

Executive Committee

28 January 2009

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Carole Gandy (Chair), Councillor Michael Braley (Vice-Chair) and Councillors P Anderson, J Brunner, B Clayton, M Hall and C MacMillan

Also Present:

D Hunt, K Banks and M Shurmer

Officers:

J Staniland, A Walsh, J Smith, K Watkins, K Dicks, S Hanley, R Kindon, T Kristunas, K Cook, S Mullins and L Walsh

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

201. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

202. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Brunner declared a personal interest in Item 9 (Matchborough West Community Centre – Letting Update) as detailed at Minute 209 below.

203. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that she had agreed to the deferral of Item 8 – Claverdon Close – Option Appraisal to allow Officers time for further consideration of certain matters within the report.

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

Item 4 – Capital Strategy 2009/12; and

Item 10 – Church Hill District Centre – Redevelopment Update.

.....
Chair

All persons that contacted the Council in writing in connection with Claverdon Close – Option Appraisal were to be advised by Officers prior to the matter coming back to a future meeting of the Executive Committee.

204. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2009/12

Members considered a report setting out the framework within which the Council would manage its capital resources over the three year period 2009 to 2012.

In the present financial circumstances Members particularly noted the recent changes to the revenue consequences of capital borrowing and the impact on the Council's programme of asset disposal of the downturn in the property sector.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Capital Strategy appended to the report be approved; and**
- 2) the Capital Strategy be added to the list of the Council's Policy Framework documents and incorporated as such into the Council's formal Constitution.**

205. ESTIMATED OUTTURN 2008/09

The Council's estimated Outturn for 2008/09 was considered following the incorporation of all changes that had taken place following approval of the initial budget at the 21 February meeting of the Council.

It was noted that the costs associated with the Council's Neighbourhood Groups had increased following agreement of the initial budget and there was concern expressed that they did not represent good value for money. The Committee urged that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider reviewing the matter through the creation of a Task and Finish Group.

Members reiterated their concern at the further reduction in the contribution from Scottish Widows Investment Partnership Ltd. to the Shopmobility service noting, as they did, that the contribution had fallen by over £50,000 over the last two years.

Officers undertook to inform Members following the meeting why there was a small budget provided for water under the general heading of "Parking".

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **subject to the comments above, the Estimated Outturn 2008/09 be recommended for approval; and**

RESOLVED that

- 2) **the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to set up a Task and Finish Group to consider the existing Neighbourhood Group process and, specifically, the following points:**
 - i) **how and whether the Groups work;**
 - ii) **how to achieve the greatest value for money when informing local residents; and**
 - iii) **how to best achieve meaningful public consultation.**

206. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

The Committee considered a report setting out a revised policy containing guidance and a framework for Officers when determining the eligibility of an organisation for discretionary rate relief. There was some discussion as to the impact of certain criteria and whether these would have the desired effect of assisting those who most required assistance.

The current and historic underspend on this budget was noted and Members agreed that the matter of how the residual funds should be allocated be referred to the Economic Advisory Panel in order that avenues for assisting local business in the present economic downturn might be explored.

Officers undertook to provide a list of recipients of discretionary rate relief to Councillor Clayton.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the policy attached to the report be approved; and**

RESOLVED that

- 2) **the issue of the balance of monies remaining with the Council following disbursement of discretionary rate relief be referred to the Economic Advisory Panel for it to consider how this could be used to support business within the Borough.**

207. VIREMENT REQUEST - PLANNING SAVINGS

There was broad support for the proposal to vire funds for further studies towards the development of the evidence base for the Borough of Redditch Local Development Framework.

The Portfolio Holder stated his wish that the Core strategy Development Plan Document be agreed by the Planning Advisory Panel and be brought to the next meeting of the Council.

RECOMMENDED that

the budget savings totalling £57,900 be vired for studies required as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework and the Redditch Economic Strategy, estimated to cost £55,000.

208. CLAVERDON CLOSE - OPTION APPRAISAL

This item was deferred.

209. MATCHBOROUGH WEST COMMUNITY CENTRE - LEASE DETAILS AND REFURBISHMENT UPDATE

A report was received that set out a proposal to lease Matchborough West Community Centre to Worcestershire County Council. It was explained that the County Council was intending to extend and refurbish the premises, thereby removing the requirement for the Borough Council to undertake forthcoming maintenance work over the coming two year period. There was also an undertaking that the premises would remain available to local community groups for community use.

Officers confirmed that Matchborough West had been experiencing the lowest usage of any of the community centres belonging to the Council prior to a recent fire at the premises. Following the fire and subsequent remedial works to the building there was at present zero usage.

There was some concern that there was insufficient detail within the report regarding the implications of the proposed terms of the letting to the County Council over the twenty year period of the lease and, as a consequence, it was

RESOLVED that

a decision on the proposed letting of Matchborough West Community Centre to Worcestershire County Council be delegated to Officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management in order that satisfactory terms for the proposed lease might be agreed.

