

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 2nd July, 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Bush (Chair), and Councillors Roger Bennett (substituting for Councillor Gay Hopkins), Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Carole Gandy, Andrew Fry, Alan Mason, Yvonne Smith.

Also Present:

P Finnemore, Commissioning Manager: Young People, (Worcestershire County Council)

Officers:

R Cooke, C Felton and J Staniland

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and M Craggs

12. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Hopkins and Witherspoon. Councillor Bennett was confirmed as a substitute for Councillor Hopkins.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any Party Whip.

14. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4th June 2013 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

15. YOUTH SERVICES MONITORING UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received an update on the action that had been taken by both Worcestershire County Council and Redditch

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Borough Council to implement the recommendations that were made by the Youth Services Provision Task Group in April 2012. As part of this update a presentation was delivered on the subject of Worcestershire County Council's arrangements for commissioning positive activities (Appendix A).

During the course of delivering this presentation the following salient points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Worcestershire County Council had adopted an outcomes based commissioning approach to delivering positive activities to young people in November 2011.
- The focus of this programme was on delivering positive activities to young people aged 13 – 19 and, in particular, on helping young people at risk of becoming NEETs (those not in education, employment or training) or of committing anti-social behaviour.
- Worcestershire County Council had committed to maintaining existing youth services until the commissioned activities had started in order to ensure that there was a smooth transition to the new process.
- Across the county 25 contracts had been issued to different service providers. In each district contracts had been awarded by the County Councillors representing the area.
- In Redditch two consortiums had been commissioned: the Arrow Vale Consortium and a consortium led by the shared Leisure service for Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils. A third group, Core Assets, had been commissioned to undertake specific projects that would target young people at risk of becoming NEETs.
- There had been a phased approach to the introduction of positive activities commissioned from the consortia.
- The consortia were expected to achieve particular outcomes that would have a long-term beneficial impact on the life prospects of the young people participating in the activities as well as on local communities. The extent to which these long-term aims were achieved would be monitored rather than short-term outcomes.
- The Commissioning Manager would be involved in monitoring the work of the consortia, though County Councillors and young people would also have a significant role to play in monitoring the delivery of activities.
- The extent to which young people were engaged, together with any outstanding requirements for support, would be taken into account whenever activities were monitored. Quarterly data would be provided to ensure that monitoring remained effective.

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- This quarterly data would over time enable Worcestershire County Council to assess how NEETS and young people at risk of committing anti-social behaviour were engaged in positive activities.
- The Arrow Vale Youth Centre had been transferred by Worcestershire County Council to the RSA Academy Arrow Vale for school and community use. All young people, not just pupils at the school, were entitled to access this facility.
- Redditch Youth House was due to be disposed of by Worcestershire County Council's Property Services team. Two organisations had expressed an interest in the building and one body had submitted a bid. A decision on the successful bidder would be made on 26th August 2013.

Further information was also provided about the work of the Council-led Consortium, focusing on the following key points:

- The Council was working with a range of local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.
- The Council's role in the consortium was to submit the bid to Worcestershire County Council. The Voluntary and Community Sector groups had taken a lead in delivering positive activities to young people.
- Nine new youth clubs had been established by the consortium using funding provided through the commissioning process.
- The consortia that had been awarded funding were working closely together, using the same software and sharing information about young people at risk of becoming NEETs.
- This close working relationship helped to ensure that activities provided by one consortium did not duplicate the work of another. Members were advised that both consortia were also keen to avoid duplicating the work of other Voluntary Sector and Community Sector organisations that had not applied for funding from Worcestershire County Council.
- The youth clubs were aiming to change the programme of activities available to young people to reflect opportunities in different seasons of the year.
- The Council-led consortium had consulted with representatives of North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership. As a consequence of this meeting a mechanism had been identified to enable the partnership to refer young people committing, or at risk of committing anti-social behaviour to the consortia.
- The Council had envisaged that transportation would be a barrier to participation. However, young people had managed to access the clubs relatively easily.

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Following receipt of the presentations Members discussed the commissioning process in further detail. Concerns were expressed about the geographical spread of positive activities across the Borough. In particular, Member noted youth clubs had not been established in areas such as Crabbs Cross, Headless Cross, Hunt End and Webheath. It was suggested that there remained a risk that some young people living in these areas would commit anti-social behaviour or become NEETs.

Members were advised that, in a context of reduced resources, the County Councillors had been required to concentrate on prioritising commissioning positive activities that would meet the greatest need. The activities that had emerged had been considered best able to achieve this purpose at the time that the County Councillors had reached a decision on the process. However, if further data emerged to indicate that there was particular need in other parts of the Borough there was flexibility within the contracts awarded to both consortia to ensure that activities could be redirected accordingly.

