

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 16 January 2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Debbie Chance, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Mark Shurmer and Pat Witherspoon

Officers:

Derek Allen, Ruth Bamford, Michael Birkinshaw, Ray Cooke, Clare Flanagan, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering, Deb Poole, Guy Revans and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

71. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Baker.

(Councillor B Clayton arrived after the start of the meeting and apologised for being late).

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

73. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader explained that, due to the size of the agenda and the likely length of the meeting, he was tabling his announcements in writing.

74. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 31st October 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

**75. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT CONSULTATION
(GOOD DESIGN)**

The Head of Planning and Regeneration presented the draft high Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the committee's consideration. The report supplemented a number of policies within the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 (BORLP4). The SPD had been considered by the Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) and the points raised by Members during meetings of this body had informed the content of the document. Officers were seeking to undertake a period of public consultation, the outcomes from which would be reported for the consideration of the Executive Committee in due course. It was anticipated that this consultation would last for at least six weeks.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the SPD and questioned the extent to which parking provision in residential developments was addressed. Concerns were raised that in recent years parking provision available to developments had been considered inadequate by some residents and this had led to complaints being made to their local Councillors. The Committee was advised that under previous legislation and guidance Councils had been required to encourage developers to design houses in a way that would enable use of more sustainable methods of transport. National guidance had subsequently changed, with greater emphasis now being placed on the role of the developer in determining parking requirements alongside other considerations. However, parking was not a key focus of this particular SPD.

The existence of a local list of heritage buildings was also discussed. The Committee was advised that this did not form part of the SPD, though a local list had been approved at a previous meeting of the Committee and was available to view from the Council's website.

RESOLVED that

the public consultation for the draft High Quality Design SPD be approved.

76. WATER SAFETY POLICY

The Leisure Services Manager presented the Inland Water Safety Policy. The policy had already been considered by the Joint Corporate Health, Safety and Welfare Committee and all of the points raised by this body had been taken into account. The

National Water Safety Forum had also been consulted about the content of the policy.

The policy was one of the last two recommendations remaining to be addressed arising from an investigation that had been undertaken by ROSPA. Officers were aiming to bring forward a report in respect of the other outstanding recommendation, relating to re-engineering works at the weirs, the following year.

RECOMMENDED

the approval and adoption of the Inland Water Safety Policy.

77. VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANT PROGRAMME 2018/19 - FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Head of Community Services presented the funding recommendations from the Council's Grants Panel in respect of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grant Programme 2018/19. Members were advised that there had been some unallocated sums and the Grants Panel had brought forward proposals to ensure that this funding would still be invested in Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations.

Members noted that a number of applicants had been unsuccessful. Each year there were more applicants than there was funding available and the Grants Panel used particular criteria to ensure that funding was distributed appropriately.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the following grants for 2018/19 be awarded to the successful applicants as set out in the table below:**

Organisation	Project Name	Amount Requested
Help me to be financially independent £4k		
REACH CIC	Savvy Savers	£ 4,000
Help me to live my life independently £40k		
REACH CIC	Building Futures	£10,000
Redditch Wheels Project	Skatepark Future	£10,000
Redditch Boxing Club	Fight for peace 'Personal Development Programme'	£ 9,900
Your Ideas Youth & Community Project	Your Ideas Holiday Activities	£10,000
Help me to live my life independently £30k		

REACH CIC	Positive Change Training Course	£4032
Relate	Counselling Services	£6000
Redditch Mental Health Action Group	Wellbeing Coaching	£6000
Onside	Redditch Community Advocacy Project	£6000
Disability Resource Centre (DRC)	Fit for Life	£5,000
Provide me with good things to do see and visit £6k		
The Ditch	The Ditch Youth Project	£3,000
Redditch Federation of Anglers	Community Fishing Development	£3,000
Keep my place safe and looking good £15k		
P&E Sports CIC	Youth 4 Youth	£ 4,860
NewStarts	Redditch Reach	£5,000
Bromsgrove and Redditch Network	BROS: Home Soil	£4,999.60
Help me run a successful voluntary sector business £50k		
Carers Careline	Carers Telephone Support Service	£ 4,404.00
Where Next	Where Next	£10,000
Touchstones	Supporting Bereaved Children in Redditch	£10,000
Britten Street Hub CIC	Inclusion project	£9,960
Home Start North East Worcestershire	Supporting Families	£10,000

