

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 1st April, 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Bush (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon

Also Present:

Councillor Michael Braley

Officers:

S Hanley, M Hanwell, S Jones and C Walker

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and A Scarce

The following minutes have been included in this extract:

Minute 122 – Football Task Group

Minute 123 – Landscaping Task Group

Minute 125 – Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker

MINUTE 122: FOOTBALL TASK GROUP - INTERIM REPORT

Councillor Bush, as Chair of the Football Task Group, informed Members that the Interim Report had been prepared in order to clarify the position with regard to Redditch United Football Club (FC).

The Task Group had reviewed the business case put forward in more detail and raised the following points:

- The Council was bound by EU law which prohibited the use of public funds to support a private entity and required it to put any development of a new stadium out to tender.
- The Council was in a difficult position as it was both the landowner and the planning authority for any future development of the land concerned.

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Chair

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- Issues with the current site going forward and the number and type of properties which could be situated on it.
- The flooding issues at the Washford site.
- No allowance being made for Section 106 monies and contingency being put in place in respect of abnormalities at the site.

The Committee discussed how the working relationship between the Council and Redditch United FC had broken down since the decision in November 2013 not to pursue the relocation proposals. It was suggested that the Club and officers should consider together how facilities at the current site could be improved, especially to support community use. Although there was a covenant on the land the option to investigate what might be reasonable to add to the site had not been considered and the group was suggesting that it should therefore be further investigated.

The Task Group Members confirmed that from the information provided it was clear that Redditch United FC was being run in a much more appropriate manner than in previous years. They had been particularly impressed with the presentation delivered in respect of the youth teams and the work carried out with a wide age range of young people. The group was suggesting that the Council should take any action possible to support this work.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the interim report of the Football Task Group be received and noted: and**
- 2) Redditch United Football Club be encouraged to discuss with Officers how to make the best use of the current football club site and to look at more local options to accommodate its expansion.**

RESOLVED that

- 1) the second objective of the Task Group, namely “to investigate the sustainability of Redditch United FC for the future with particular focus on the current relationship with the Borough Council and how this has been affected by recent events” be signed off as having been achieved; and**
- 2) the final report deadline for the remainder of the Task Group’s objectives be postponed and reviewed at the first**

meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2014.

MINUTE 123: LANDSCAPING TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor Gay Hopkins, as Chair of the Landscaping Task Group, delivered a presentation which highlighted the areas which had been investigated by the Task Group and which had led to it making seven recommendations for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Detailed information was provided in respect of the following areas:

- The traditional way of working and the role of operatives within the team including litter pickers and tree surgeons.
- The transformation work which had taken place and how the team was now working, including taking ownership of workloads.
- Improvements that had been made in communicating with residents, which include direct face to face contact made by tree surgeons and place operatives.
- Details of the site visits which Members had carried out together with the interview with the staff based at the depot.
- The ability for staff to use and develop new skills.
- Information about the trees intervention programme and the fact that professional tree surgeons employed by the Council had greater discretion in the trees intervention trial to carry out work required on trees.
- Details about the Place project, a new holistic approach to managing the environment in an area, and how this was being rolled out to other areas from the initial trial location in Winyates.
- The involvement of residents in the place intervention trial which involved encouraging them to liaise with the operatives on site and to take ownership and to have pride in their particular areas when the work had been carried out.
- The fact that as part of the intervention trials place operatives and tree surgeons were working on cases that might not previously have been addressed by Council staff in order to both meet the needs of the customer and improve the condition of the local environment.

Following the presentation Members discussed the Place project in further detail and officers confirmed that the aim was for less work schedules to be produced and for the operatives to be pro-active rather than reactive in the work that they carried out. Members agreed that allowing the operatives to discuss a particular situation

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directly with the resident would help in cases where the work being requested was not always possible. This communication was often appreciated by the customer and helped to clarify the reasons why the operatives were delivering work in a particular way.

