

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 18th October,
2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Debbie Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Michael Chalk, Andrew Fry, Julian Grubb, Pattie Hill, Anthony Lovell and Jennifer Wheeler

Also Present:

Dr. Frances Howie, Sue Harris (Worcestershire Health and Care Trust) and Councillor Greg Chance

Officers:

Matthew Bough, Kevin Dicks, Farzana Mughal and Sue Hanley

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and Farzana Mughal

46. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Joanne Beecham and Gemma Monaco. Members were advised that Councillor Salman Akbar was attending as substitute for Councillor Gemma Monaco and Councillor Julian Grubb was attending as substitute for Councillor Joanne Beecham.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

48. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2018

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th September, 2018 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th September, 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

49. HEREFORD AND WORCESTERSHIRE SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Director of Strategy and Partnerships for Worcestershire Health and Care Trust and Director of Public Health for Worcestershire County Council provided an update in respect of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire's Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) and provided an overview of the work of the STP work streams.

It was reported that the Herefordshire and Worcestershire's Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) was signed off in 2016. The STP Programme Board had agreed on its top priorities which needed to be addressed to meet the objectives of Health and Well-being; Care and Quality and Finance and Efficiency.

The following points were then highlighted:

- There was a complex set of arrangements for the delivery plan in place;
- There had been a lot of public engagement work undertaken.
- It was recognised that the main issues were, transport links, health, and the availability of beds in hospital.
- The approach to prevention, self-care and promoting independence.
- Developing out of hospital care.
- Establishing clinically and financially sustainable services.
- Social Prescribing Schemes were now developing in both Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Worcestershire was covering the majority of practices in the County through six pilot programmes.
- Lifestyle Behaviour Change Programmes – The Healthy Lifestyle Trainer Service remained in place in Herefordshire and was delivering support, focused on priority neighbourhoods. In Worcestershire the Living Well Service continued to deliver support.
- Frontline staff were provided with training to ensure that appropriate advice was given to patients.
- Progress was being made in respect of digital inclusion.
- Neighbourhood Teams were integrated multidisciplinary teams of physical and mental health care professionals for adults including the over 65s, requiring community services. They worked closely with GPs, primary care services, social care services and the third sector to provide joined-up responsive, expert care and treatment.

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Following the presentation Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- Maternity Services were using a system whereby all public health information and data was recorded, in terms of the number of cesareans, pre-births etc.
- There was support provided for patients with eating disorders.
- The Local Neighbourhood Team could be contacted for any information required.
- Members raised concerns that there had been issues of accessing services at the right time.

In response to Members asking about the challenges faced, it was stated that one of the biggest challenges was around resources and that there was a national shortage of specialists available throughout the workforce.

The Committee was informed that moving forward those working on the STP were keen to engage with ward Councillors in order to work with them on meeting the needs of local residents. However, there was some uncertainty about how those working on the STP could engage with Councillors. The Chief Executive stated that he attended the Alliance Board for health services on behalf of the Council and that at the next meeting of the Board he would seek advice in relation to how Members could be engaged in the process.

Members that the Committee should continue to receive an update on the Herefordshire and Worcestershire STP as it was important to them to understand the ongoing work that was being delivered.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) report be noted; and**
- 2) **a further update on the Herefordshire and Worcestershire's Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) be provided to the Committee at a later date as required.**

50. EMERGENCY PLANNING (CIVIL CONTINGENCIES) ANNUAL UPDATE

The North Worcestershire Civil Contingencies and Resilience Manager provided an update on emergency planning arrangements for the Council. This update was being provided in accordance with one of the recommendations that had been made by the Civil Contingencies short Sharp Review in 2017:

During the update Members were advised that two significant incidents had occurred in 2018 which required both an internal and multi-agency debrief process to be commissioned. The internal debrief reports for the following would be discussed at a Corporate Management Team (CMT) meeting in November. Areas identified for development were incorporated into an action plan for CMT management:

- Wythall Surface Water Flooding – May 2018
- Partial Building Collapse – July 2018

A review of the following arrangements was pending discussion and approval at the CMT meeting in November 2018:

- Corporate Emergency Plan
- Corporate Business Continuity Plan
- Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Council Rest Centre Operational Annex
- Bromsgrove and Redditch Flooding Response Framework
- Three debrief reports - suggested action plans.

