

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 December
2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor David Bush (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Bill Hartnett, Gareth Prosser, Mike Rouse and Craig Warhurst

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Helen Broughton, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering and Judith Willis

Committee Services Officer:

Amanda Scarce

56. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

58. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair circulated a written update on the Leader's Announcements.

59. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 23rd October 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

60. REDDITCH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

The Head of Planning Services and Regeneration presented the report in respect of the Redditch Business Improvement District (BID) and reminded Members that this matter had been discussed a number of times over many months. In presenting the report she highlighted a number of key issues, including:

- A cost to the Council in respect of properties that it owned within the proposed BID boundary. The estimated annual cost was £10,450 during the lifetime of the BID.
- Statutory responsibilities of the local authority and the indicative costs.

Officers requested an additional recommendation to say that £10k be included in unavoidable pressures within the Medium Term Financial Plan, which Members were in agreement with.

Following presentation of the report a number of questions and comments were made by Members, including the length of time it had taken to get to the current position. It was confirmed the cost of the ballot software, estimated at £2,720 would be refunded to the Council if the BID went through. Members also briefly discussed the role of CMS and the feasibility study they had produced.

The Chair referred Members to a recommendation which had been put forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Budget Scrutiny Group and explained to Members that this Group had not seen the final report and therefore the recommendation put forward was similar to that within the report before them. He suggested that the wording within the report be used, but acknowledged the work of the Group and thanked them for their input.

RESOLVED that

- a) the relevant information relating to the proposed Redditch Business Improvement District (as detailed in appendix 1 and 2) be noted;**
- b) the position in respect of the vote in favour of the BID in respect of Council properties in the Town Centre be agreed;**
- c) authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the relevant Portfolio Holder to exercise the Council's vote in support of the proposed BID in the ballot in respect of properties in the Council's ownership/occupation within the BID area, which will be entitled to cast a vote on the ballot; and**
- d) £10k be included within the Medium Term Financial Plan as an unavoidable pressure.**

61. REVIEW OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS POLICY

The Redditch Partnership Manager presented the report and in so doing explained that this was the draft Policy and Councillor Guidance Notes for the recently approved Councillor Community Grant Scheme. In presenting the report a number of areas were highlighted, including:

- Key elements of the old scheme had been incorporated within the new scheme, including areas such as the type of project that could be funded and the need to meet the Council's strategic purposes as one of the guiding principles.
- There would be £5k allocated to each Councillor with the option to "club together" up to £20k.
- Details around the types of groups that should be considered and who can apply.
- What would and would not be funded by a grant.
- Risk considerations in grant giving and evidence which would need to be provided to the Ward Councillor and the Grants Team.
- Conditions around the grants given – small grants would be funded up front, but larger one would be split and paid by instalments and monitored by the Grants Team.
- The process and administration of the scheme, which would be carried out by the Grants Team. The Councillor would need to complete the appropriate paperwork with the Grants Team checking to ensure that it was appropriate and then making the necessary payments.
- Records will be kept by the Grants Team and regular updates provided for both Councillors and displayed on the Council's Grants pages of the website.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism thanked Officers for their work on the Scheme and advised that it would continue to provide the voluntary sector with financial support for the good work that was being carried out in Redditch. Members were remind that the introduction of the scheme had been agreed at full Council and this report was the next step in setting up the scheme and providing Members with guidance going forward. The scheme would be implemented from the new municipal year.

During consideration of this item an amendment was proposed by Councillor Bill Hartnett, which involved the inclusion of additional funding. This was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

The proposed additional recommendation stated the following:

“That the £20k which was proposed to be withdrawn from the grants pool for 2019/20 be reinstated to bring it back to a total of £165k.”

Councillor Hartnett explained that the inclusion of a further £20k would take the funding available to the voluntary sector back up to its current level. He also raised concerns that the new scheme was more cumbersome and would be more difficult and complicated to administer, which would lead to increased costs.

Some Members also raised concerns that the “pot” of funding available to the voluntary sector would be reduced and that previously it had been discussed that the introductory of the local lottery would also impact on funding available to them. It was noted that this Council still had the largest grants budget within Worcestershire, which was commendable, particularly in light of the current financial challenges that it faced.

On being put to the vote the proposed amendment was lost.

Further discussion took place and some Members commented that they continued to be disappointed as the scheme did not appear to address some of the concerns which had been raised when this scheme had first been suggested. It was confirmed by Officers that the Scheme was to be a trial for one year and an evaluation would be brought back to Executive Committee next year.

The Chair drew Members’ attention to the additional papers pack which contained a recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He requested that this be noted by the Executive Committee. However, Councillor Hartnett proposed the recommendation and it was seconded by Councillor Chance.

The proposed additional recommendation stated the following:

“The Council should retain the £20k due to be cut from the grant budget, to invest in town wide issues and issues of importance to Redditch.”

On being put to the vote the proposed amendment was lost.

