATE

Members received an update on progress with asset disposals to date and considered declaring a number of further assets surplus. A related change being proposed was that of incorporating the Minor Land Disposal Programme into the overall Asset Disposal Programme. In response to a question on the Minor Land Disposal Programme, it was confirmed that there was currently a waiting list of those attempting to acquire interests that came under the "Minor Land" category.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **progress on asset disposals to date be noted;**
- 2) **the assets scheduled in Appendix 2 to the report be declared surplus, in accordance with current policy; and**
- 3) **the Council's Minor Land Disposal programme be incorporated into the Asset Disposal Programme; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 4) **the definition of Minor Land under the Policy be amended to the definition set out in paragraph 5.6 of this report and that the Scheme of Delegation to Officers be amended accordingly; and**
- 5) **the Scheme of Delegation in relation to forfeiting of business leases be amended as set out in paragraph 5.7.**

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any further debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which could reveal provisional terms of land disposal subject to negotiation which may affect the Council's bargaining position with individual owners, tenants and third parties.

There is nothing exempt, however, in this record of the proceedings.)

48. CORPORATE SICKNESS STATISTICS

The Committee considered the corporate sickness statistics for the period April 2008 – March 2009. Officers explained the measures that were being undertaken to assist in the reduction of the number of days of sickness absence. A number of measures such as health promotions for staff and Councillors and the Wellness Works programme were having a positive impact. However, it was anticipated that there would be a significant increase in sickness absence as a result of the swine flu pandemic.

Members suggested minor amendments to the recording method for sickness absence, proposing that the "No Reason" category might be termed "Other" and that there be a more explicit breakdown of the work-related and non-work related absences due to "Bones, Joints and Fractures".

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the statistics be noted; and**
- 2) **the programme outlined in the report to reduce sickness absence be approved.**

49. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Legal Democratic and Property Services undertook to respond to Councillor B Clayton in respect of the exact budget allocation of the cost of training courses attended by two Overview and Scrutiny Members.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 May 2009 be received and noted.

50. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS, NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS ETC.

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

51. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received the latest update report on the activities of the Council's Advisory Panels, Working Groups and similar bodies. Councillor Brunner noted that she was not proposing to convene meetings of the Community Safety Advisory panel whilst the current Shared Service arrangements were being put in place for the Community Safety Team.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

52. ACTION MONITORING

It was noted that the Actions arising from the meetings on 20 May and 10 June 2009 had been carried out.

53. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

Asset Management and Disposal Programme - Update (as detailed at Minute 47 above).

The Meeting commenced at 7.00pm
and closed at 9.14pm

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Chair