

Executive Committee

3rd February 2010

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

R Bamford, B Barr, M Bough, C Flanagan, H Halls, S Hanley, J Homer, R Kindon and T Kristunas

Committee Officers:

D Sunman

229. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

230. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

231. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised that she had accepted the following matter as urgent business:

Item 7 – Initial Estimates 2010/11 and Forecasts for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

232. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - OFFICE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Members considered a report which sought endorsement of an Office Needs Assessment that had been jointly produced by Officers of the Council and GVA Grimley. Officers reported that the study would form part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy Development Plan document.

Members were informed that the Office Needs Assessment had included four key stages as follows:

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Chair

- 1) a Survey of Existing Occupiers;
- 2) an Assessment of Floorspace in Redditch town centre;
- 3) a Property Market Review; and
- 4) the Need for Additional Floorspace.

The key issues arising from these stages were:

- a) the town centre was an attractive location for the Office market with:
 - i) affordable rent levels;
 - ii) flexible accommodation; and
 - iii) location accessible to main transport routes.
- b) since January 2000 to March 2009 there had been a gradual increase of office lettings – the average take up being around 3,800 sq.m per annum, the freehold sales market was more limited;
- c) currently 28% of the total stock was vacant, the highest level in a decade;
- d) achieving the WMRSS target of 45,000 sq.m would be challenging given the limited amount of demand for such a high level of office floorspace in the town centre and peripheral zone;
- e) the town centre and peripheral zone could only accommodate half of this requirement;
- f) a revised office target of 30,000 sq.m over the Plan period was recommended;
- g) the study identified some potential sites which could accommodate around 22,000 sq.m, which would mean identifying an additional 2.3ha outside the town centre / peripheral zone in order to achieve the 30,000 sq.m requirement;
- h) in order to attract a wider office market, which traditionally had not wanted to locate in the Borough, marketing of the town centre would be fundamental to its success;
- i) the Council should focus on regional and sub-regional public sector organisations when identifying potential occupiers of

office accommodation in the town centre;

- j) a wider range of 'office products' would be required, i.e. new, modern office buildings with flexible space capable of accommodating medium to large businesses.
- k) support from Economic Development would be required in order to ensure a holistic approach is used in identifying the types of sectors that should be focused upon in the town centre; and
- l) in order to achieve the challenging office requirement policy would need to set precedence over competing uses, e.g. residential and leisure in the town centre.

The Chair of the Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) reported that the draft report had been presented to the Panel and had been discussed at length. He informed Members that a number of key points, which had arisen in these discussions, had been included in the final report.

RECOMMENDED that

the Office Needs Assessment, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be endorsed as part of the Council's Local Development Framework Evidence Base.

233. WATER QUALITY REPORT

Members received a report which sought approval and adoption of a policy in relation to Water Quality in Redditch Borough Council's owned and managed buildings.

Officers reported that the Council's policy for the management of water quality was as follows:

- 1) to have clear procedures for the design and management of water services;
- 2) to have specific lines of responsibility for the management of water services;
- 3) to identify locations with high risk users of premises;
- 4) to identify , where possible, potential risk areas due to materials, storage methods, poor installation etc. within buildings;

- 5) to check on a regular basis the quality of water within buildings;
- 6) to train staff and contractors to ensure that works carried out on water services comply with legislation and the policy;
- 7) to ensure that any risk of contamination is removed or reduces in an efficient, cost effective manner with the minimum disruption to building users.

Members requested that the Council's insurers be asked to comment on the policy.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the policy in relation to water quality in Council-owned and managed buildings, as included at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted; and**
- 2) **the Council's Insurers be sent a copy of the Water Quality Policy for comment.**

234. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Committee received a report that sought approval and adoption of the Private Sector Housing Strategy and Action Plan, which would replace the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2004.

Officers reported that a stock modelling survey of private housing (all non-social) had been completed in April 2009 by Building Research Establishment (BRE). Based on the evidence from the survey significant issues had been identified in the older areas of the Borough and hot spots in part of the former new town areas. The areas of most need had been identified as the older dwellings in Central and adjacent wards of Lodge Park and Abbey.

Members were informed that a survey had been carried out during the summer of 2009 with private tenants, landlords and owner-occupiers to identify which private sector housing services were seen as a priority.

Resident's priorities had been identified as follows:

- 1) assistance to low-income households on property maintenance and helping arrange subsidised loans;
- 2) returning empty properties back to use;

- 3) helping older people and people with disabilities to live independently in their own homes by providing stairlifts, wider doorways etc.; and
- 4) advice on reducing energy use and combating fuel poverty.

Officers reported that the main strategic aims of the strategy were:

- a) improve housing conditions in the private sector; and
- b) give support and advice to private sector tenants and vulnerable households.

