

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 9th January,
2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Bush (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy, Alan Mason, Yvonne Smith, Pat Witherspoon and Roger Hill

Officers:

J Pickering, S Jones, J Bayley and A Scarce

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

87. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Simon Chalk. Councillor Roger Hill attended the meeting as his substitute.

88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

89. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

90. BUDGET SCRUTINY BRIEFING

Officers delivered a presentation (Appendix 1) which highlighted the current financial position and the resultant deficit. Members were informed that Heads of Service had been asked to provide details of any savings which could be made and further information would be

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Chair

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provided for the Committee's consideration at the following meeting in February.

The following areas were highlighted within the presentation:

- A history of the funding reductions year on year, which to 2015/16 was approximately 41% overall.
- The reduction in Council tax support to 80%.
- Further reductions over the next three years and the overall affects of these throughout the country.
- Background information on the community care and crisis loans and why these funds would not be available in future. This was due to some authorities not using the funds provided and therefore it had been assumed that it was not needed.
- How the Council was now looking at the budget in a different format, which concentrated on costs in relation to the Council's strategic purposes. The figures therefore did not relate to specific services as had been the case in the past.
- The role and cost of those services which were classed as "enabling" others to carry out those purposes and how these needed to be reduced in order to be able to support frontline services more.

Members raised concerns in respect of the financial cuts that were expected to be made by Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and the impact of these upon the Council. Officers confirmed that the WCC budget would be agreed shortly and that it was likely that every area of it would have an impact on the Council, though as yet this had not been factored in to the Council's budget figures. Members also asked whether there had been any consultation with Officers across the district or with the third sector and it was understood that there had not been any as far as Officers were aware. It was crucial that people responded to any consultation and in particular Members discussed the Future Lives consultation and the associated budget which was likely to be significantly reduced.

The Committee queried whether the Council had been pro-active in determining whether there were services at WCC which the Council could provide for a fee. It was confirmed that senior Officers were holding discussions with WCC in respect of this.

Officers also discussed with Members the use of both general and capital reserves and the knock on effect of their use on balancing the budget. It was acknowledged that it would be difficult to replenish these reserves in the long term. Service reviews for all services following transformation would deliver significant savings in

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the future. Members were reminded that there continued to be a freeze on vacant posts, which was in place to protect current staff wherever possible. Savings through transformation had been received from several teams, however some were still outstanding as the work had not been completed and it was anticipated that further savings could be made towards the remaining shortfall.

RESOLVED that

the presentation be noted.

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

The Committee received the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 10th December 2013 together with the most recent edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme. It was noted that Members would receive a more detailed report in respect of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Members also expressed an interest in scrutinising the report in respect of fees and charges for 2014/15 in more detail together with the Housing Revenue Account Initial Estimates/Rent Setting 2014/15 report.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 10th December 2013 and the latest edition of the Executive Committee Work Programme be noted.

92. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Reference was made to concerns that had been raised by Members at the previous meeting regarding progress with action in respect of the Dial-a-Ride services being available to hire out of hours. Officers clarified that there had been some confusion in respect of this item and it was confirmed that this had in fact been in place since January 2013. A further update on this matter would be provided at a meeting of the Committee on 4th March 2014.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

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93. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Chair presented the draft scoping document for the proposed Footballing Provision within the Borough of Redditch Task Group, which had been requested at the Committee's previous meeting.

Following a short discussion it was agreed that key objective two should be rewritten, so that the word "investigate" replaced the word "establish" for considering the sustainability of Redditch United FC for the future.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) **a Task Group be established and the proposed terms of reference be endorsed;**
- 2) **Councillor Bush be appointed to Chair the review; and**
- 3) **Membership to be confirmed by Officers as soon as possible, but to include Councillors Bush, Gandy, Fry, Pattie Hill and Witherspoon.**

94. TASK GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The following updates in respect of current Task Group reviews were provided:

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

Councillor Gandy informed Members that the group had visited Evesham Leisure Centre in early December which had been most interesting and informative. There had been a number of things which had come out of this visit and the group were now considering in detail how these might be replicated at the Abbey Stadium. A visit to Stratford Leisure Centre was also planned as this was a different type of centre which it was hoped would give a good comparison and wider understanding of the facilities available. A number of initial recommendations had already been drafted and the Task Group had made good progress in recent weeks.

- b) Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services – Redditch member, Councillor Alan Mason

As Councillor Mason had been unable to attend the previous meeting of the Task Group Officers provided an update. There had been two further meetings. On 4th December Members had taken the opportunity to reflect on progress of the investigation so far and on 18th December a further interview with the Head

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of Regulatory Services, together with his senior managers to investigate what challenges the service was currently facing, had taken place. A meeting was planned for 16th January when members of the WRS Management Board were due to be interviewed and a visit to Wyatt House, the main office of WRS, would be taking place on 6th February 2014.

c) Landscaping Task Group – Chair, Councillor Gay Hopkins

Councillor Hopkins informed Members that the group had begun to realise what a large area landscaping services covered. However at the most recent meeting Members had revisited the scoping document and had been pleased with the number of areas which had already been covered. The Chair was therefore confident that the group would meet its April deadline. The areas which remained to be investigated were tree roots and pavements and the legal element. Members had also made arrangements to go out with members of the place intervention team to see first hand the work that was being carried out in Winyates.

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

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that the group would be meeting the following day with the Neighbourhood Development Manager for the Area of highest Needs project in Redditch at the Space in Winyates. This would provide Members with an opportunity to see for themselves the involvement the project had with the Voluntary Sector. It was a small Task Group which had undertaken a lot of work already. However she explained that it was unlikely that the group would meet its 1st April deadline and might therefore ask for an extension at the February meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

95. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that there had not been a meeting of the HOSC since she last reported to the Committee and there was therefore nothing to report.

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The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.45 pm