- 2) the unallocated sums of £100.00, £2,968.00 and £140.40, be included in the Stronger Communities Grants funding theme for 2018/2019; and
- 3) the unallocated sum of £5,636.00 relating to the Help Me Run a Successful Voluntary Sector Business Theme be retained and its availability be re-advertised in parallel with the Stronger Communities Grants applications in January 2018.

78. FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT GRANT (INCLUDING HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT NEW BURDENS FUNDING)

The Strategic Housing Manager presented a report in respect of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant. The report included information about additional funding that had been provided by the Government to help the Council address additional responsibilities in respect of homelessness set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Officers were proposing that £60,000 of this funding should be allocated to recruiting two new trainees in the Private Sector Housing team. Local organisations that delivered services

tackling homelessness in the community would be provided with an opportunity to bid for funding from some of the remaining budget.

Officers confirmed that £50,000 had already been spent on temporary accommodation. In previous years the Government had provided a Temporary Accommodation Advisory Grant for this purpose, but that funding had been combined with this grant in 2018/19. In the long-term local authorities would be required to concentrate on preventing homelessness and it was anticipated that the need for Councils to provide temporary accommodation would decline as a consequence.

RESOLVED

- 1) to NOTE that the 2018/19 grant funding implications will be included as part of the medium term financial plan report to Council in February 2018, subject to Council approval of the budget;**
- 2) that the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant is made available in line with the table initiatives in 3.9, and that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 New Burdens Funding be allocated as set out in section 3.13.**
- 3) that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing, to use any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grants for 2018/19 in support of existing or new schemes; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 4) the Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Grant Policy as set out in Appendix 1 be approved with delegated authority granted to the Strategic Housing Manager following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to award the grants.**

79. FEES AND CHARGES 2018/19

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the proposed fees and charges for 2018/19 and explained that in some cases Officers were proposing that the charges should be increased by 3.9 per cent in line with budget assumptions. However, there were some cases where Officers were suggesting no increase to the fees or an increase over 3.9 per cent.

Members were advised that a typographical error had occurred in the report as incorrect figures had been listed for hiring mechanically swept private road / car park mini-sweepers and mechanically swept private road / car park HGV sweepers. This should have been recorded as £30 and £50 respectively per hour rather than as £0.00 in both cases.

The proposed installation fee for lifeline services, due to increase by 38.89 per cent was discussed with concerns being raised about the potential impact on customers. Officers advised that this increase had occurred following benchmarking with other authorities and to ensure that the service achieved full cost recovery. Additional support could be offered to customers who might struggle to meet the costs.

The fees for Bereavement Services had also increased by up to 22.2 per cent and questions were raised about the causes of this. The Committee was advised that these increases had occurred following a rise in the fees charged by organisations that supplied services to the Council at the Crematorium. The fees would enable the Council to recover these costs as well as contribute to meeting administrative and maintenance costs at the site.

Fees had not been published in the papers for Building Control due to recognition of the commercially sensitive nature of these services which were provided in competition with external organisations. A request was made for a sample of these fees to be provided in exempt papers for future editions of this report to enable Members to assess how these charges were changing, though it was acknowledged that the fees for this service could vary according to changing levels of demand within the market.

In many cases there were no proposals for there to be an increase in the fees charged for Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS). Officers explained that there was a lot of case law in relation to licensing fees which specified that these fees needed to be self-financing. When calculating Licensing fees issues such as administration costs were taken into account. There were also a number of licensing fees that were set at a statutory level and which the Council could not amend.

