

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th August 2010

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Diane Thomas (Chair), Councillor Anita Clayton (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Kath Banks, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Robin King, William Norton, Brenda Quinney and Graham Vickery

Also Present:

Councillors Andrew Brazier, Jack Cookson, Carole Gandy, Adam Griffin, Malcolm Hall and Nigel Hicks

PC P Kennedy

Officers:

H Bennett, R Cooke, C Felton, S Hanley and A Heighway

Committee Services Officers:

J Bayley and J Smyth

52. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Mark Shurmer.

An apology for absence was also received on behalf of Councillor Juliet Brunner, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

54. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th July 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

55. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered the latest version of the Actions List. Specific mention was made of Action 2, the Joint Worcestershire Flooding Scrutiny Group's recommendations. It was noted that the recommendations were scheduled to be considered by the Council's Executive Committee on 29th September 2010.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

56. CALL-IN AND SCRUTINY OF THE FORWARD PLAN

There were no specific call-ins relating to the Decision Notice of the Executive Committee meeting held on 28th July 2010.

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations on the REDI Centre Options (Min.44) and review of Redditch Borough Council's Sheltered Housing Stock (Min.46) had not been accepted. Members were informed that, if they wished, they would have further opportunities to raise the matters again when the Decision Notice recommendations were considered at the following meeting of the Council on the 9th August.

There were no pre-scrutiny requests in relation to items scheduled on the Forward Plan for consideration by the Executive Committee.

57. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no draft scoping documents for the Committee to consider at the meeting.

58. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

It was noted that the Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group's final report was to be presented later in the meeting under Item 10 on the agenda.

The Committee received an oral update, supported by a written update sheet tabled at the meeting, in relation to the latest meeting of the Joint Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on 27th July 2010. It was noted that, as the Council's representative, Councillor Hopkins, had not been able to attend the last meeting of the Task and Finish Group, the tabled written update had been provided by the County Council's Scrutiny Officers.

The Committee noted the update which reported that the evidence gathering process for the review had concluded with recommendations being possibly discussed at the following meeting in September. Members were also informed that draft proposals were to be discussed with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Director at Worcestershire County Council in early October.

Members expressed their desire for further information about the matter and asked to be provided with a copy of minutes of the Task and Finish Group's meeting as soon as practicable.

RESOLVED that

the update be noted.

**59. PETITION - AGAINST ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN
LOWLANDS LANE PARK**

(The organisers of the petition regarding anti-social behaviour in Lowlands Lane Park, Mr and Mrs Wall, were in attendance and spoke during the course of the meeting).

Under the Council's new procedures for the consideration of Petitions, the Committee received a Petition in relation to anti-social behaviour in Lowlands Lane Park. The Petition organisers, Mr and Mrs Wall, were invited to speak to the Committee on the matter and Members were informed in some detail about the problems being experienced by residents with noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour (drinking and use of motor cycles). This was particularly occurring after midnight, often in the early hours of the morning, and was affecting nearby residents' sleep and their quality of life.

The Council's three local Ward Councillors for the area were also invited to speak to the Committee on the matter and concurred that the issue had been discussed at both the June and July local PACT meetings in some detail, when a number of suggestions to resolve the problem were made, including securing the park at night and removing it altogether.

The Local Police Officer for the area also addressed the Committee and confirmed that the matter had been designated a PACT priority which had resulted in a joint operation to target the area. A high visibility presence had been organised and daily patrols had also been undertaken during which no specific evidence of anti social behaviour (such as broken bottles) had been found. Members were

informed, on request, that eleven calls on noise nuisance had been made in June, eight from the same person with a similar number in July, to which the Police had responded.

Members were informed that the park was multi-functioning and catered predominantly for younger children during the day with facilities in the evening for young people such as basketball. Officers reported that, for a second year, Play Ranger sessions were being held in the park, where work was undertaken with a targeted age range of 8 to 14 year olds from which there had been very positive feedback.

The Petitioners advised that the comments and work of the Police and Council Officers had been appreciated. However, residents had collected evidence which showed that anti-social behaviour was occurring and they suggested that relevant Officers should visit the park in the early hours of the morning to best assess the scale of the problem.

The Committee agreed that removing the park was not an option, particularly as it was the only park facility in the area. However, it was agreed that further work could be undertaken to resolve the matter and that a multi-agency approach would be the most suitable way to tackle any anti-social behaviour.

RECOMMENDED that

a multi-agency approach be adopted to discourage drinking and anti-social behaviour in Lowlands Lane Park.

60. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel's report on the work of the Panel was noted without comment.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

61. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TASK AND FINISH GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Committee received for consideration, the final report of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Task and Finish Group Review from the Chair of the Review Group, Councillor William Norton.

Councillor Norton also provided an oral presentation and slide show, outlining the background to the review, the issues that had prompted the review, its objectives, initial findings, the actions that had already been taken to implement the Group's interim recommendations together with details and proposals relating to the areas still to be addressed.

The effectiveness of the LSP within the Borough and the County was discussed. It was acknowledged that whilst the LSP had lost its focus in recent years and was not perfect, it had, following its re-launch in 2009, improved and regained momentum.

Members also considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role of monitoring the LSP on an ongoing basis to ensure it provided a focused and valuable service that was fit for purpose. There were some concerns about the Committee's capacity, given current the workload, to undertake regular reviews. It was suggested however, that the Committee could commit to six monthly review sessions for the LSP to scrutinising the Sustainable Community Strategy, both in draft form and at the end of the three year process, once every three years.

