

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 9th August, 2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Pattie Hill, Wanda King, Gemma Monaco and Mark Shurmer

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Dean Piper and Sarah Sellers

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley and Farzana Mughal

23. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Debbie Chance, Andrew Fry, Anthony Lovell and Jennifer Wheeler.

Members were advised that Councillor Salman Akbar was attending as substitute for Councillor Anthony Lovell, Councillor Wanda King was attending as substitute for Councillor Debbie Chance and Councillor Mark Shurmer was attending as substitute for Councillor Jennifer Wheeler.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillors Joe Baker and Mark Shurmer declared an other disclosable interest in respect of Minute no. 27, Redditch Town Centre Regeneration, as they were both part of the Executive Committee when it made a decision about the One Public Estate in March 2018. During the item being considered they took no part in the discussions and left the room.

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Chair

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25. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 5th July, 2018 were deferred for consideration at the next meeting to be held on 6th September, 2018.

26. FINAL REPORT OF THE SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS SHORT SHARP REVIEW TASK GROUP

The Committee was presented with the final report in relation to the Support for Care Leavers Short Sharp Review Task Group.

At the meeting of the Council on 29th January, 2018, it was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, working with officers, would undertake a review and bring forward proposals to the Council to introduce any changes to either exempt or reduce the amount of Council Tax paid by care leavers for the age group of 18 to 25.

The report set out the work that the group had undertaken to investigate support for care leavers in Redditch, and in particular, the options for making changes to Council Tax Support arrangements for care leavers. The report also highlighted the positive work carried out by the agencies in supporting care leavers.

Councillor Pattie Hill, Chair of the group, gave an overview of the work carried out by Members. She stressed that all Members had responsibility as corporate parents and a duty in respect of care leavers and young people.

Councillor Pattie Hill highlighted the challenges that young people experience after leaving care and the difficulties they faced at the start of their adult lives. It was important to ensure that care leavers continued receiving the appropriate support and access to services to help them at an early stage. The group was proposing three recommendations to support care leavers.

Members welcomed the proposals set out in recommendations 1 and 2 but raised concerns that some care leavers residing in Redditch would not be entitled to assistance under the interim arrangements proposed in recommendation 3. Officers clarified that the support proposed under recommendation 3 would only apply for 12 months. Members also stated that it was important that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognised the vulnerability of young people leaving care and ensured that they

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were getting the help and support needed to reduce any problems they might experience.

The Committee requested clarity in relation to how the proposed means testing for the 22 to 25 age group would operate. In addition, information was requested as to why the actions proposed in the third recommendation would not apply to care leavers from outside of Worcestershire in that interim period. The Chief Executive confirmed that information would be requested from the Revenue Services Manager.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Councillor Pattie Hill for the information provided and for her contribution.

RESOLVED that

- 1) in recognition of the financial pressures faced by care leavers, and the Council's role as a corporate parent, that the Council Tax Support Scheme be amended to include:-**
 - a) a new category for care leavers aged 18 to 21 under which care leavers liability for Council Tax will be reduced to nil; and**
 - b) a new category for care leavers aged 22 to 25 under which tapered relief from Council Tax will be provided based on the means of individual applicants; and**
- 2) subject to the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed changes, the measures referred to in Recommendation 1 are brought into force in April 2019 as part of the 2019/2020 Council Tax Support Scheme; and**
- 3) pending the review and adoption of the 2019/2020 Council Tax Support Scheme, interim measures are put in place by making changes to the Council Tax Support Hardship Policy under which net liability for young adults leaving the care of Worcestershire County Council in the age group 18 to 25 will be reduced to zero until the care leavers 25th birthday whilst they are living independently in the Borough and liable to pay Council Tax.**

27. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - REDDITCH TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

Members considered the report in relation to the Redditch Town Centre Regeneration. The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration for North Worcestershire provided an overview outlining the work proposed to be undertaken during the next twelve months.

On 6th March, 2018, the Executive Committee received a number of proposals contained within a Regeneration Prospectus relating to the Redditch Town Centre. The outcome of the One Public Estate review for Redditch Town Centre was reported to the Executive Committee. The key findings and recommendations of the strategic review were endorsed.

It was reported that, whilst the regeneration of Redditch Town Centre was central to the proposals, and the establishment of a Council-led Public Services Hub, the proposed site at Church Road was no longer considered an appropriate location due to the costs involved and weak office market, which undermined the rationale for a 'Business Quarter' to be developed around Church Road. The Council would work with the NHS and Homes England to identify other viable options for the Church Road site.

It was proposed that the Council should progress the detailed business case for the Public Services Hub and would commission external support to identify site options, partner requirements, funding and delivery options and benefits for the scheme. In addition, the Council was to ensure that the public was consulted prior to any decisions being made in respect of the location.

A number of ideas and concepts contained within the Regeneration Prospectus would continue to be supported by the Council.

Arising from Members' questions, the following points were considered:

- The Council would continue to work with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and West Mercia Police to develop a joint Blue Light Hub facility and ensure that the existing sites were re-developed to support the regeneration of the Town Centre.
- Middle House Lane would be a potential site for the Blue Light Hub. It was vital that the Police were located in the Town Centre and was part of the Hub.

