

Executive Committee

16th September 2009

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Carole Gandy (Chair), Councillor Michael Braley (Vice-Chair) and Councillors P Anderson, J Brunner, B Clayton, W Hartnett, N Hicks and M Shurmer

Officers:

R Cooke, M Davidson, I Gregory, L Hadley, S Hanley, R Kindon, T Kristunas, S Mullins, I Ranford, Jackie Smith, Jane Smith, J Staniland and P Wilkins

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

111. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor MacMillan.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

113. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised that the following item of business, scheduled on the Forward Plan had been re-scheduled to a later meeting:

- Business Centres Review – Terms of Reference

She also advised that she had accepted the following matters as Urgent Business:

Item 14 – Advisory panels – Update Report

Item 17 – Development Opportunities – Dingleside and Ipsley

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Chair

114. WORCESTERSHIRE ENHANCED TWO TIER PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report that had been circulated to all District Councils in the County and which provided an update on the enhanced two-tier working agenda.

Officers stated that the shared services agenda with Bromsgrove District Council and the WETT programme were complementary and that each business case for a service was being considered on its merits. The Programme was most advanced in the area of regulatory services at the present time. Redditch Borough Council Officers were inputting significantly into the programme across the range of services.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

115. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

A report was received that set out the actual prudential indicators for 2008/09, within six months of the end of that financial year, as required.

The Prudential Code sought to ensure that the capital investment plans and treasury management decisions of the authority were prudent, affordable and sustainable.

It was noted that the financial climate over the previous year had been difficult with volatility in the rates of interest for borrowing and investing. However, it was confirmed that the Council's investment strategy was still generally producing a positive margin.

A number of matters were highlighted by Members. The future of the Major Repairs Allowance beyond 2011/12 was queried and Officers stated that this matter was still out for consultation. The steep drop-off in recent years in capital receipts was remarked upon but Officers were very much of the opinion that the zero estimate going forward was a realistic projection. The similar zero projection for Section 106 was also commented upon. Again, Officers confirmed that it would not be prudent at this stage to estimate a greater sum.

Councillor Braley enquired as to the maximum and minimum borrowing rates that had existed over the past 25 years and also the magnitude of the interest rate in 1979.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

116. COMPLAINTS POLICY - REVIEW

Officers presented a report that sought to review and refresh the existing Council Complaints Policy. From talking to the Council's customers through means such as the Community Forum it had become apparent that the process was difficult for service users to understand. It was therefore suggested that the process be streamlined by removing the first tier of the current Complaints Policy.

The format of the Complaints Appeals Panel was briefly discussed as there was a view expressed that the complainant may have a role to play. Officers clarified that the Panel meetings were specifically to consider internal issues of service delivery and were not designed to determine the rights and obligations of customers and Officers.

Members suggested that a clear explanation of the entire Complaints Procedure be included in the initial response sent to any complainant.

RECOMMENDED that

the Complaints Policy be amended so that 'Informal Complaints' are removed at Stage One of the Complaints Policy.

117. REDDITCH TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

In early 2009 the Council had appointed a number of external consultants to deliver a Town Centre Strategy for Redditch. A report was received by the Committee that set out the priority projects and actions contained within the draft Strategy received from these external consultants. The detail and costs associated with any of the actions listed would be reported to future meetings of the Committee.

Members were generally very much in favour of the proposals contained within this initial report. It was accepted that perceptions of the Town Centre were not altogether positive within the region and the Council and its partners needed to have bold ideas and ambitions if they wished this situation to improve. It was acknowledged that the overall sums of money involved over a number of years would be substantial but many of the Council's

partners shared the Council's commitment to the aims underpinning the draft Strategy.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Town Centre Strategy as detailed in Appendix A to the report be endorsed; and**

RESOLVED that

- 2) **Officers be instructed to work on projects associated with implementing the Town Centre Strategy.**

118. DECENT HOMES CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND HOUSING ROOFING REPAIRS

Officers presented a report that set out requests for the reallocation of a part of the Decent Homes budget for 2007-12 and for additional revenue funding for essential roofing repairs.