The Committee thanked Councillor Hopkins and the Task Group Members for the detailed report.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **new Members should be invited to visit teams responsible for tree maintenance, landscaping and cleansing services as part of the Member Induction process to provide them with an opportunity to learn about the work of these teams;**
 - a) **a short briefing outlining the work of the place intervention, tree intervention and landscaping teams should be provided prior to a Council meeting early in the municipal year to provide those Members who are unable to participate in the member induction visit with an opportunity to learn about the work of these teams;**
- 2) **a contact list of key senior and operational Officers, containing the telephone and email details together with the basic information about the Officers' responsibilities, should be provided for the consideration of Members;**
- 3) **Members should be provided with updates on progress made addressing landscaping issues that they have referred to Officers at the request of residents including at the point of resolution;**
- 4) **data relating to landscaping cases reported for each area be provided for Members' consideration on an annual basis. Every Member should receive data for the areas they cover;**
- 5) **one of the Environmental Services Teams' performance measures should be to monitor the number of landscape cases that take longer than six months to resolve. The information obtained through this monitoring process should be reported in the strategic measures for consideration of Senior Officers and elected Members;**
- 6) **Officers should undertake a feasibility study, risk assessment and cost benefit analysis to assess the**

potential for the Council to bulk plant trees in Council open spaces and other appropriate locations. This feasibility study should take into account the following matters:

- a) the legal implications, if any, of this action;
 - b) the financial costs involved in planting and maintaining these plants;
 - c) the availability of grants from the government and other sources to help pay for bulk planting in the Borough;
 - d) demand within the market;
 - e) where bulk planting would take place in the Borough;
 - f) the size of the plots available for bulk planting;
 - g) the implications for the Council's Planning Department in relation to the Local Plan;
 - h) the potential revenue that could be accrued by the Council; and
- 7) Officers should investigate how to dispose of logs in a way that would maximise income for the Council. Part of this investigation should involve a risk assessment. Any revenue from these sales should be reinvested in landscaping services.

MINUTE 125: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

Officers informed Members that this report contained the latest quarterly update on the action that had been taken to implement scrutiny recommendations.

The updates had been provided in three appendices:

- Appendix 1 – which contained further information about recommendations which had been implemented since the last update was received.
- Appendix 2 – Detailing recommendations that had not yet been implemented. Members noted that wherever possible Officers had been asked to provide an estimate of the date by which these recommendations would be implemented.
- Appendix 3 – Further information about the recommendation from the Promoting Sport Task Group regarding provision of outdoor games. This information had been recorded separately due to the amount of detail provided.

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The Committee discussed the current poor state of the market area and raised concerns in respect of the lack of progress in response to the proposals that had been made by the Redditch Market Review in March 2013. Members requested that relevant senior Officers be asked to provide a further more detailed update at a future meeting of the Committee in order to clarify the current situation for the market and future intentions for implementing the group's proposals.

In respect of the Sickness Policy Short, Sharp Review it was noted that Officers had been unable to produce an A5 laminated guide to the Council's Sickness Absence Policy. Members stressed that this should only contain a small number of bullet points covering the key areas such as reporting absence and the requirement for a return to work interview to take place. It was suggested that one side could cover the employees responsibility and the other that of the employer. Following discussion it was agreed that this would be revisited and brought to a future meeting of the Committee for Members' consideration.

Members discussed the Access for Disabled People Task Group's recommendations and highlighted the importance of the proposal for a disability awareness session to be provided. At present it was intended this would be delivered as part of the Member Induction Programme. However, it was suggested that all Members, not just new Members, would benefit from this training. The committee agreed that whilst this should not be part of the mandatory training programme, the importance of this subject needed to be stressed and all Members needed to be encouraged to attend by Group Leaders.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Member Development Steering Group be asked to extend participation in the annual disability awareness session to all Members rather than to confine to new Members in the Member Induction process;**

RESOLVED that

- 1) a detailed report be delivered, in respect of the implementation of the Market Review's recommendations, for consideration at a future meeting of the committee; and**
- 2) a draft bullet point summary of the key points of the Sickness Absence Policy be provided for consideration of**

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Members at a future meeting, as detailed in the preamble above.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.03 pm