

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3rd February 2010

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), and Councillors K Banks, G Chance, R King, J Pearce, D Thomas and B Quinney (substituting for Councillor Smith)

Also Present:

M Collins (Vice-Chair, Standards Committee)

Officers:

R Cooke, S Morgan and J Staniland

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and I Westmore

157. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Norton, Taylor and Smith. Councillor Quinney attended as a substitute for Councillor Smith.

158. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

159. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered the latest version of the Actions List. Specific mention was made of the following matters:

- a) Action 1 - Shared Services process

It was agreed that, as the shared services process was well-established and nothing had reported to the Committee to date, this item be removed from the list.

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3rd February 2010

b) Action 2 – Medium Term Financial Plan

It was agreed that the Committee send a letter to the relevant Officer requesting that this matter be addressed.

c) Action 4 – Disabled Facilities Grant

Officers informed the Committee that the West Midlands Kickstart Partnership had been launched to deal with the matter. It was agreed that the Committee monitor the implementation of the scheme in 6-9 months time.

d) Action 7 – Single Equalities Scheme

It was confirmed that the Committee would scrutinise the Single Equalities Scheme. As a first step it was proposed that the Head of Strategy and Partnerships provide a presentation on gender equality. The Chair also requested that the Committee investigate why there was an apparent lack of younger people employed by the Council.

e) Action 10 - Council Flat Communal Cleaning Task and Finish Group

Officers reported that the revenue bid had now been approved by the Council.

f) Action 12 – Comprehensive Area Assessment

It was reported that this would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

the Actions List be noted.

160. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3rd February 2010

161. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

Officers noted that the Joint Flooding ask and Finish Group item was not expected to go to Executive Committee until August 2010 because of staff absences.

Councillor Banks expressed a wish for the Committee to receive additional information on the Private Sector Home Support Service which was not scheduled to go a specific meeting of the Executive Committee at present.

162. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no scoping documents for the Committee to review.

163. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee received reports in relation to current reviews:

a) Dial-A-Ride – Chair, Councillor R King

Councillor King provided an update on the attempts to convene a meeting of this Group.

(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 in respect of contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations matters arising between the authority and employees of the authority.)

b) Local Strategic Partnership – Chair, Councillor W Norton

It was reported that the first meeting had considered the scoping document for the review and that a further meeting was scheduled for 17th February. Councillor Thomas noted that the Partnership had become a more effective body of late and had raised its profile, in part through a week long event in the Kingfisher Centre. The reporting mechanisms between the Partnership and the Council were an area that Members considered might be pertinent to review.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3rd February 2010

RESOLVED that

- 1) continuation of the Dial-A-Ride Task and Finish Group Review be deferred until after the Annual Meeting in May 2010; and
- 2) the progress reports be noted.

164. JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE HUB TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - PROGRESS REPORT

The notes of the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group were tabled. Councillor Robin King reported that, unfortunately, he had not been able to attend but he stressed his commitment to represent the Council in a robust manner. Councillor Thomas noted that she had received reports from local carers that they had experienced difficulty in getting through to the Carers' Unit and requested that these problems be followed up.

RESOLVED that

the progress report be noted.

165. ARROW VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE - PRE-SCRUTINY

Officers introduced a report that was to be submitted to the Executive Committee regarding the options for the future management of the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre.

(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 in respect of contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations matters arising between the authority and employees of the authority.)

166. INITIAL ESTIMATES 2010/11

The report setting out the initial estimates for 2010/11 was received by the Committee. Officers apologised for the late circulation of the report, necessitated by the delay in receiving information from the Government on the application for a capitalisation direction in connection with the creation of the single management team. It was reported that the Executive Committee was being asked to recommend a balanced budget for 2010/11 but that savings would be required for the following two years.