The suitability of outreach work for engaging with young people at risk of committing anti-social behaviour was considered. The North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership had suggested that outreach work would better enable youth groups to engage with young people at risk of offending. However, outreach work had not been commissioned specifically. There was the potential to introduce outreach work; though it was likely that resources would need to be diverted from existing activities which could lead to the end of some practices.

There was the potential for the consortia that had been awarded contracts to fail to meet target outcomes. Worcestershire County Council had retained the right to decommission service provision by the consortia if this occurred. However, the Council was eager to support the consortia and to help to identify solutions to problems before they became intractable.

Intergenerational projects were due to be provided in some parts of the town as part of the process. The exact nature of these projects remained to be confirmed, though it was likely that it would include activities such as lunch clubs.

A variety of methods had been utilised to promote the positive activities. All of the Youth Clubs in the Council-led consortiums used social media to communicate with young people. The council-led consortium would also be promoting youth activities during the Morton Stanley Festival in August 2013. In the long-term

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Worcestershire County Council was due to re-launch the Plug and Play website, which was dedicated to promoting youth activities, and which could be used by all youth clubs to promote events and activities.

The Committee finished their discussions by considering the overall impact of the Youth Services Provision Task Group review. The recommendations that had been made by the group were considered to have had a significant influence over the work of the Council-led consortium in particular. The Council had not been involved in delivering youth work for a significant number of years and, therefore, a number of innovative actions had been taken to ensure that activities were delivered in partnership effectively. For these reasons Members concurred that the Task Group exercise had been worthwhile.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a presentation on the subject of the data outcomes from the positive activities programme in Redditch be presented for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2013; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

16. HOUSING DENSITY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Chair of the Housing Density Targets Task Review, Councillor Bush, delivered a presentation on the outcomes of the review. During the course of this presentation the following matters were raised for Members' consideration:

- The group had consulted widely including with: relevant Officers; the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport; local estate agents; a representative from the local Asian community; and a local housing developer.
- A questionnaire had been circulated for the consideration of local estate agents. Key points raised by the estate agents in their completed responses included concerns that there were limited numbers of three and four bedroom properties in the Borough and limited numbers of bungalows.
- Estate agents were able to provide examples of individuals and families leaving the Borough to live in neighbouring districts due to a greater number of larger properties that would meet their needs and expectations.

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- Existing rules regarding housing density frequently deterred developers from building multiple bungalows on sites, due to the space required for bungalows.
- Self-build properties provided an opportunity for people to build houses to a size that would meet their needs. The Chair suggested that the option to secure larger self-build properties would help to attract more businessmen to live permanently in the Borough.
- Self-build properties had been found in other parts of the country to have a beneficial impact on the local community and residents were often keen to remain in these homes years after they had been built. Also these residents found that they developed new skills as a result of participating in self-build projects.
- Many members of the local Asian community lived in inter-generational households. Often families struggled to purchase properties in the Borough suitable for inter-generational living, and a significant number of the larger houses that met this requirement were located near the town centre and were not high quality buildings.
- Developments on large sites were eligible for discounts on road infrastructure. Similar discounts for road infrastructure were not offered for developments on smaller sites.
- Small, local housing developers, who often employed local people, struggled to compete with larger developers.
- The group had considered suggesting that the first measure Members were proposing should be applied to sites less than 0.5 hectares. However, the group had discovered that this would not have been realistic as it could have had a detrimental effect on the council's ability to meet housing targets. The Task Group had been advised that the same requirement for sites less than 0.16 hectares in size would not have the same impact.
- Officers had been fully consulted during the course of the review and had expressed support for Members' proposals prior to the Committee meeting.

Following delivery of the presentation the Committee debated the findings of the review. There was general consensus amongst Members that more bungalows were required in Redditch, particularly to meet the needs of an aging population. This would also potentially help to increase the number of three and four bedroom properties available to families further down the housing ladder, as elderly people would be moving from previous family properties.

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A Member noted that when the review had been launched Officers had suggested that there was already flexibility within the local planning policy framework to adapt housing density requirements for developments as and when required. However, the group expressed concerns that under existing arrangements Planning Officers tended to be minded to enforce the housing density rules.

