

EXECUTIVE

Committee

25th November 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton (during Minute No's 53 to 67), John Fisher, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Jim Stobie – Worcestershire County Council (for Agenda Item 9: Joint Property Vehicle Full Business Case)

Officers:

Derek Allen, Clare Flanagan, Mark Hanwell, Jayne Pickering, Deb Poole, Guy Revans, Katie Sharp-Fisher and Amanda de Warr

Committee Officers:

Debbie Parker-Jones

53. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

55. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised the following:

White Ribbon Campaign 2014

The Leader referred to the White Ribbon Campaign 2014 which opposed domestic abuse and sexual violence. 25th November saw the first of a 16-day period of action for the 2014 Campaign. White ribbons were handed round and worn by Members and Officers in support of the Campaign.

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Chair

Additional Papers & Shared Services Board Recommendation

Additional confidential papers relating to Agenda Item 16 (Environmental Services Transformation and Shared Services Restructure) had been issued as Additional Papers 1 pack. There was also a recommendation for the Executive Committee's consideration arising from the meeting of the Shared Services Board on 6th November 2014 at Agenda Item 11, which endorsed, in principle, the Business Case for Environmental Services moving forward.

Also, as previously notified to Members, a copy of the Full Business Case for the Joint Property Vehicle at Agenda Item 9 had been published as additional papers, and a hard copy placed in each of the Members' Group Rooms owing to the size of the document.

Change in agenda running order

Following a request from Officers it had been agreed that the Home Improvement Agency Services report at Agenda Item 8 would be dealt with as the first substantive item on the agenda, immediately prior to Agenda Item 5; Public Service Network Compliance.

Work Programme

There was one matter which had appeared on the Executive Committee Work Programme for consideration at the meeting and which was not included on the agenda. This related to the Domestic Abuse Workplace Policy which it had subsequently been agreed would take the form of guidance as opposed to policy, and which therefore no longer required the Executive Committee's consideration.

It was noted that Members would still have input into the guidance as the draft of this would be referred to a future Portfolio Holder Briefing as a strategic issue, following which it would receive consideration at the Informal Trade Union and Employee Liaison Meetings.

Time to Change Pledge

The Pledge had received the full support of all the political groups of the Council and had been confirmed by the respective Group Leaders. The Pledge would be formally endorsed by Full Council on 8th December 2014 and would be signed by the Leader on 16th December.

The Council's Pledge was: "To reduce the stigma of mental illness and support staff who are experiencing or who may experience personal or family mental health issues."

The Leader thanked all Members for their support in this regard.

56. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 28th October 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

57. PUBLIC SERVICE NETWORK COMPLIANCE

The Committee considered a report which updated Members on the Council's requirement to achieve compliance with the Public Services Network (PSN), and which sought approval for the release of funds for 2014/15 to maintain compliance in the current financial year. Further funding would be needed to achieve full compliance in 2015/16, the additional financial implications of which would be included in the budget setting process for 2015/16.

It was noted that Cabinet Office was taking a zero-tolerance approach to compliance and that authorities would lose their connection to the PSN should they fail to comply. Officers advised that failure to comply would also result in significant financial consequences to the Council, meaning Members had no option other than to adhere to any current and future PSN requirements.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **there be an increase to the 2014/15 Capital Programme of £74,000 to be funded from borrowing;**
- 2) **the revenue implication of £18,000 per year, as detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the report, be added as a revenue pressure from 2015/16; and**
- 3) **£10,000 be released from balances in 2014/15 to fund the associated revenue costs.**

58. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/16

Further to Minute 45 of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 28th October 2014, the Committee was asked to consider

the final local Council Tax Support Scheme 2015/16 following consultation which had taken place on the draft Scheme.

Officers advised that the only changes to be made to the Scheme related to the future 'uprating' of some figures to allow for national changes in other benefits and allowances. Following consultation only one response had been received, which supported the proposed scheme.

Since changes to the support scheme had been introduced in April 2014 there had not been a substantial impact on collection rates and recovery rates were now levelling out. The authority was one of the few in the county to have a hardship fund to assist people in financial difficulty. Financial Support Officers were working closely with customers in financial hardship to discuss their financial situation and help with wider issues to help identify appropriate solutions.

Concerns were expressed by some Members for the future when the Council Tax Support Scheme would not form part of Universal Credit, which it was felt could have a significant impact on arrears. Officers responded that they were already working to try to address this, and were working closely with JobCentre Plus to ensure things ran as smoothly as possible for the residents of Redditch.

RECOMMENDED that

no changes be made to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16, other than to allow for the future 'uprating' of some of the figures to take account of other national changes in benefits and allowances.

59. LAND ADJACENT TO THE ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL - DISPOSAL

The Committee received a report which sought approval to declare land at Nine Days Lane surplus and to transfer access right to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

Members noted that the HCA was looking to develop a parcel of their land behind the Alexander Hospital for residential and employment purposes, and would be tendering their site for sale in the coming months. An adjacent plot of land owned by the Council, which on its own held little value for the Council, would be required to provide access to any development on the HCA land.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the land at Nine Days Lane as outlined on the plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be declared surplus and sold in part or whole; and
- 2) access rights across Redditch Borough Council land, if required, be granted to facilitate the proposed development scheme.

60. HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

The Committee considered a report which sought delegated authority to accept a tender for the re-letting of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) contract which was due to expire on 31st March 2015.

At the time of writing the report it was not known whether the successful tender would be above the financial threshold (£250,000) for acceptance by Officers on behalf of the Council. Delegated authority was therefore being sought to accept the successful tender and enable the process to continue, and to meet the deadline to ensure continuity of service for residents.