There were currently 11 plans for North Worcestershire with an additional 34 plans locally. All plans were up to date or pending approval.

Training was being planned for Duty Incident Response Officers to undertake internally or within the multi-agency environment as appropriate to the role undertaken. This was expected to be signed off by the end of the year.

It was clarified that Cobra was another name for the civil contingencies committee which led responses to national crises.

The Committee was informed that the current post holder was scheduled to undertake maternity leave in December 2018. Cover arrangements had yet to be agreed.

The Chair concluded by thanking the North Worcestershire Civil Contingencies and Resilience Manager for attending the meeting and providing the report.

51. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - COUNCIL HOUSING GROWTH PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report in relation to the Council Housing Growth Programme. The Housing Strategy and Enabling Team Leader provided information on the proposed development sites.

It was reported that on 30th January, 2017, the Council agreed the Council Housing Growth Programme and funding of £12.5 million was allocated to this project. A number of options to increase the Council's housing stock were agreed including commissioning the construction of new Council houses.

Following a desk top exercise, the Council identified a number of sites that could be added to Phase 2 of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) New Build Programme.

The sites identified were considered to be HRA assets with the exception of Hawthorn Road Community Centre (the former Redditch Play Council site) which was a General Fund asset and the proposal was to transfer this to the HRA.

Officers had assessed the possible numbers and type of properties that could be delivered on the suggested sites. It was anticipated that the ten sites that had been identified could provide a total of 67 new council homes, subject to planning. Having considered the housing needs of the Borough, it had been found that there was a high demand for two bedroom bungalows.

The cost of development for the number of properties on each of the sites was estimated to be £8.173 million.

The Housing Strategy Manager was undertaking a process to appoint a development agent to assist in delivery and provide support to Council officers. Subject to approval, it was proposed that the sites would undergo detailed discussions, in terms of, design and layout, and be submitted for planning permission to achieve a rapid start on site. The project would progress through a number of processes toward delivery, including, consultation with stakeholders and planning approval.

The Council was proposing that properties delivered through the Council Housing Growth Programme be let at affordable rent,

where permitted. As part of the Council Housing Growth Programme £3.285 million had been spent on purchasing from the open market, 'off plan' and through s.106 agreements. The remaining budget was £9.215 million.

Members supported the Housing Growth Programme and expressed the view that this was beneficial for the housing needs of the Borough. Members therefore agreed that it would be appropriate for the Hawthorn Road site to be moved from the General Fund into the HRA, in order that it could be developed for new Council housing.

In response to Members questions, the Housing Strategy and Enabling Team Leader explained that off-site housing would be considered if the Council concluded this was a more efficient way to reduce construction times and could lead to cost savings. It was further stated that a practical decision would be agreed after all elements had been considered in relation to what was best to meet the housing needs of local residents in Redditch.

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Team Leader confirmed, in terms of affordable rent, that this was set in accordance with government guidance, which stipulated that this could be up to a maximum of 80% of private market rents. The Council could determine its own level of affordable rent under that 80% threshold.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the sites in Appendix 1 be included in Phase 1 of the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) new build programme and proposals to progress the development of HRA new build council housing on them be approved;**
- 2) properties delivered through the Council Housing Growth Programme be let at Affordable Rent, where permitted; and**
- 3) the appropriation of the Hawthorn Road site from the General Fund into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in order that it can be developed for new council housing.**

52. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN

The Chief Executive presented the Corporate Peer Challenge and advised the Committee that other local authorities had also participated in similar exercises.

Since 2012 the Local Government Association (LGA) had provided, as part of its support to the sector, the facilitation of Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) reviews whereby senior Members and Officers from other local authorities, supported by LGA staff, visited the Councils with the objective to inform their improvement plans and how to develop corporate learning. It was designed to be forward looking, and to facilitate reflection on issues and how they might be resolved. While it could be used as an external 'health check' on the authority's corporate governance, the peer challenge was not a form of inspection.

The report outlined the outcomes and next steps resulting from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPS) which took place in January and February, 2018.