The proposal regarding self-build properties was discussed in detail. Reference was made to paragraph 4.9 of the report, where the Task Group had suggested that more land should be allocated to self-build properties. Officers explained that the Council could not allocate land to self-build properties, partly because it would not be possible to enforce construction of self-build properties following the granting of planning permission, Officers remained supportive of the aim to increase the number of self-build properties. Concerns were expressed that the issue of allocation had not been raised prior to publication. However, it was agreed that references to allocation should be reviewed with a view to suggesting that self-build should be encouraged.

The number of developments that would be influenced by the group's recommendations was discussed. Some Members in particular commented that the group's proposals appeared to have focused on particular social groups within the population, rather than on the needs of all residents. However, other Members commented that these proposals would help to attract residents who would live in larger, more expensive properties and pay higher levels of Council tax. There was also the possibility that these residents would be encouraged to establish businesses in the area, to the benefit of the local economy. Furthermore, over 90 per cent of developments in the Borough were for larger sites and would not be affected by the proposals.

The potential impact of the proposals on the availability of affordable housing in the Borough was also considered. Some concerns were expressed that larger executive homes would not meet the needs of families on low incomes or young people seeking to get onto the housing ladder. However, Members were advised that requirements remained for a specific proportion of properties built as part of a larger housing development to be social housing. This would ensure that a supply of affordable housing remained available in the Borough.

RECOMMENDED that

Policy 5 of the emerging Draft Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 be revised as per Appendix 1 (*to the report*) to incorporate the following headline points:

- a) all new housing developments within the Borough on sites less than 0.16 hectares should be exempt from the Council's housing density requirements;**
- b) all new self-build housing developments on sites larger than 0.16 hectares within the Borough should meet a minimum housing density requirement of 15 dwellings per hectare; and that**
- c) all new bungalow developments within the Borough on sites larger than 0.16 hectares should meet a minimum density requirement of 15 dwellings per hectare.**

17. FUTURE APPROACH TO CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY AT REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL - DISCUSSION

Members noted that the future of Crime and Disorder Scrutiny at the Council had been proposed at the previous meeting of the Committee. A report had subsequently been prepared on this subject which detailed the options available to Members. In preparation for the report the leaders of both of the political groups represented on the Council as well as the relevant Head of Service for community safety had been consulted.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 introduced a requirement for every local authority in England and Wales to have a scrutiny Committee designated with responsibility for reviewing the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), often referred to as a Community Safety Partnership. The legislation required that each Council reviewed the work of the partnership at least once a year. In Redditch the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had established the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel in 2010 to undertake this work. The Panel had focused on the work of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership and, following a merger with Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest, the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership.

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Brazier, explained that the group had held four meetings the previous year. During these meetings Members had considered a lot of interesting information about the work of the Partnership,

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however, there had been no recommendations made as a result of this work.

Members agreed that the work of both scrutiny Task Groups and Panels should be constructive. For this reason the Committee agreed that changes needed to be made to crime and disorder scrutiny at the Council. However, Members suggested that it would not be appropriate to disband the Panel. Instead, the Committee proposed that a meeting of the Panel should be convened at least once a year. During this meeting members of the Panel could be invited to consider subjects such as the Partnership's Community Safety Plan and latest performance data. In the event that any areas of concern were identified as a result of this meeting work could be delegated to a Task Group to review the subject.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel hold at least one scheduled meeting during the year to scrutinise the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership; and**

RESOLVED that

- 1) additional work identified during this meeting be delegated on an ad hoc basis to Task Groups as and when required; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

18. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING EVENT - CONSIDERATION OF SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

The Committee was invited to consider the outcome of the workshop session that had taken place during the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning event in June 2013. A large number of topics had been suggested during this workshop as potentially suitable for further scrutiny. Members were invited to consider whether any of these items would be suitable for either a Task Group or the Committee to review in further detail. However, the Committee noted that no Task Group exercise would be launched until detailed terms of reference had been submitted for Members' consideration.

When selecting items for scrutiny Members were advised to consider the extent to which the topics matched items listed on the

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Executive Committee's Work Programme or had recently been the subject of a decision by the Executive Committee. The Committee was also informed that in line with best practice in Overview and Scrutiny the relevance of the topics to local community needs and priorities needed to be taken into account. As part of this process Members were urged to note that anything impacting on the local community, including services and activities delivered by external organisations, could be scrutinised.

During consideration of this item the Committee's Work Programme was also considered. Members noted that a scoping document, detailing the terms of reference for a proposed review of the Abbey Stadium, was due to be submitted by Councillor Derek Taylor for the Committee's consideration on 23rd July. Councillor Hopkins had also expressed an interest in submitting a scoping document for the Committee's consideration in due course; on the subject of trees and landscaping, which would take into account grass cutting and the impact of tree roots on footpaths.

