



Executive Committee

Tuesday, 28 October 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer and Yvonne Smith

Officers:

Ray Cooke, Kevin Dicks, Clare Flanagan, Alison Grimmett, Matthew Mead, Jayne Pickering, Amanda de Warr and Dave Wheeler

Committee Services Officer:

Debbie Parker-Jones

39. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Debbie Taylor.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

41. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Leader's Announcements.

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 8th September 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

43. IMPROVED PARKING SCHEMES

Members considered a report setting out proposals for improved parking schemes across the Borough.

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Chair

Officers explained the funding elements of the proposals and advised that monies for improvements came from the General Fund. As detailed in the report, the demolition of garages and removal of resulting material to an approved tip had so far been financed by the Housing Revenue Account, which would remain the case for all future schemes.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **a virement of £139,000 be made from the Woodrow and Lodge Park Estate Enhancement Capital budgets to fund the completion of Schemes in Crophorne Close, Bushley Close and Doverdale Close Woodrow; and**
- 2) **as part of the future capital bidding processes for 2015/16 and 2016/17 Members consider funding future 'Improved Parking Schemes' in: Exhall Close, Church Hill South; Drayton Close, Matchborough West; Astley Close, Woodrow; Mainstone Close, Winyates East; Fulbrook Close, Church Hill South; Garway Close, Matchborough East; and Felton Close, Matchborough East.**

44. DESIGNATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA - FECKENHAM

Members considered a request from Feckenham Parish Council for the designation of Feckenham as a Neighbourhood Plan area under decentralisation measures introduced through the Localism Act 2011.

Officers explained the background to neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood plans were required to be 'pro-development' and could not be used to prevent any development which was already allocated or permitted, nor could they propose less development than that which was set out in the Local Development Plan.

Neighbourhood plans provided an opportunity for local communities to have a say on what development should look like in their area, and it was noted that Feckenham Parish Council would continue to be consulted on relevant planning applications as at present.

RESOLVED that

Feckenham Neighbourhood Plan Area application, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be considered as providing a 'sound' basis for a six week period of public consultation prior

to its formal designation in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

45. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME - DRAFT SCHEME 2015/16

The Committee received a report seeking confirmation of a Local Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2015/16. The report also included data on the take-up of the Hardship Fund and other measures showing the impact of the Scheme on collection rates and recovery action.

Officers advised that there had been only a slight dip in collection rates since changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme were introduced in April 2014. Whilst there had been an increase in recovery action this was now levelling out. Members were pleased to note that only a small amount of the Hardship Fund had needed to be committed, which Officers advised was as a result of working closely with those affected and in providing support to assist them with any issues. This was also in line with the locality work currently being undertaken by the Council.

It was proposed that there be no changes to the level of support provided by the Council, but that the various allowances be uprated in line with the Secretary of State's annual announcement to ensure the Scheme remained in line with other benefits.

Some concerns were raised for the future when the Local Council Tax Support Scheme would not form part of Universal Credit, which it was felt could have a significant impact on arrears.

RESOLVED that

- 1) no changes be made to the draft Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16, with the exception of 'uprating' some of the figures to take account of other national changes in benefits and allowances;**
- 2) consultation on the proposal in 1) above be carried out in accordance with legislation, before a final decision on the Scheme is recommended to Council later in the year; and**
- 3) the contents of the report in relation to take up of the Hardship Fund and other measures data be noted.**

46. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 - 2017/18

The Committee received a report on the costs associated with delivering the Council's Strategic Purposes and the current summary position for the financial plan.

Officers explained the background to the report and the report appendices which outlined the 2014/15 budgets for all Council services aligned to the Strategic Purposes. A correction was noted to Appendix 2, 'Provide good things for me to see and do', which included Non Adopted Highways Inspection and CCTV Operating Costs, both of which should have appeared at Appendix 5 'Keep my place safe and looking good'. It was further noted that Pay & Display Car Parks at Appendix 2 was an error.

Officers were continuing to work through the detail of their budgets across the Strategic Purposes, with a number of costs having already been identified for further detailed work. Managers were also developing savings as a result of reducing waste in their systems and reducing the costs of enabling services, which it was noted included management teams in front line services. Heads of Service were also looking at how they could deliver their services differently by bringing in alternative service providers or providing more service for a reduced cost. Proposals in this regard would be factored into future reports to the Executive and would also be considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

A shortfall of approximately £1.7m was currently projected for 2015/16. It was assumed that the Government Grant settlement, which would be made known in December, would not be significantly different to the current estimate. It was further estimated that the position for the following 2 years would not improve with further reductions in Government Grant being projected.

Officers provided a number of clarifications in response to Members' questions on the costs detailed and the elements included in these, and undertook to provide a more comprehensive response to Members after the meeting on some of the issues raised. Officers further agreed to meet with one Member separately to discuss the property budgets.

Members appreciated the greater clarity on service costs and Officers advised that they would continue to refine and develop the way in which the costs were presented to Members. It was agreed that it would in future be helpful to set out gross expenditure and gross income and for any capital charges to be removed from the figures.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the costs associated with the delivery of the Council's Strategic Purposes be noted; and**
- 2) **Officers continue work on the financial plan to realise savings and additional income to meet the projected shortfalls.**

47. FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered a report setting out the proposed Fees and Charges for the Council's chargeable services for 2015/16. Members also considered with the report the minute and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 21st October 2014, which had been circulated as Additional Papers, in relation to the pre-scrutiny of the Fees and Charges report.