Officers explained that the capitalisation would be funded through the use of capital receipts. A number of capital assets, such as Council houses and various pieces of land were to be used to fund the capitalisation and Officers undertook to provide Councillor Chance with further information on the capital assets involved. It was unclear whether all the required capital receipts were held by the Council at the present time. The implication of not pursuing this course of action, with an impact on the proposed revenue spending for 2010/11 was highlighted to Members.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

167. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNTS INITIAL ESTIMATES 2010/11

The Committee received the Initial Estimates for the Housing Revenue Account for 2010/11. It was noted that the Executive Committee was being requested to recommend that funding be agreed for the cleaning and maintenance of the flooring at the Three Storey Flats. This was in response to a recommendation from a Task and Finish Group Report.

Officers informed the Committee that a 2.6% rent increase was being proposed. Members were interested to understand how close the Council was to convergence in respect of registered social landlord and council housing rents given that the date for rent convergence had been reinstated to 2012/13. Officers undertook to provide this information to the Committee following the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

168. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING EVENT

The Chair of the Committee informed the meeting of the necessity to organise a Scrutiny Work Programme planning event in May or June of this year, following the appointment of the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee members for 2010/11.

Members discussed the present shortfall in staffing for the Overview and Scrutiny function. It was noted that measures were being taken to deal with the current situation and it was hoped to fill the existing vacancy before the end of the month.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3rd February 2010

RESOLVED that

the update be noted.

169. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer informed Members that a training session was to be held on 8th February and that dates for future meetings of the Panel would be established in due course.

It was noted that the Panel would be making recommendations directly to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and, thus, the position of Chair of the Panel was of some importance.

RESOLVED that

the update be noted.

170. GOOD SCRUTINY AWARDS 2010

Members considered information from the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the forthcoming annual conference Good Scrutiny Awards 2010.

The Chair proposed that the Neighbourhood Groups Task and Finish Group report be submitted as a candidate for an award within the Community Influence category. It was noted that endorsements were required from individuals outside of the Scrutiny process. It was proposed that such endorsements of the review be sought from the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and Inspector Ian Joseph of West Mercia Police.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Officers submit the report of the Neighbourhood Groups Task and Finish Group to be a candidate for an award within the Community Influence category at the forthcoming Good Scrutiny Awards; and**
- 2) endorsements for the review be sought from the individuals listed in the preamble above.**

171. QUESTIONS FOR THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LEISURE AND TOURISM

Members considered the questions to be put to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism at the meeting of the Committee on 24th February. The following were agreed:

- 1) Can you guarantee that Redditch's Leisure Services will continue to be delivered in the 'Redditch way' and not in the 'Bromsgrove way'? (i.e. We won't be begging Wychavon District Council to run our Leisure Services).
- 2) When will Shopping, Investing and Giving (SIG) be fully implemented?
- 3) What have you instigated to involve more people in the arts in Redditch?
- 4) What do you do in your capacity as Portfolio Holder with responsibility for education?
- 5) What are you doing to help remove the red flag on educational inequalities?
- 6) What are your views about the two tier as opposed to the three tier education system?

RESOLVED that

the above questions be put to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism.

172. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

173. WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer informed the Committee that a review of how other authorities dealt with the implementation of Scrutiny recommendations had identified the option of introducing measures such as periodic monitoring to ensure compliance. Members agreed that there should be quarterly monitoring reports on progress with regard to implementing approved scrutiny recommendations.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3rd February 2010

It was noted that the Review of Ditches – Update Report scheduled for later in the month needed to be deferred to a meeting in August as a result of the enforced absence of a key Officer.

The Chair understood that Worcestershire County Council were considering operating the Older Persons' bus pass scheme countywide. He suggested that this might be subject to scrutiny. It was agreed that a report be sought on the matter.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Work Programme be noted; and
- 2) the amendments and additions listed in the preamble above be incorporated into the current Programme.

174. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND 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 paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

Task and Finish Groups – Progress Reports [as detailed at Minute 163 above]; and

Arrow Valley Countryside Centre – Review of Alternative Management Arrangements [as detailed at Minute 165 above];

The Meeting commenced at 7.00pm
and closed at 8.55pm

.....
Chair