

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Bush (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Andy Fry, Carole Gandy, Wanda King (substituting for Councillor Alan Mason), Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon

Officers:

R Cooke, C Felton, D Hancox, G Harris and S Singleton

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and I Westmore

66. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Alan Mason. Councillor Wanda King attended the meeting in place of Councillor Mason.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

68. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8th October 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

69. REDDITCH UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB - DISCUSSION

The Chair informed the Committee that he had asked that this item be placed on the agenda in the light of recent press articles concerning the Football Club. The Chair had subsequently been made aware that the Chairman of the Football Club would not be available to attend the present meeting and proposed that the matter be deferred until the December meeting of the Committee.

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Chair

RESOLVED that

consideration of this matter be deferred to the meeting of the Committee on 3rd December 2013.

70. POSITIVE ACTIVITIES - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered an update on the Redditch Consortia Positive Activities Programme. Officers reported that they were now in possession of detailed attendance statistics for the first two quarters of 2013/14. It was considered that the programme was enjoying relative success with numbers of attendees remaining quite consistent, although there was considerable variation in numbers of attendees at different sessions.

Officers reminded the Committee that the Third Sector had been given the scope to determine the nature of the sessions as they saw fit. One session in particular, the boxing session, had been particularly popular and around a dozen young people had become involved in the Boxing Club itself as a result. A number of young people had also become actively involved in a voluntary capacity with Leisure Services and were helping out at events such as the forthcoming Charity Santa Dash.

One aspect which had not worked so well to date was the audit of the various groups by local County Councillors and the Younger People's Forum. This had been delayed in part by the significant changes in Council membership at the elections. Officers understood that local County Councillors had now been apprised of the situation and were to commence visits to groups shortly.

Concern was expressed about several of the groups, but primarily that at Oakenshaw, that the activities on offer were essentially those which had previously been provided and which had in the past failed to attract young people. The use of a fixed base and the choice of a Friday night were thought to militate against the success of the venture. It was suggested that outreach work might be more successful at locations such as Morton Stanley Park or The Pleck and Officers were asked whether discussions could be held with the County Council over delivering youth provision in a different way. A further specific concern was around the gender imbalance at Astwood Bank and the measures which were being taken to address this.

Officers explained that the specification of the projects was very prescriptive which reduced the ability for the Borough Council to effect change directly. It was suggested that the County Council would take account of evidence from interested parties and the

young people themselves should it be directed at improving the service. Officers also stressed that an aim of the programme was to prevent young people from becoming NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and getting involved in anti-social behaviour. To that extent, the focus was as much about reaching the right children as about reaching a particular number of children. The County Council was to provide data during the next quarter and beyond which would give a much clearer picture as to whether this aim was being achieved. It was suggested that the Committee be provided with this data early in the next financial year.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the report be noted;**
- 2) Paul Finnemore from Worcestershire County Council be invited to the meeting of the Committee in June 2014 at which point the final two quarters of detailed attendance data for 2013/14 might be considered;**
- 3) Officers raise a number of issues with Paul Finnemore in the coming weeks including youth provision in Headless Cross, Oakenshaw and Webheath, the possibility of outreach work rather than work from a fixed base and measures to improve the gender balance at Youth Clubs; and**
- 4) Officers provide further details of the Primrose Hospice Santa Dash and Santa Cycle to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor following the meeting.**

71. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANIES - PRESENTATION

Members received two presentations, the first on Business Development and the second on Community Interest Companies.

The first of the presentations outlined the support that was available to new, young and growing businesses in Redditch, primarily through the Enterprising Worcestershire vehicle which utilised European Regional Development Funding to provide business advice and grant funding for businesses in eligible sectors. Officers considered that the business advice was the most significant benefit on offer to those looking to start or develop a business. For businesses in non-ERDF eligible sectors there was also some grant funding available through Enterprising Worcestershire.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

It was now proposed to extend the Programme until 2016 and a number of targets had been set locally. To date the programme was looking to deliver near to target in most areas although grant applications were low at present. Officers highlighted that the programme had not been running that long and it was expected that the majority of grant applications would come about later within the process of a business's interaction with Enterprising Worcestershire. Finally, Officers highlighted the additional sources of support available to local businesses such as the Business Development Programme, the Growth Accelerator and the Green Bridge Supply Chain.

The Council advertised the business support available and maintained links with Job Centre Plus but was dependent on potential businesses approaching the Council to utilise the support on offer. It was suggested that a competition for new Redditch businesses might encourage and reward local entrepreneurial spirit. Officers were supportive of the principle but were aware that the critical mass of new businesses supported through the Enterprising Worcestershire Programme might not yet exist in Redditch.

The second presentation focussed on the support provided to the voluntary sector by the Council and its partners. The Council had a process for the provision of grant funding on an annual basis but there was also a great deal of training, support and mentoring carried out by the Council to assist this sector. This support included help in filling out application forms, identifying additional sources of funding and signposting groups to organisations and support opportunities such as the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) and the Changing Futures Fund. These organisations were particularly useful in addressing questions as to the most appropriate form of voluntary sector organisation any particular group might choose to become.