The Peer Team considered the following five questions which formed the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These were the areas that were believed to be critical to the Councils' performance and improvement:

- Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Did the Council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
- Financial planning and viability: Did the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and was there evidence that it was being implemented successfully?
- Capacity to deliver: Was organisational capacity aligned with the Council's priorities and did the Council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
- Political and managerial leadership: Did the Council provide effective political and managerial leadership through its elected Members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
- Governance and decision-making: Was political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that responded to key challenges and enabled change to be implemented?

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The Peer Team were based at both the Redditch and Bromsgrove offices during the four day review. There was an initial 'scene setting' and 'checking the brief' discussion with the Chief Executive and Leader. These were done separately for each Council.

Meetings and discussion sessions then took place with a range of officers, Members and other stakeholders enabling the peer team to explore the issues relevant to the purpose, scope and suggested terms of reference for the peer review.

At the end of the initial on-site activity there was a feedback session and members of the Executive Committee (Redditch), Cabinet (Bromsgrove) and Corporate Management Team were invited to attend and presented with the findings of the initial three day review. A further day in February was then held for the team to review their initial findings based upon further discussions and investigations. Again the Executive Committee, Cabinet and Corporate Management Team were invited to attend. This was followed by a written feedback report summarising the peer team's feedback with their recommendations for improvement.

Following consideration by the Senior Management Team and Leaders of both Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils, an action plan had been produced. Due to the change of political control in Redditch this report had been delayed in order to allow the new Leader and Executive in Redditch to discuss this with their counterparts in Bromsgrove.

In terms of the establishment of a single workforce, the Corporate Management Team had concluded that there was not sufficient benefit in terms of moving to a single organisation at this point in time for the following reasons:

- Work was ongoing around the harmonisation of policies and procedures which would address some of the issues that gave rise to this recommendation. This would include reviewing the Scheme of Officer Delegations, particularly around the HR delegations.
- Work was ongoing around the harmonisation of the Job Evaluation Schemes and the potential costs associated with this – dependent on this, consideration would be given to the positives and negatives of moving to a single employer.
- Work continued to be undertaken to change the culture of the workforce across both authorities.

Although these arrangements were not appropriate at this time, it's not to say that this would not be considered again in the future.

It was clarified that the lead people identified in the Action Plan which stated "Leaders" this was referred to Leaders of the Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils rather than to political party group leaders. It was agreed that the action plan should be amended to reflect this accordingly.

The Chair sought clarification in relation to actions 9, 10 and 11 and questioned why Redditch Borough Council needed to undertake a review in respect of the Constitution, as he felt that the current constitution and procedures worked well in Redditch. The Chief Executive informed the Committee that at the last Council meeting Members had endorsed changes to the constitution. Those undertaking the Corporate Peer challenge had concluded that in Redditch too many decisions were taken by Council, and many could be taken by the Executive committee. Changes had to be made to the constitution to reflect this.

As the Chair felt that actions 10 and 11 were related more to Bromsgrove, he requested that these actions be specified as applying to Bromsgrove District Council only.

The Chief Executive clarified that he had frequent meetings with the leaders and would discuss and monitor progress in relation to the Corporate Peer Challenge at these meetings. Members were advised that progress would also be monitored in the performance reports.

RECOMMENDED that

Actions 10 and 11 in the Action Plan arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge should be amended to refer to Bromsgrove District Council only.

53. HOUSING ATTITUDE SURVEY - MEMBER DISCUSSION

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) informed the Committee that following the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Event on 25th June 2018, Members had proposed to undertake a 'Housing Attitudes Survey' primarily looking at what residents in Redditch really thought about a range of housing issues, their expectations and experiences.

Following discussions, Members expressed the view that it was important that the Council understood the challenges facing

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housing services. Members noted however, that as part of the work on the review of Housing and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which had been considered at the previous meeting of the Committee, some consultation work was already taking place with tenants and further surveys would duplicate this work.

Members therefore agreed that the Committee should not proceed with the 'Housing Attitude Survey'. However, as the Tenancy Conditions for Council Housing Tenants and Tenants Handbook was included on the Executive Work Programme in March, 2019, Members agreed to pre-scrutinise this item as it related to the experience of residents.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should not launch a 'Housing Attitude Survey'.