Increases had also not been proposed to a number of fees for services provided by the Palace Theatre. Officers advised that a benchmarking exercise had been undertaken and this had discovered that many of the venue's fees were comparable to that of similar venues. To ensure that the theatre remained competitive Officers were advising that these fees should not increase.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **all fees and charges that are included in Appendix 1 which have a proposed increase for 2018/19 over the currently agreed budget assumption of 3.9% be approved;**

RESOLVED that

- 2) **the fees and charges as presented in Appendix 1 that have no increase for 2018/19 be approved; and**
- 3) **the fees and charges as presented in Appendix 1 that have reduced for 2018/19 be approved.**

80. PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT

The Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development presented a report outlining the approach Officers were keen to adopt to update Members on the Council's corporate performance. Officers were proposing to present this report to the Executive Committee every two months, each of which would focus on a different strategic purpose. The reports would also include information obtained from the Corporate Dashboard.

Following presentation of the report the Committee discussed Members' familiarity with the Dashboard. There was general recognition that Members of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group were well acquainted with the dashboard but other Councillors had had more limited exposure. Members suggested that it would be helpful for training to be provided to enable Members to review and utilise the data available on the dashboard more effectively.

The regularity with which the data on the dashboard was updated was also discussed by Members. Some Councillors had accessed the dashboard and had found that data did not always appear to be up to date. It was acknowledged that sometimes officers might only be able to obtain data on a quarterly or yearly basis but this was not always clear from the commentary provided for a measure on the dashboard. Officers noted that this would be raised with the lead officers for those measures to ensure that clarification could be provided.

RESOLVED that

the approach to performance reporting to Executive through use of the Measures Dashboard and a bi-monthly report, detailed in the draft template attached at Appendix 1, be approved.

81. ACQUISITION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Acquisition and Investment Strategy and in so doing highlighted that this supported the Council's commercialism strategy. Whilst the report was requesting authority to allowing borrowing of up to £20 million for the strategy there were no projects currently in development and all opportunities would be rigorously assessed to minimise risks to the Council. Officers confirmed that borrowing would only be undertaken should an investment meet the strict criteria as included in the strategy.

The focus of any investment would be on options within Redditch, or areas contiguous to the Borough in order to take advantage of any opportunities that occurred just over the border. The Place Partnership Ltd was working closely with the Council and would provide advice, where appropriate.

Confirmation was provided that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had pre-scrutinised the content of this strategy. The group had not proposed any amendments to the policy nor had they made any recommendations in respect of this matter.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Acquisition and Investment Strategy be approved;**
- 2) the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Head of the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit be responsible for identifying suitable opportunities and developing the viability appraisal and business case for the Council; and**
- 3) the Executive Committee have delegated powers to approve business cases and complete acquisitions.**

82. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018/19

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Council Tax Base 2018/19 report. Members were advised that the local authority was required to set a calculation in respect of the Council Tax Base for Band D properties and above. The information had to be shared with Feckenham Parish Council. The calculations also underpinned the figures in respect of Council Tax that would be charged in the year ahead, which would be reported to Council on 19th March 2018.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2018/19, be approved; and
- 2) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the figures calculated by the Redditch Borough Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2018/19 be 26,058.20 and for the parts of the area listed below be:

Parish of Feckenham	372.20
Rest of Redditch	<u>25,686.00</u>
	<u>26,058.20</u>

83. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the updated Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules and in so doing explained that this had provided an opportunity to refresh the Council's rules. As a result of the proposed changes the level at which staff needed to obtain written quotations in line with competition requirements had fallen from quotes over £5,000 to those between £3,001 and £25,000. Information had also been added to the Contract Procedure Rules setting out requirements in respect of services working with consultants. The report also clarified that in future virement between staffing budgets would not be permitted. A formal training process would be introduced to ensure that staff were familiar with the changes.

The frequency with which the Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules should be reviewed was briefly discussed. Officers advised that these would be reviewed every two to three years, though amendments might sometimes need to be made more frequently in response to legislative changes. Members noted that it would be useful for an internal audit of the new rules and regulations to be undertaken once they had been embedded to monitor the impact and compliance amongst officers.

Members noted that the report had suggested that the rules should apply from 29th January 2018. However, this was the date on which the Council meeting would take place to determine the policy and there was no guarantee that this would occur. It was therefore agreed that the recommendation from the Executive Committee should be amended to reflect this.