Officers explained that the primary encouragement for the set up of new Community Interest Companies was through the provision of Stronger Community Grants of up to £500. Members were concerned that groups should be made more aware that the provision of these grants should be seen as the start of a process rather than an end in itself. Officers confirmed that a number of organisations did use this grant funding as a stepping stone whereas others simply sought support for one-off events. It was noted that even such one-off events could have a legacy in a particular locality, however. Members raised the possibility of an award for enterprising voluntary and community sector organisations within Redditch. Officers highlighted the supportive and collaborative nature of those working in this sector which generally ran counter to a spirit of competition.

RESOLVED that

the presentations be noted.

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

The Committee received the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Executive Committee and the current Executive Committee Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 15th October 2013 and the Executive Committee Work Programme be noted.

73. WORK PROGRAMME

Officers reported a number of updates to the Committee's Work Programme. Aside from the discussion on Redditch United Football Club agreed earlier in the meeting, it was noted that there were two further items for the next meeting in December, these being the Quarterly Recommendation Tracker and a presentation on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members were also made aware that the County Council had made Officers available to attend an informal briefing on the transport implications of Local Plan No.4 at very short notice and it was proposed that this be held on the evening of Wednesday, 6th November. Given that the majority of Members were unavailable on that date it was agreed that the Committee's disappointment at the failure of County Council Officers to come forward with a date sooner be communicated to the County Council. The Committee also agreed that a date for this briefing be sought early in the new year.

Concern was expressed that levels of support for Overview and Scrutiny should be maintained following the departure of one of the Officers whose focus was on this area of work. It was recognised that there were budgetary pressures but it was contended that Overview and Scrutiny was as good as the investment in the process.

Officers acknowledged these concerns, noting that Overview and Scrutiny at Redditch had long enjoyed cross-party support. The Committee was informed that Officers would be meeting with

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

Leading Members and Senior Management within the next two weeks to discuss the options available. The creation of a shared team had provided resilience and, given that Democratic Services Officer posts were generic, cover could be provided from elsewhere within the team in the short term.

RESOLVED that

- 1) subject to the amendments included within the preamble, above, the Committee's Work Programme be noted; and**
- 2) the Committee's disappointment at the failure of County Council Officers to come forward with a date for a briefing on the transport implications of Local Plan No.4 in a timely manner be communicated to the County Council by the Executive Director for Planning, Regulatory and Housing Services.**

74. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The following updates on current Task Group reviews were provided:

- a) Abbey Stadium Task Group – Chair, Councillor Carole Gandy

Councillor Gandy informed the Committee that the group was planning on visiting a Leisure Centre in Evesham in December. It was proposed that, in order to do the review justice and provide a satisfactory outcome, the deadline for the finalisation of the report be extended to June 2014.

- b) Landscaping Task Group – Chair, Councillor Gay Hopkins

Councillor Hopkins provided a brief update on the work her group had undertaken, including attendance at a Shared Services Board meeting at which a lengthy presentation on the transformation work within this service was given. It was reported that the group would be going out on site with Tree Surgeons on Wednesday of that week.

- c) Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services – Redditch Member, Councillor Alan Mason

In Councillor Mason's absence, Members' attention was drawn to the summaries of the first two meetings provided within the agenda. It was noted that the group would observe

the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee meeting on 21st November and subsequently interview the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee.

d) Voluntary Sector Task Group – Chair, Councillor Pat Witherspoon

Councillor Witherspoon stated that the group had a heavy workload. Members had recently reviewed the content of the final report produced by the Third Sector Task and Finish Group in 2008 in order to avoid duplicating that group's work. It was reported that senior Officers involved in the Council's involvement with the Voluntary Sector would be interviewed within two weeks of this meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the deadline for submission of the Abbey Stadium Task Group final report be extended to June 2014; and**
- 2) **the update reports be noted.**

75. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Pat Witherspoon provided a brief oral summary in her capacity as Redditch Borough Council's representative on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC).

The HOSC was meeting later that week but Councillor Witherspoon expressed grave concerns over statements made by the Chairman of the Trust Board in local media around closing services at the Alexandra Hospital should issues of safety arise. Councillor Witherspoon had raised the matter with the Chair of the HOSC and had suggested that the Chairman of the Trust Board be summoned before that Committee. Other Members echoed the fear that the longer the matter was left unresolved the greater the difficulty in attracting and retaining staff at the hospital.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

76. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Andrew Brazier, Chair of the Panel, introduced an update on the recent meeting of this Panel.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4th November 2013

It was reported that Supt. Kevin Purcell, Divisional Superintendent for West Mercia (North Worcestershire), had provided the Panel with a brief overview of the policing arrangements for Redditch in the future. Councillor Brazier advised that the Police were in the process of recruiting further Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Special Constables to assist with work in schools and the local community. Recruitment of Police Cadets was a further means of breaking down barriers with young people and under-represented communities. Police Officers were generally spending more time out of the Police Station and within local communities under a separate initiative.

Members were informed that West Mercia Police were considering the future use of Redditch Police Station as the current building was difficult and costly to maintain and car parking was inadequate. It was possible that an alternative base might be identified and utilised within the next five years.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.58 pm

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Chair