Officers reported that an overall 3% increase in fees and charges would be achieved through approval of the proposals, and that the income target for the year had been increased by 97k when compared to the previous year. All fees and charges, save for those where an invoice had already been raised covering the last quarter of the financial year or where there was a contractual period preventing this, would take effect from 1st January 2015. Exceptionally, the Palace Theatre charges would take effect from 2016/17 as booking arrangements for the Theatre were made significantly far ahead.

It was noted that some charges did not represent a 3% increase as benchmarking with other local authorities had been undertaken and some rounding up or down of figures applied for ease, for example with cash handling at leisure centres. Some new charges had also been introduced, for example, Knowledge Tests for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Deeds of Variation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In relation to Building Control, the number of requests from customers for local authorities to provide project specific quotations on request was rising rapidly. As such it was proposed to continue with the provision of site specific fees in accordance with the relevant regulations in those fee categories previously affected and to raise other specific declared fees by at least 3%.

Officers provided a number of clarifications to questions raised on the fees and charges.

Members discussed the minute and recommendations arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21st October 2014, and a debate ensued on whether the rate for Junior Swimming Lessons should be subject to increase. The recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny for the rate for Junior Swimming Lessons to remain at the current 2014/15 rate (part 1 of the recommendation) was not supported by the majority of the Committee. Part 2 of the recommendation formed part of the original recommendation detailed in the Fees and Charges report which was carried.

It was noted that whilst free swimming was available for the under 16's and over 60's this only applied to residents who lived within the Borough and who had registered for this. As such, a charge appeared in the schedule for those under 16's/over 60's who did not fall within those categories.

The current high occupancy levels for swimming lessons, particularly those for beginner classes, were noted, as was the fact that the Council's charges were lower than many other authorities, with concessions also applying.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the fees and charges for 2015/16 as set out in Appendices 1- 9 to the report be approved, other than in cases where:**
 - a) fees or charges are statutory;**
 - b) fees and charges are set externally; or**
 - c) other Council-approved circumstances apply; and**
- 2) the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services has delegation to alter the Leisure fees and charges by a variation of up to 30%.**

48. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd September 2014, and the minute of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the Fees and Charges report at its meeting on 21st October 2014.

2nd September 2014

In relation to the 2nd September 2014 minutes, it was noted that the recommendation on the Football Task Group Final Report had already been considered and resolved by the Executive at its meeting on 8th September. Accordingly, the only recommendation to be considered by the Executive Committee related to Minute 27 regarding the minutes of the Redditch Partnership Executive Group and Redditch Community Wellbeing Trust being appended to the Council agenda.

Members agreed that rather than appending the minutes to Council agendas, it would be more appropriate for these, or any resulting notes/actions arising from the meetings in question, to be published for Members' information only on the Modern.gov committee administration system. Councillors could also be alerted to any relevant activity in this regard via the regular Members' Newsletter. It was noted that, on occasion, some elements of the discussions and outcomes concerned might contain sensitive information, which would need to remain confidential. Any queries which Members might have arising from the minutes/notes/action points could then be raised with the appropriate Officer in the first instance.

21st October 2014

The minute and recommendations of the 21st October 2014 Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Committee's pre-scrutiny of the Fees and Charges report was considered under the previous agenda item (Minute No. 47 refers).

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd September 2014 be received and noted;**
- 2) the recommendation from the 2nd September Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in relation to the minutes of the Redditch Partnership Executive Group and Redditch Community Wellbeing Trust being appended to the Council agenda be rejected, and the any resulting minutes/notes/action points arising from the meetings in question instead be published to Councillors only via the Modern.gov committee administration system, and that Members also be alerted as to any activity in this regard via the Members' Newsletter;**

- 3) the minute and recommendation of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21st October 2014 in relation to the Fees and Charges report be received and noted;
- 4) part 1 of the recommendation from the 21st October Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in relation to the rate for Junior Swimming Lessons remaining at the current 2014/15 rate be rejected; and
- 5) part 2 of the recommendation from the 21st October Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in its amended format to reflect that this was subject to the approval of part 1 of the recommendation, automatically fall and all original recommendations in the Fees and Charges report stand.

49. WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 2nd October 2014.

Members had only one recommendation at Minute 16/14 to consider, relating to the Final Report of the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Scrutiny Task Group.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 2nd October 2014 be received and noted; and
- 2) the recommendation from the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee as follows be approved:

the lessons learned from the WRS shared service experience, particularly as detailed in this report, should be heeded by elected members and senior officers when considering any future proposals for shared service arrangements involving multiple partners.

50. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

There were no outstanding referrals to consider.

51. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

It was noted that the Planning Advisory Panel due to take place that evening had been cancelled due to lack of business.

Also, the Economic Theme Group under the Local Strategic Partnership; the successor body to the disbanded Economic Advisory Panel, had met and had had a productive meeting.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

52. ACTION MONITORING

Members were advised that no update on the information requested at the previous meeting in relation to the Finance Monitoring Report 2014/15 April to June (Quarter 1) was yet available. Officers undertook to find out the details for the questions raised and to report back to all members of the Committee on this.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.55 pm

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Chair