Following a further brief discussion it was

RESOLVED that

- (a) the Policy and Guidance Notes for the Councillor Grants Scheme as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report be approved; and**
- (b) the Councillor Grants Scheme be implemented from the 2019/20 municipal year.**

62. REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE BROMSGROVE PLAN REVIEW - ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION

The Head of Planning Services and Regeneration introduced this report and reminded Members that it had been discussed at the most recent meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel. It was explained that Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) had chosen to begin the process of reviewing its local plan and part of that process involved a consultation in respect of Issues and Options. This report contained the Officers' formal response and was an opportunity for Members to agree it or make any changes.

It was highlighted that it referred to two matters in particular, that BDC give the Council the opportunity to discuss nearby facilities and services should any sites be proposed which are adjacent to Redditch Town and the other was in respect of two existing cross-boundary housing sites at Brockhill and Foxlydiate. The Head of Planning Services and Regeneration explained to Members that it was important to consider the housing need going forward and beyond the timescale of the current Local Plan. This land should therefore be reserved for the use of this Council going forward.

Members briefly discussed BDC's decision to review its local plan and that this should not impact on the arrangements for this Council.

RESOLVED that

the RBC response to the BDC issues and Options consultation be noted.

RECOMMENDED that

the draft officer response to the Bromsgrove District Plan Review Issues and Options (as attached at appendix A) be approved by Council and submitted to Bromsgrove District Council as a formal consultation response.

63. FINANCE MONITORING APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2018 (QUARTER 2)

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources introduced this report and in so doing drew Members' attention to a number of points within the report, including:

- Projected variance of £215k and the supporting explanatory notes in respect of these.
- The saving made under the strategic purpose Help me find somewhere to live in my locality which was predominantly due to salary savings as a consequence of posts not being filled. It was anticipated that this would be addressed in the full housing review.
- There was currently no short term borrowing other than that for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- Capital underspends which largely related to the Locality Capital budget. This was due to the majority of schemes being dependant on approval from Worcestershire County Council.
- Redditch Energy Efficiency Fund – it was likely that there would be a request to carry this forward.
- The major variances in respect of the HRA account and further work which needed to be carried out.
- HRA Capital programme and the properties being built in the next 5-10 years.
- Financial Reserves Statement – the bulk of this related to the HRA Reserves and included growth and repairs. Heads of Services had been asked to go through this line by line to see if there were any items which could be released.
- Identified savings were currently all on target to be delivered.

Members appreciated that it was difficult for any local authority financial officer to make savings during these difficult times and thanked the Executive Director, Finance and Resources and her team for all their hard work.

RESOLVED that

the current financial position for quarter 2 July – September 2018 as detailed in the report.

RECOMMENDED that

An increase in the 2018-19 Capital programme of £16k for Section 106 monies for use in improving the Batchley Play area be approved.

64. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2019/20 TO 2022/23 - PRESENTATION

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources gave a short presentation which covered the current financial position in respect of the assumptions that had been made and the current position. It was confirmed that there would be a full report presented to the Executive Committee meeting in January.

The presentation included the following:

- Costs in respect of pay scales and adjustments to take account of the increase in the living wage.
- Treasury and capital borrowing costs.
- Unidentified savings – these would be stripped out and put back in as pressures.
- There would not now be a negative impact from the Revenue Support Grant.
- A shortfall in the Non Domestic Rates and also in Council Tax – this was due to there not being the developments that had been expected.
- Details around the Section 31 grant.
- A budget gap of £496k and the work which was being carried out to address this, including the possible inclusion of vacancy management savings.
- The impact of changes to the New Homes Bonus Scheme (NHB). 2019/20 would be last year for new payments.

RESOLVED that

the presentation be noted.

65. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair noted that there were no outstanding recommendations for Members' consideration as these had been addressed during the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED that

The minutes form the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18th October 2018 be noted.

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

The Chair confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had made a recommendation in respect of the Review of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy at their latest meeting on 6th December 2018 and this had been considered by the Executive Committee during the debate in this evening.

67. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORTS

- a) Constitutional Review Working Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer confirmed that the next meeting of this Group was due to take place on 12th February 2019.

b) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Gareth Prosser

Councillor Prosser read out an extract of a letter from OFSTED, addressed to Catherine Driscoll, Director of Children and Families, Worcestershire County Council. The full details of the letter were available on the OFSTED website, but Councillor Prosser took the opportunity to remind Members that this had been sent following the sixth visit by OFSTED on 2nd October 2018, which followed the service being classed as inadequate in November 2016. He believed that progress continued to be made.

Councillor Prosser invited Councillor Tom Baker-Price to provide Members with an update in respect of the Corporate Parenting event he had hosted in October and he confirmed that this had been both successful and well attended and he hoped to be able to build on this in the future.

c) Grants Panel – Chair, Councillor Greg Chance

Councillor Chance took the opportunity to thank all those who had been involved in the Grants Panel and thanked officers for their support.

d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer confirmed that the next meeting was due to take place on 21st January 2019.

e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer confirmed that as Members would already be aware a meeting of PAP had taken place in November when the Bromsgrove District Council Issues and Options consultation had been considered, as previously discussed at this meeting.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.52 pm