The Chair advised Members that he was keen to ensure that the Committee's Work Programme remained flexible during the year. As part of this process he suggested that the Committee should not seek to set items for every meeting at an early stage in the municipal year. Flexibility in the Work Programme would provide the Committee with an opportunity to respond to urgent issues as and when they arose.

The Committee also considered the resources available to support scrutiny exercises. The two Democratic Services Officers with lead responsibility for Overview and Scrutiny at the Council realistically had capacity to support one Task Group review at any one time effectively. Members agreed that they were keen to ensure that the time dedicated by these Officers to supporting scrutiny exercises was used as constructively as possible.

The impact of service transformation on the timing of some reviews was discussed in detail. Members questioned whether it would be appropriate to review subjects such as trees and landscaping at a time when changes to landscaping services were being trialled through the transformation process. Instead, it was suggested that Councillors could ask to observe or participate in the trials. In addition, Members noted that it might be useful to invite Officers involved in the trials to deliver a presentation to the Committee, as this would enable Members to learn about the impact on the service from frontline Officers.

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The Alexandra Hospital had been proposed a significant number of times as a potential topic for scrutiny. The Committee noted that the Save the Alex campaign was already working hard, with the support of elected Members, to address the issue. Furthermore, the Alexandra Hospital Commission had already been established by the Council and would provide an opportunity for relevant issues to be discussed in further detail. For these reasons it was agreed that the hospital should not be added as an item to the Committee's Work Programme.

Housing had similarly been consistently identified during the workshop as a subject suitable for scrutiny. In particular it was suggested that the Council's working relationship with Housing Associations in allocating suitable housing to tenants should form the subject of a Task Group review.

The condition of pavements in the Borough had also been identified a number of times as a suitable topic for scrutiny. Councillor Smith expressed an interest in leading a Task Group review on this subject. However, Members agreed that further information about the proportion of footpaths and pavements that were the responsibility of Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council should be provided for Members' consideration before a scoping document was submitted for the Committee's consideration on this subject.

The Committee was advised that the Council's Landscaping and Legal teams were currently working closely with Worcestershire County Council to review respective responsibilities for maintaining land in the Borough. Maps were being produced which would identify the areas of land that were known to be owned by the County Council or the Borough Council. Further areas of land where ownership was unclear, and appropriate maintenance arrangements, were also being considered. Members agreed that a presentation to the Committee on this subject would be a suitable item to add to the Work Programme.

During the course of discussions Section 106 Agreements were identified as an item suitable for the Committee to scrutinise. In particular, Members noted that clarification was required about; how much Section 106 monies could be secured for different developments, how the money could be spent; and the extent to which elected Members could influence spending.

The Council's tendering process had been identified as a potential area of interest after the workshop event had taken place. Members reported that they had received questions from

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constituents about the process. In the first place it was suggested that these questions might be addressed most appropriately through separate discussions with Officers responsible for the Council's procurement process. Further information could be provided on this subject for the committee's consideration at a later date if considered appropriate.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor Andrew Brazier submit a scoping document detailing draft terms of reference for a review of the Council's relationship with housing associations in relation to housing allocation;**
- 2) Officers deliver a presentation at a following meeting of the Committee on the outcomes of current discussions between Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council to clarify land ownership and maintenance arrangements;**
- 3) information about the proportion of footpaths and pavements in the Borough that are the respective responsibility of Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council be provided for Members' consideration at a forthcoming meeting of the Committee;**
- 4) Officers deliver a presentation on the subject of Section 106 Agreements at a forthcoming meeting of the Committee; and**
- 5) the report be noted.**

19. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted that at the latest meeting of the Executive Committee, on 11th June 2013, Members had endorsed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's proposal for funding to be allocated to the installation of a canopy over the access ramp to Shopmobility. However, the source of funding for this project would be derived from the Shopmobility Donation reserves rather than from the Council's balances, as had originally been proposed by Scrutiny Members.

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RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 11th June 2013 and the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

20. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

21. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee was advised that the first meeting of the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Scrutiny Task Group had not yet taken place. This delay had occurred because some of the local authorities participating in the review had not confirmed appointments to the Task Group. Bromsgrove District Council, which was due to host the review, was scheduled to appoint Members to the group at a meeting of the Bromsgrove Overview and Scrutiny Board on 15th July 2013.

Officers explained that following the previous meeting of the Committee Worcestershire County Council had reconsidered the terms of reference for the review. The County Council had subsequently agreed to participate in the joint exercise. As a consequence every Council in the county would be involved in the review.

RESOLVED that

the update report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.30 pm