RECOMMENDED that

the updated contract and financial procedure rules be approved. The rules would then apply following Council approval.

84. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE - PRESENTATION

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources tabled a presentation which outlined the Council's current budgetary position (Appendix 1). Whilst delivering this presentation the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Further information would be available from the Government about the forthcoming Local Government Funding Reform in the spring.
- The service specific cost drivers referred to in paperwork relating to the Local Government Funding Reform were more relevant to Worcestershire County Council as the local provider of social services.
- The Business Rates Baseline Reset in 2020/21 would lead to any growth in business rates in previous years being absorbed into the baseline.
- Officers had built into the budget an assumption that the Council would increase Council Tax by 2.9 per cent following a change to the level of increase in Council Tax that would trigger a referendum to three per cent.
- Worcestershire County Council was consulting with the Government about the reasons why the Worcestershire Business Rates Pilot bid had been unsuccessful. This would help the authorities to amend their proposals for any future opportunities to bid.
- The Council had anticipated, based on performance in previous years, that it would meet the baseline target for growth of Band D properties in order to secure funding from the New Homes Bonus. Unfortunately failure to do so had implications for the Council's budget.
- CMT were in the process of reviewing the Council's budget for 2018/19 on a line-by-line basis. The Council had to achieve a balanced budget in the first year of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), though this was not necessarily required for the subsequent three years.
- The Council's proposed MTFP for 2018/19 to 2020/21 would be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee on 6th February. This would be subject to detailed scrutiny on the 13th February and a final decision would be taken by Council on 19th February.

Following delivery of the presentation the Chair explained that he had asked Officers to investigate the potential for the Council to work with other local authorities to lobby the Government over the

deadweight rules in respect of the New Homes Bonus. Unfortunately, whilst there had been significant development in the Borough the majority of these developments involved Band A – C properties.

RESOLVED that

the presentation be noted.

85. FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 2 2017/18

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Finance Monitoring Quarter 2 report which set out the Council's financial position in the period June to September 2017/18. The report highlighted a shortfall of £124,000 which Officers were working hard to address. In addition, the Council's auditors had suggested that the authority needed to revise the allocation of charges to the capital programme which had an impact on the corporate financing budget. Officers advised that there had been significant developments in respect of the budget since September 2017 as managers were addressing the impact of any shortfalls

As part of the Council's work to achieve savings senior officers were undertaking a line-by-line analysis of the budget during quarter three of the financial year. The outcomes of this work would be reported for Members' consideration in the quarter 3 report in March 2018.

The inclusion of vacant posts within the Council's budget was briefly discussed. Officers advised that there would always be some vacant posts due to the departure of staff over time. However, senior officers were working hard to ensure that these posts did not remain vacant for long.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Executive Committee note the current financial positions for the quarter April – September 2017 as detailed in the report; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) the virement of £104k from Customer Access and Financial Services Public Capital Building project to Environmental Services Capital Crematorium project. This is due to part of the public buildings contract now being included as part of the bigger crematorium project to minimise disruption.**

86. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing) for the Committee's consideration. Members were advised that the policy had been refreshed to update titles and reporting routes. The document also provided transparency about the process that should be followed by staff in the event that they had concerns about something happening at the local authority.

RECOMMENDED that

the Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing) be approved.

87. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee was advised that all of the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26th October 2017 had already been considered. There were no recommendations arising from the meeting of the Committee held on 7th December 2017.

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

Officers confirmed that there had been no recommendations arising from the latest meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which took place on 11th January 2018.

89. CORPORATE PARENTING STEERING GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE

In the absence of Councillor Baker no update was available to provide in respect of the Corporate Parenting Steering Group. Members requested that in future, for meetings that Councillor Baker was unable to attend, a brief update on the work of this group should be provided in writing for Members' consideration.

90. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

Members considered the content of the Advisory Panels update report and noted that the Planning Advisory Panel meeting that had been due to take place that evening had been cancelled.

Executive

Committee

Tuesday, 16 January 2018

and closed at 9.07 pm