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- An assessment would be undertaken to established suitable proposals in respect of the Police Station at Grove Street, in terms of market value.
- A number of proposals would be discussed with representatives of the Railway Station and the West Midlands Combined Authority in relation to the Railway Quarter to identify both residential and commercial development opportunities that would be exciting and dynamic.
- In respect of Edward Street and Britten Street, the Council would work with landowners to look at suitable developments. It was important that the Council had a clear delivery strategy to identify any funding opportunities.

Members were informed that the Council would continue to identify any potential funding opportunities to support the regeneration proposals and would be progressing an application for £5m of funding to the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP).

The Chief Executive stated that it was important that the Council had a long-term vision for Redditch Town Centre that provided an exciting opportunity to make improvements for the people in Redditch.

RESOLVED

that the Redditch Town Centre Regeneration Report be noted.

(During consideration of this item Councillors Joe Baker and Mark Shurmer declared other disclosable interests as they had been members of the Executive Committee when a decision had previously been taken in respect of the One Public Estate. As such they left the room during consideration of this item and took no part in the debate or voting thereon. In the absence of the Chair Councillor Pattie Hill chaired the meeting during consideration of this item).

28. ANTI SOCIAL-BEHAVIOUR SCRUTINY REVIEW - VERBAL UPDATE

At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th July, 2018 it was proposed that a Short Sharp Review should be undertaken to look at the issues around Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Redditch. The Chair informed Members that there were only two Members who

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had been appointed to the review and a minimum of three Members would be ideal.

Therefore, Members agreed not to continue with the review. The main concern amongst Members was that the focus of the proposed review was too broad.

It was noted that the last review of ASB was undertaken in 2006.

Subsequently, as Members felt that the topic was important, The Committee requested that a presentation be delivered in respect of ASB and the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership to address this at the next meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel that was scheduled to take place on 26th September, 2018. The main focus would be on providing an update on ASB levels over the last twelve months in Redditch, to include ASB figures.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Anti-Social Behaviour Short Sharp Review be dissolved;**
- 2) a presentation to be delivered in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour and the work of the partnership at the next meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny held on 26th September, 2018.**

29. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

Members considered the Executive Committee minutes held on 10th July, 2018 and the Committee's Work Programme. Members were advised that the Executive Committee had reached the same conclusions as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the REDI Centre and this was reflected in the minutes.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer informed Members in respect of Matchborough and Winyates District Centre Redevelopment Consultation that this was to be considered by the Executive Committee in October, 2018. The Committee was further informed that there was an additional item in respect the Council Housing Growth Programme – Proposed Development Sites was to be considered by the Executive Committee in October, 2018.

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The following items were agreed to be pre-scrutinised:

- Housing / HRA Overview and Recovery Plan;
- Redditch Business Improvement District;
- Service Delivery Options – HRA Gas Maintenance.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 10th July, 2018 be noted;**
- 2) **the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted; and**
- 3) **the following items to be pre-scrutinised as agreed:**
 - a) **Housing / HRA overview and Recovery Plan;**
 - b) **Redditch Business Improvement District; and**
 - c) **Service Delivery Options – HRA Gas Maintenance.**

30. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19. It was noted that the draft Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Wider Support Framework would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee due to be held on 6th September, 2018.

Members were further informed that the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and the relevant officer from Worcestershire County Council had been invited to the meeting in December, 2018 to provide an update in relation to Sexual Health Services in Redditch. An initial response had been received from the officers and it was anticipated that this item would be progressing.

Furthermore, Members welcomed news that senior representatives of Diamond Buses had been invited to the meeting in December, 2018 to provide an update in relation to the bus services in Redditch.

The Chair proposed that future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should start at 6:30 pm.

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RESOLVED that

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted; and
- 2) future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commence at 6:30 pm.

31. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS

The Senior Democratic Services Officer provided verbal updates in respect of the following Working Groups:

a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group

It was reported that two meetings of the Group had taken place. At the first meeting the Group considered a document produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) which outlined best practice in relation to budget scrutiny Best Practice, taking into account lessons learnt from the difficulties experienced by Northamptonshire County Council when trying to balance their budget in 2017/18. Members felt that the document was useful and adopted the approach to budget scrutiny that had been suggested by the report authors.

During the second meeting of the group Members had considered the contents of the existing Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and had compared this to the Financial Outturn report for 2017/18. Based on this assessment Members had agreed to invite the Head of Environmental Services to their next meeting to discuss the budgets for his service. This would be considered alongside an initial overview of the Council's fees and charges and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

It was noted that the next Working Group was scheduled to take place on 10th September, 2018.

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b) Performance Scrutiny Work Programme

Members were advised that the first meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group would be held in September, 2018.

32. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

The following updates were provided in respect of External Scrutiny Bodies:

a) West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Michael Chalk advised that he had attended the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting that was held on 16th July, 2018 at Sandwell Council House and the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 4th September, 2018.

b) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

Councillor Michael Rouse had provided a written update in relation to Worcestershire HOSC. Members were advised that he had attended this meeting before he had been appointed to the Executive Committee. Councillor Michal Chalk would attend future meetings of HOSC on behalf of the Council.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.30 pm