There had been an overspend on roofing repairs during Year 2 of the Programme (last year) and, in addition, works in part of the town had identified that a number of roofs could no longer be sustained by reactive repairs and were in need of replacement. The money for the proposed programme of the replacement of roofs had been identified through negotiating savings with the Council's contractors given the current financial climate and the consequent downturn in costs for materials. The additional money required for the day to day roofing repairs was to be found from HRA reserves.

The Committee acknowledged that the additional spending was required given the poor condition of roofs to Council homes in some areas. There was broad agreement that spending on the envelopes of Council properties was a sensible and prudent long-term investment. The proposal to carry out comprehensive works including gutters, soffits and fascias whilst scaffolding was in place was welcomed by Members. There was discussion as to the possibility of incorporating contemporary technology such as alternative building materials and photo-voltaic cells into these new roofing schemes. Officers confirmed that they were actively exploring such opportunities where they arose but that there were generally significant additional and consequential costs arising from such enhancements. The biggest issue throughout the town was identified as the existence of substantial numbers of solid-walled properties.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) approval be given for the reallocation of £200,000 funding from the Decent Homes capital budget to commence a programme of essential roof replacements;
- 2) £50,000 additional revenue funding for roofing repairs be approved from the HRA reserve for this year 2009/10 and 2010/11; and

RESOLVED that, if approved,

- 3) approval be given to incur up to the expenditure detailed in 1) above, in accordance with Standing Order 41; and
- 4) the contents of the report relating to budget spend for Year 2 of the programme (2008/9) and budget and programme of works for 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 be noted.

119. REDDITCH CREMATORIUM - CREMATOR REPLACEMENT AND BUILDING UPGRADES

Members considered a report advising them of requirements for a major infrastructure upgrade to the existing crematorium plant and buildings. The Committee welcomed the report and commended Officers on the service that was provided at the facility.

Officers were able to provide reassurance that disruption would be kept to a minimum during the course of the works. There was a need to be sensitive in the handing of this work and it was expected that local residents would be kept informed through press statements. It was hoped that the carrying out of the work would not result in any loss of revenue to the Council.

The recycling of the waste heat was considered to be a positive innovation and Members were pleased to hear that heat recovery from crematoria was not considered objectionable by the overwhelming majority of the public in surveys. It was also noted that the service was not intending to purchase a larger replacement cremator, thereby reducing the amount of waste heat produced in cremating all users.

RESOLVED that,
subject to the necessary budgetary approvals of the full Council, as detailed at recommendations 6) and 7) below,

- 1) a programme of replacement of and installation of one new cremator, complete with mercury abatement

- equipment, at a current cost in the region of £575,000, be carried out;
- 2) a programme of civil works be undertaken to improve the public and staff areas of the crematorium buildings, at a cost of £380,000;
 - 3) a defined study be carried out in relation to energy recovery and re-use for both internal and external purposes;
 - 4) specialist and technical support be employed to assist the Bereavement Services Manager with the management and implementation of this project, at a cost of £32,500;
 - 5) expenditure of up to the total sum approved by the Council, for the purposes defined in the report, be approved in accordance with Standing Order 41; and

RECOMMENDED that

- 6) the Council, if it is established that it is economically viable to recover waste energy and to re-use it for internal and external purposes, implement the recommended programmes for such re-use. Initial research indicates that internal re-use will be economically viable so a sum of £70,000 has been included in the Capital Programme for this aspect of the project.
- 7) up to £757,500 be allocated from the Capital Programme for the purposes indicated in the report; and
- 8) the Capital Programme be amended accordingly.

120. REDDITCH OPEN AIR MARKET - REGULATIONS 2009/10

Officers presented a revised version of the Redditch Open Air Market Regulations to the Committee. It was suggested that the previous Regulations, agreed in 2006, were no longer sufficient to support the efficient running of the Market.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to more clearly define the rules on matters such as stall allocation, fees and methods of payment. It was noted that the revised Regulations had been agreed with the Market Traders.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **authority be delegated to the Head of Operations in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to agree the adoption date for the revised Market Regulations;**
- 2) **authority be delegated to the Head of Operations in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to make minor alterations or amendments to the Regulations for the operational benefit of the Market and its Traders; and**
- 3) **authority be delegated to the Head of Operations in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to finalise the hours of operation and any other relevant rules in the (document) following consideration of the planning application by the Planning Committee.**

121. ARROW VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE - INSTALLATION OF BUS STOP

The Committee considered a report setting out a proposal for provision of a bus stop on Battens Drive and a connecting footpath to the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre. At this stage the proposed facility was basic and did not incorporate a shelter.