54. PARKING OUTSIDE SCHOOLS - PROPOSED SHORT SHARP REVIEW

Members gave consideration to a proposal to undertake a Short, Sharp Review in respect of the issues around parking outside schools. This issue had been identified as a problem during the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning event in June 2018, and the Committee noted that this was raised following some Members receiving complaints from residents about the issue.

For any review of parking the Council would need to consult with the public and partner agencies, including, schools, Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police and other relevant agencies. The Chair was proposing that the review should be completed in three to four months.

Members discussed the proposal and recognised that there was a major issue in Redditch with people parking inappropriately outside schools and causing problems for residents and other road users. However, Members concluded that a review would be beneficial, though acknowledged that something had to be done.

The Chief Executive informed Members, that the Head of Environmental Services and Inspector Mark Chappell were working together to discuss the issues around inappropriate parking and if Members were keen, it could be arranged for Redditch Councillors to meet with them to discuss the issues raised in their wards.

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RESOLVED that

that a meeting to be arranged with Members to meet with the Head of Environmental Services and Inspector Mark Chappell to discuss the issues in relation to parking around school.

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

Members considered the Executive Committee minutes from a meeting held on 11th September, 2018 and the Executive Committee's Work Programme.

It was noted that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group would be pre-scrutinising many of the items with specific financial implications, including the Fees and charges 2019/20 report. In addition it was agreed that the group should pre-scrutinise the Redditch Business Improvement District item.

The following items were identified as suitable for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Private Sector Home Repair Assistance Policy Update. Members agreed that this should form the basis of an overview to be presented to the Committee in the new year, rather than an item for pre-scrutiny.
- Tenancy Conditions for Council Housing Tenants and Tenants Handbook, to be pre-scrutinised at a meeting in March 2019.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 11th September, 2018 be noted;**
- 2) the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted; and**
- 3) the following items be included on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme as agreed:**
 - a) Private Sector Home Repair Assistance policy Update; and**
 - b) Tenancy Conditions for Council Housing Tenants and Tenants Handbook.**

56. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) presented the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19. It was noted that the Pre-Scrutiny Redditch Improvement District (BID) would be considered by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group.

Members noted that the agenda for the next meeting of the Committee in December, 2018, was comprehensive. However, it was appreciated that all items would be given due attention.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.

57. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - VERBAL UPDATES

Councillor Wheeler 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 since the last meeting of the Committee. Members were informed that the Head of Environmental Services was invited to the latest meeting to discuss the budgets for Environmental Services. Members had also discussed the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). It was agreed that an update in respect of Housing Services and work on the Housing Action Plan should be provided every quarter.

Members were also provided with a presentation in respect of the Council's budget framework, including the fees and charges. It was stated that there were £777,000 of unidentified savings in the budget that needed to be found.

Members noted that the next Budget Scrutiny Working Group meeting was scheduled to take place on 19th October, 2018 and the Town Centre Co-ordinator had been invited to discuss the work of the town centre partnership, in particular, the proposals in respect of the Redditch Business Improvement District.

b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group

It was reported that the group had held its first meeting on 8th October 2018 and each Member of the group had identified which of the six strategic purposes they wished to focus on which had been matched to their expertise. It was agreed that all Members of the group would focus on 'Provide good things for me to do, see and visit', which was considered appropriate given all the changes that were due to be made to the way in which Leisure and Cultural Services were delivered.

It had been agreed that training should be provided on the Measures Dashboard to ensure that Members understood the data provided and how to navigate the system. The training was expected to be delivered at the next meeting of the group on 10th December, 2018. Due to the relevance of the dashboard to all Members the Chair of the group proposed that all Members would be welcome to attend the training.

58. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Chalk provided a written update in respect of the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He advised that the questions and answers by the Mayor were available for consideration if required.

Members were also provided with a written update in respect of Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

59. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Pattie Hill, presented the minutes from the latest meeting of the Panel.

RESOLVED that

the notes of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel held on 26th September, 2018 be noted.