Members were reminded that eight interim recommendations had previously been considered and endorsed by the Committee on 17th March 2010 and subsequently approved by both the Executive Committee and the Redditch Partnership Management Board. The Committee was asked to consider a further seven recommendations.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Recommendations 1 to 8, as detailed in the Group's interim report, previously considered and endorsed by Members at the 17th March 2010 Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting and subsequently approved by both the Executive Committee and the Redditch Partnership Management Board, be noted; and**

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RECOMMENDED that

the recommendations listed below be referred to the next meetings of both the Executive Committee and the Local Strategic Partnership Management Board for consideration:

Monitoring: ensuring that the Redditch Partnership is subject to regular overview and scrutiny by Councillors:

- 9) there be pre-scrutiny of each new Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 10) there be a full review and audit of each completed SCS by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 11) the Redditch Partnership and SCS be subject to six-monthly monitoring sessions by the Committee;

Operational: suggestions for improving the future work of the Redditch Partnership and the next SCS:

- 12) the next SCS have fewer, more focussed targets (four to six) which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound;
- 13) for the foreseeable future, the SCS contain targets relating to health and education inequalities in Redditch;
- 14) the priorities within the SCS should reflect residents' priorities (as identified through consultation) and also dovetail with those of the Worcestershire Partnership; and
- 15) the Local Strategic Partnership be supported by a full-time permanent Partnership Manager reporting directly to the Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships.

62. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING EVENT - OUTCOMES

The Committee considered a report which summarised the main proposals that had been made by the Councillors who had attended the Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Event on 26th July 2010. Specific reference was made to suggestions regarding: the delivery of Portfolio Holder Annual Reports at meetings of the Committee;

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public engagement with scrutiny; and suitable topics for review in 2010/11.

In relation to Portfolio Holder Annual Reports, four potential options (as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report) for the delivery of the annual reports were considered for implementation in 2010/11. A suggestion that the Annual Reports be presented at Council meetings was considered. It was agreed, however, that Overview and Scrutiny was still the most suitable arena for the Portfolio Holder annual Reports to be considered for both scrutiny and practical purposes. It was instead therefore agreed that a combination of suggestions 1 and 2 would be more suitable. (Please view Appendix 1).

In relation to public engagement with scrutiny, the suggestions detailed in Appendix 3 to the report were discussed. Members considered that more should be done to raise awareness of scrutiny with the public. It was suggested that residents be provided with opportunities for public speaking at meetings on specific issues of local interest. It was also considered that, subject to looking into the practicalities of arrangements, residents might be more interested in scrutiny if the Committee were to hold external scrutiny meetings across the Borough on appropriate local issues of public interest.

In relation to future proposed topics for scrutiny, a list of issues (detailed in Appendix 4 to the report) were discussed. The Committee agreed that budget scrutiny (Item 2) should be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the course of the year. Members further agreed that scoping documents be submitted for the Committee's consideration on potential Task and Finish review work on Promoting Redditch (Item 14) and Work Experience Opportunities for Young People (Item 17).

A proposal that the "red flag" issues be considered for scrutiny was discussed. Officers advised that the LSP would be focusing on a number of the suggested topics, including the red flag items on health and education inequalities, during the course of the year and there was therefore the potential for work to be duplicated if the Committee agreed to undertake further scrutiny work itself. Members would be provided with and have an opportunity to scrutinise individual updates on the various areas of focus through the proposed six monthly reports to the Committee and key Officers could be asked to provide reports on specific areas to the Committee if necessary.

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RESOLVED that

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) a combination of Options 1 and 2 in respect of Portfolio Holder reports, be implemented by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2010/11 (see attached appendix for details);
- 3) the suggestions regarding public engagement made during the course of the Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Event, be noted;
- 4) relevant Officers be requested to scope options for public speaking at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings and look at the practicalities of holding Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings at various venues across the Borough on single issues as and when appropriate and report back to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- 5) the following topics be added to the Committee's Work Programme, if not already listed, for further scrutiny work, namely:
 - a) Budget Scrutiny - to implement appropriate arrangements for budget scrutiny during the year;
 - b) Promoting Redditch – locally, regionally and nationally; and
 - c) Work Experience Opportunities for Young People – to assess current opportunities and how they could be improved.

63. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

64. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee was informed that the agenda for the scheduled 15th September meeting was particularly busy. The Chair proposed that an additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be convened. Tuesday 21st September was suggested for this meeting, though this was subject to confirmation that there

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would be no clashes with other appointments in the Council's Committee calendar.

Members were informed that the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) would be hosting a Conference on "The Future of Overview and Scrutiny 2010" in London on 5th October. This conference was responding to legislative changes and would provide further information about effective scrutiny of partnerships. Members agreed that it would be beneficial if a member of the Committee could attend the Conference and Councillor King indicated that he would be interested in attending.

RESOLVED that

- 1. Officers be asked to investigate the potential for having an additional meeting of the Committee on Tuesday 21st September and clarify that there would be no clash with other Council meetings;**
- 2. subject to the interested Members' availability being clarified, the Committee send a representative of the Committee to "The Future of Overview and Scrutiny 2010" Conference on 5th October 2010; and**
- 3. subject to any updates previously agreed during the course of the meeting, the Committee Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.35 pm

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CHAIR