Both First Bus and Hardings were working with the Council at present to provide a service to this stop. The service was only intended to be off-peak although it could also be used as a park and ride stop in due course for events in the Park.

Members were pleased to note the progress that had been made on this scheme since it had first come through as a recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In that respect, it was suggested that due recognition be paid to other Councillors, including Councillors Thomas and Pearce, in facilitating the installation of this amenity.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **approval be given for the allocation of the sum of £10,245.00 for the provision of a bus stop and connecting footpath from Battens Drive to Arrow Valley Countryside Centre within the Capital Programme; and**

RESOLVED that, if approved,

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

122. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider.

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

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

124. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

125. ACTION MONITORING

Members considered the report on the work of the Executive Committee's Advisory Panels and similar bodies.

126. 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 matter(s) on the grounds that it/they involve(s) 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.

Dingleside and Ipsley – Development Opportunities (as detailed in minute 127 below)

Shared Services Business Case – CCTV / Lifeline (as detailed in minute 128 below)

Shared Services Business Case – ICT Services (as detailed in minute 129 below)

127. DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES - DINGLESIDE AND IPSLEY

The Committee received a report advising of the opportunities for the Council to progress disposal of two sites at Dingleside and Ipsley jointly with the adjoining owners. Site plans for both sites and

a draft Concordat between the Council and other parties for the Dingleside site were tabled at the meeting.

Officers reiterated that the decision to be made at this stage was one of declaring the land surplus and considering the sites for disposal and was not about determining future use. One of the other parties wished to have some comfort that redevelopment of the sites would be completed, hence the drawing up of a draft Concordat. The magnitude of any proceeds to the Council were still under negotiation.

Because of the nature of the land being disposed of, Members were keen to establish to what uses Section 106 and Section 77 monies were to be put. It was highlighted that the Section 77 element would be required to be spent primarily on school sports provision and possibly education related leisure assets. It was hoped that the Section 106 element would contribute to the funding of the Abbey Stadium redevelopment.

A Member requested that the advice from the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services that Members who were on both the Executive and Planning Committees would not be at risk of being conflicted out on grounds of predetermination as the issue at hand at this stage was merely one of declaring land surplus and authorising disposal be placed on record.

(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 debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to provisional terms of land disposals under negotiation, disclosure of which was not considered to be in the public's best interests.)

128. SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE - CCTV / LIFELINE

A report was received that set out the business case for a shared CCTV and Lifeline service for Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils.

This had previously been identified as a medium term opportunity. There was the requirement for capital investment to establish a shared service at one site and this would in part be met through savings, including salaries. It was anticipated that there would be human resources implications in establishing a single unit based in Redditch. However, Members were reassured that the existing accommodation in Redditch was sufficient for the shared service.

(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 debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to an individual or which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual, the business affairs of the authority and contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations matters between the authority and employees of the authority, disclosure of which was not considered to be in the public's best interests.)

129. SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE - ICT

The Committee received a report that set out a case for a shared ICT service between Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils. It was proposed to host the shared service at Bromsgrove.

Officers explained that a key driver was an attempt to underpin the systems across both Councils by maximising the use of available resources. A skeleton staff would still be present at the Redditch site following the proposed merger.

Officers undertook to provide a response to a question from Councillor Anderson regarding the installation of fibre-optic cabling and whether this was still planned under the shared service.

It was noted that further work was to be carried out through the Shared Services Board into the savings that could be achieved through the sharing of this service through software licences, re-use of office space, etc.

(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 debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to an individual or which was likely to reveal the identity of an individual, the business affairs of the authority and contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations matters between the authority and employees of the authority, disclosure of which was not considered to be in the public's best interests.)

The Meeting commenced at 7.00pm
and closed at 10.11pm.

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Chair