Members noted that the grants provided assistance for people in the private sector, who either owned or rented their homes, and that there had been a lower-than-expected take up on these. Officers responded that they took seriously the underspend and that it was difficult to predict year-on-year what case numbers would be.

On average between 60-80 cases were received a year, with there being significant variation in the type of adaptations required and loan amounts involved. There was a section of the tender form which specifically addressed promotion of the service, with more needing to be understood about the town's housing market and needs in order to know how to best cater for residents' needs. Officers provided a breakdown of the number of applications received during 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14. Members queried what the take-up was for the private housing sector (between homeowners and privately rented properties), which Officers agreed to look into and report back to Members on.

RESOLVED that

- 1) progress with re-letting the tender for Home Improvement Agency services be noted;

- 2) **authority be delegated to the Head of Community Services to accept the successful tender on behalf of the Council; and**
- 3) **the Head of Community Services and Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services be authorised to finalise the contract.**

61. JOINT PROPERTY VEHICLE FULL BUSINESS CASE

The Committee received a report setting out the Full Business Case in relation to the establishment of a Joint Property Vehicle (JPV) for the delivery of improved and more efficient property and asset management services to a number of public sector partners across the West Midlands. Members were asked to consider becoming a partner within the new arrangement, agree to nominate the Council's representatives to the Board and Shareholder Group and delegate authority to Officers to implement the decision and complete the actions and documentation to do so.

Officers advised that the recommendations at paragraphs 2.2 to 2.5 of the report were recommendations to Full Council rather than matters to be resolved by the Executive Committee as stated in the report. It was further proposed that the delegation to Officers referred to at recommendation 2.5 would be in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management. Jim Stobie, JPV Manager at Worcestershire County Council, was also in attendance for this item.

Officers highlighted the key elements of the Business Case and benefits of the JPV to the Council. The JPV would be an arms-length Company limited by shares, wholly owned and governed by the participating public sector partners. The JPV proposals related to the management of the Council's properties only and did not affect their ownership, which would remain with the Council.

Since 2010 the Council's Property Services had been delivered by the County Council. If participating in the JPV the authority would have a greater say over its property management services as it would have an equal shareholding in the JPV and be in a position to contribute towards change programmes. The JPV would formalise joint working, making it sustainable for the future, driving rationalisation, service transformation, regeneration, growth and efficiencies. The JPV tied in with the locality approach which was being developed in Redditch and which was already in place for some direct service delivery, and also supported a number of the Council's Strategic Purposes.

Officers and Mr Stobie responded to Member questions during the discussion. Mr Stobie advised that the JPV would have its own IT system which would provide for a single database of property assets and therefore allow for much greater interrogation of property than was currently possible. Communication for the JPV would be key and was a current priority, with the same messages needing to be delivered to all of the partners involved at the same time.

It was queried how the outcomes from the Board of the Company would be passed on to Members, for both information and scrutiny. The exact mechanism for this had yet to be determined, although these might be reported to the Executive Committee in the same way as the minutes of the Shared Services Board and Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee were, with the Executive Committee ultimately being able to determine how it wished for such reporting to take place. It was further noted that the Company would be a limited company and therefore subject to the full legal requirements applicable to limited companies. Officers stated that any decisions on assets owned by the Council would continue to be made by the Executive Committee and Full Council. Mr Stobie stated that the JPV would not in any way circumnavigate the Council's current governance arrangements, which would also continue to apply.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Council participates in establishing a Joint Property Vehicle company limited by shares;**
- 2) The Director of Finance and Resources, currently representing the Council on the Shadow Shareholder Group, represent the Council on the Board of the Company;**
- 3) two Member representatives and their substitutes be appointed to the Shareholder Meetings; and**
- 4) authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, to take the measures required to implement the decision at recommendation 1) and to complete any necessary documentation relating to it.**

62. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21st October 2014.

It was noted that there were two recommendations at Minute No's 40 and 41 and that the recommendations at Minute No. 40 (Fees and Charges – Pre-Scrutiny) had already been considered by the Executive Committee at its previous meeting on 28th October 2014.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21st October 2014 be received and noted; and**
- 2) **the recommendation from the 21st October Overview and Scrutiny Committee as follows be approved:**

the Executive Committee ask the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) to facilitate the launch of a Redditch Hour on social media.

63. SHARED SERVICES BOARD

The minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 6th November 2014 were received by the Committee.

It was noted that there was one recommendation contained in the minutes which related to the Business Case for Environmental Services. As the Business Case appeared as a separate item later in the agenda (Agenda Item 16 refers) it was agreed that the Shared Services Board recommendation would be considered at the same time as the Business Case.

Following Member consideration of the Business Case (Minute No. 68 refers) it was

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 6th November be received and noted;**
- 2) **it be noted that the Shared Services Board endorsed, in principle, the Business Case for Environmental Services moving forward; and**

- 3) the Executive Committee recommend to Full Council the approval of the Business Case for the transformation and shared service restructure of Environmental and associated services.

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

There were no outstanding referrals to consider.

65. **ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT**

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

66. **ACTION MONITORING**

Members were advised that no update on the information requested at the 8th September 2014 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.

67. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that

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 matter on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended:

Minute 68 – Environmental Services Transformation and Shared Services Restructure

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68. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES TRANSFORMATION AND SHARED SERVICES RESTRUCTURE

The Committee received a confidential report on the proposed transformation and shared services restructure of Environmental and associated services and the Business Case for this.

It was noted that the Shared Services Board had considered the Business Case at its meeting on 6th November 2014 (Minute No. 63 refers) and that it had recommended that this be endorsed, in principle, moving forward.

Officers provided Members with a detailed presentation on the Business Case and responded to Member questions.

RECOMMENDED that

Full Council approve the Business Case for the transformation and shared service restructure of Environmental and associated services.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.50 pm

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Chair