(Prior to consideration of this item, and in accordance with the requirements of Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000, Councillor Brunner declared a personal, but not prejudicial interest in view of her being a Member of Worcestershire County Council, the prospective lessee of the property.)

210. CHURCH HILL DISTRICT CENTRE - REDEVELOPMENT UPDATE

An update report on progress with the redevelopment of the Church Hill District Centre was considered by the Committee. The most important point that was communicated to Members was the impact of the economic downturn on the viability of the proposals for redevelopment at the present time. As a result of recent events Officers were recommending that the marketing of the redevelopment be delayed and it was noted that this would necessarily require revision of the (provisional) project plan.

Members requested that a Press Release be prepared as part of the means by which residents of Church Hill be kept informed of the delay in the redevelopment scheme resulting from current economic pressures in the financial and property development markets.

RESOLVED that

- 1) progress on the project be noted;**
- 2) the delay in marketing due to current economic pressures in the financial and property development markets also be noted; and**
- 3) market testing proceed when market conditions are appropriate to test the scheme's viability in the current economic conditions.**

(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 the business affairs of the Council's tenants.)

There is nothing exempt, however, in this record of the proceedings.)

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

In this case the special circumstances were that Members needed to be appraised of the impact on the scheme of the current economic conditions as soon as possible).

211. FIVE YEAR HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Members considered a request for reallocation of funds and an increase in capital to support the completion of the existing five year Housing Improvement Programme.

Officers reported that valuable lessons had been learned during the completion of the previous five year programme. A number of problems had been identified, such as the underestimation of the numbers of Council properties in certain areas requiring maintenance and renewals. It was proposed that the budget be re-profiled to reflect revisions to the present programme. In addition it was proposed that a programme of works be published each April for the benefit of Members.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the budget spend for years 3 – 5 be re-profiled to reflect the revised programme to 31 March 2012; and**

Housing Revenue Account

- 2) additional funding of £3,340,778.00 be allocated for the completion of the 5 year Housing Capital Programme 2007 – 2012.**

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

In this case the special circumstances were that the report, not available for publishing with the Agenda owing to a number of late amendments being necessary, was required to be considered prior to agreement of the overall budget for the Council.)

212. ABBEY STADIUM BUSINESS CASE

A report was considered that provided a business case for the redevelopment of the Abbey Stadium and presented the available options open to the Council.

The Committee was informed that, at present, there were no funds set aside to progress the scheme and the proposed programme of asset disposals had effectively been stalled by the economic downturn. Asset values were currently unrealistically low and the risk profile under present circumstances would be very poor. Members did not feel that they were able to recommend to Council that the scheme be progressed owing to the financial situation. As a consequence it was agreed that the scheme be deferred.

In the interim it was agreed that Officers would report back to the Committee on existing facilities at the Abbey Stadium and Hewell Road and any remedial action that might be required to maintain those facilities. There was a recognition that the facility at Hewell Road in particular was old and could not be expected to remain free from major problems indefinitely.

RECOMMENDED that

the scheme be deferred to such a time that the disposal of assets programme can deliver the capital funding required to deliver the scheme; and

- i) the time scale for recommencement of the scheme be set at a period of up to one year; and**
- ii) a further report on remedial action on Hewell Road Pool and Abbey Stadium be brought to the Committee regarding the expenditure required to sustain the facilities in the short, medium or long term.**

(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 which would significantly affect the Council's ability to achieve the best solutions for the Borough in relation to the Abbey Stadium redevelopment.

There is nothing exempt, however, in this record of the proceedings.)

213. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that

the minutes of meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 December 2008 be received and noted.

214. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

Members identified that there was the need to rethink the basis upon which the Council maintained the number of Executive Advisory Panels and other Working Parties and Groups that was currently in existence. The matter had been discussed at a recent meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party.

It was proposed by the Chair of the Group that the IT Steering Group be wound up and a discussion be held between appropriate Members, Committee Services and IT on IT provision for Members and related matters.

It was also proposed that each Portfolio Holder consider their own Advisory Panels, discuss with other members of the Panel the benefit of continuance, if the Panel was no longer deemed to be of benefit then to no longer meet and, finally, that Panels in such a situation be deleted at the end of the current municipal year.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments, the report be noted.

215. ACTION MONITORING

Members noted the Action Monitoring Sheet and requested that greater clarification be provided as to when an action had been completed and that completed actions be removed as appropriate.

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

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

217. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**RESOLVED that**

- 1) 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 paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

Church Hill District Centre – Redevelopment Update (as detailed at Minute 210 above); and

Abbey Stadium Business Case (as detailed at Minute 212 above); and

- 2) non-Member, Mr Collins, be permitted to remain.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.15 pm