RECOMMENDED that

the Private Sector Housing Strategy, as included at Appendix A to the report, be adopted.

235. INITIAL ESTIMATES 2010/11 AND FORECASTS FOR 2011/12 AND 2012/13

Members received a report which presented the estimates at Directorate level that had been prepared in accordance with the Budget Guidelines, which had been approved by Council on 7th December 2009.

The Head of Resources reported that since consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan for the period 2010/11 to 2012/13 in July 2009 central government had announced an increase in National Insurance contributions to take effect from April 2011 at an estimated cost of £110k. She also reported that there had been a reduction in income from business centres, leisure services, local land charges and planning fees.

Members were informed that the Executive Committee at their meeting on 18th November 2009 had considered a number of revenue and capital bids. Members had approved the bids for 2009/10 and approved, in principle, the bids for the forthcoming three years, subject to the availability of resources. Following the outcome of the Initial Estimates process for 2010/11 the Strategic Management Team had reviewed the General Fund bids. As a result the following amendments had been made:

- 1) the bid for £110,000 for works to Public Building had been removed pending a further report to Members;
- 2) the bid for the repair and maintenance of street lighting had been changed to medium priority and would be reconsidered

later in the year;

- 3) the bid for Landscape Maintenance had been changed to medium priority pending an investigation into the potential utilisation of Section 106 contributions to support the budget;
- 4) the bid for Direct Action – Enforcement had been removed from the list.
- 5) the capital bid for the Energy Management System had been removed from the list as it had been included in the list of projects for SALIX funding.

The Leader reported that, with the approval of Members, the bid for the repair and maintenance of street lighting at a cost of £6,000 would be included in the Initial Estimates 2010/11.

The Head of Resources reported that the Secretary of State had approved the Council's application for a Capitalisation Direction in respect of the severance costs associated with the Single Management Team. She explained that this would mean that the severance costs could be met from capital receipts as opposed to a direct charge to the General Fund revenue account.

Officers were asked to write, in the first instance, to Worcestershire County Council highlighting the increasing pressure on the Council's budgets for staff pensions.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Initial Estimates for 2010/11 be approved;**
- 2) **the Revenue Bids categorised as unavoidable and high detailed in Appendix 14 be approved , as follows:**

2010/11	£279,210
2011/12	£ 98,210
2012/13	£ 97,210

- 3) **The General Fund bids for capital resources categorised as high set out in Appendix 15 be approved, as follows:**

2010/11	£325,000
2011/12	£165,000
2012/13	£845,000;

together with the associated revenue implications as follows:

2010/11	£ 6,500
2011/12	£54,200
2012/13	£96,400
Future years	£188,800;

- 4) the proposal for how the Further Support for Town Centre Grant is utilised as set out in Appendix 17 be approved;**
- 5) the bids as recommended by Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved as follows:**
 - a) 2nd December 2009 Redditch Matters to be published quarterly. Cost of an additional edition £6,000;**
- 6) the bid for Church Hill District Centre Redevelopment for £60,000 2010/11 which was approved in principle at Council on 7th December 2009, be approved;**
- 7) that any Direct Action - Enforcement expenditure be funded from balances, pending recovery from the third party, and officers report back to Members on the success of any recovery action;**
- 8) that any bids not approved at this stage be brought back to this Committee for reconsideration once the outturn position for 2009/10 is known and**
- 9) the bid of £6,000 for the repair and maintenance of street lighting be included in the Initial Estimates 2010/11.**

(This report had been accepted as a matter of Urgent Business – not having met the publication deadline and was considered at the meeting as such, with the approval of the Chair, and in accordance with the Council's constitutional rules and powers vested in the Chair by virtue of Section 100 (B) (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 to agree matters of urgency being discussed by reason of special circumstances.

In this case the special circumstances were that the information, which was not available at the time of the agenda going to print, was required to be considered at the present meeting in order to meet statutory requirements.)

236. FORMER COVERED MARKET - INITIAL OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The Committee were asked to consider the options for the use or redevelopment of the former Covered Market site.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the site be declared surplus to the Council's requirements;**
- 2) Property Services, in conjunction with Planning Services, be authorised to work up a development brief to be reported to a future Executive Committee meeting; and**
- 3) the Property Services Manager be authorised to secure any short term interim uses of the former covered market area that would generate income, subject to planning considerations and in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.**

237. CORPORATE SICKNESS STATISTICS

Members received a report that updated them on sickness statistics for the Council for the period July to September 2009. Officers circulated information for the period October to December 2009 at the meeting.

Officers were asked to provide Councillor Hartnett with information regarding the SLA with Worcestershire County Council for the provision of Occupational Health services.

RESOLVED that

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

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.50 pm

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Chair