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Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

25th November 2009

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), Councillor David Smith (Vice-Chair) and Councillors K Banks, G Chance, R King, W Norton, J Pearce and D Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors M Braley, J Cookson, D Enderby, A Fry and G Hopkins.

Officers:

A Heighway, T Kristunas, S Skinner, and J Staniland.

Committee Officers:

J Bayley and D Sunman

114. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Thomas. There were no named substitutes.

115. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or of any party whip.

116. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

117. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered the latest version of the Actions List. Specific mention was made of the following matters:

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Chair

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a) Arrow Valley Countryside Centre – Consultant’s Report

Officers reported that this report had been programmed for pre-scrutiny at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13th January 2010.

b) Pre-scrutiny of Budget Bids and Fees and Charges

Officers reported that the report had not been available for pre-scrutiny as it was a draft report and could have been changed following the Portfolio Holder briefing.

RESOLVED that

the Actions List be noted.

118. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the latest version of the Forward Plan. Officers reported on amendments made since the last Forward Plan had been published.

Members were informed that the Executive Committee had not approved the Garden Waste Strategy but had agreed that the redecoration of the Mayor’s Parlour should be prioritised in the programme for 2010 / 11.

There were no call-ins.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

119. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Committee received a draft scoping document from the Complaints Appeal Panel to review Property Services – Policy and Process of Land Disposals.

Members were informed that the service formed part of the WETT (Worcestershire Enhanced Two Tier) proposals.

Members felt that although this subject was a good item for review, it should be deferred until the WETT review had been completed.

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RESOLVED that

- 1) **subject to the outcome of the Council's consideration of the WETT business case for Property Services further consideration of the draft proposal be deferred; and**
- 2) **the report be noted.**

120. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee received reports in relation to current reviews:

- a) Dial-A-Ride – Chair, Councillor R King

Councillor King informed the Committee that a meeting of the Task and Finish Group would be arranged following consideration of a report by Officers on the subject of the Dial-A-Ride service by the Executive Committee scheduled for 9th December 2009.

- b) Neighbourhood Groups – Chair, Councillor K Banks

Members were informed that the Group's final report had been included on the Agenda for this meeting.

- c) Local Strategic Partnership – Chair, Councillor W Norton

Councillor Norton reported that a presentation on the Local Strategic Partnership had been included on the Agenda for this meeting.

RESOLVED that

the progress reports be noted.

121. NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP TASK AND FINISH GROUP - DRAFT REPORT

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Groups Task and Finish Group introduced the final draft report of the Task and Finish Group.

The Committee was informed that the main objective of the review was to determine whether the Neighbourhood Groups were

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operating in accordance with their purpose and to consider alternative methods of consultation.

Members were informed that the purpose of Neighbourhood Groups when they were set up was to inform, engage and consult with residents about Council business, policy development and decision making.

Following consultation with Councillors, Officers, Police and residents the Task and Finish Group concluded that Neighbourhood Groups were no longer fit for purpose.

Information regarding the Task and Finish Group's initial findings had been circulated to all residents on the contact list for the Neighbourhood Groups. Members of the Task and Finish Group also attended all Neighbourhood Group meetings in October 2009 to receive feedback on their initial findings.

Evidence provided to the Group had indicated that there was a lot of duplication over the types of issues considered at Neighbourhood Group meetings and at Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings. Many residents considered that PACT meetings were more effective at addressing and resolving issues.

As a result of consultation with West Mercia Police it was suggested that PACT meetings might be re-launched as the primary local meeting for engaging with residents and could include other partners, when necessary.

Members of the Committee felt that generally PACT meetings were worked better than Neighbourhood Groups. They recognised that Neighbourhood Groups had outlived their usefulness and were very expensive to run. They also felt it important that alternative methods of engaging with a wider cross section of the community be implemented.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Neighbourhood Groups are not now fit for purpose and should be discontinued;**
- 2) the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) group meetings should be re-launched and delivered as an equal partnership arrangement;**

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- a) **Redditch Borough Council should work with the Police and other local agencies participating in Partners and Communities Together (PACT) to agree funding and administration for PACT meetings;**
 - b) **a protocol should be jointly developed outlining the roles and responsibilities of all agencies in the re-launched PACT Groups;**
 - c) **the Chairs of all PACT meetings should be independent members of the community;**
 - d) **promotion of the re-launched PACT meetings should be appropriately targeted towards clarifying the meaning of the new arrangements for residents living in areas where PACT and Neighbourhood Group meetings currently only take place on the same night;**
 - e) **there should be small, local budgets for each of the re-launched PACT groups which could be spent at the discretion of the group;**
- 3) **the Neighbourhood Groups also be replaced with a further variety of methods that will enable Redditch Borough Council to inform and consult more effectively with local residents;**

these alternative methods should include the following;

- a) **the Council should publish quarterly editions of Redditch Matters during the year to inform residents about local public services, activities and Council business;**
- b) **Redditch Borough Council should continue to host road shows throughout the Borough;**
- c) **Redditch Borough Council should embrace the Worcestershire Viewpoint Citizens Panel and use every opportunity to work with the Panel to consult with residents over local issues;**
- d) **the Council should promote web based systems, such as the Worcestershire Hub and FixMyStreet,**

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- that can be utilised to resolve residents' individual issues;
- e) social networking should be used by the Council to inform and consult residents in appropriate circumstances;
 - f) the use of Councillor Calls for Action be promoted in order to be used to resolve local neighbourhood issues;
 - g) more effort should be made by the Council to advertise the fact that residents should resolve individual issues through direct contact with Councillors, Officers and the One-Stop-Shops;
 - h) the Council should work in equal partnership with the Police and other local agencies to advertise Street Briefings and Environment Visual Audits to local residents;
- 4) Redditch Borough Council should continue to seek ways to better engage and consult with a more diverse range of residents;
 - 5) the Council should have a robust monitoring system in place to assess the effectiveness of each of the mechanisms used to inform, engage and consult with local residents;
 - 6) the Community Forum and similar groups which engage and consult with local residents should report to the Executive Committee; and
 - 7) the Council should have a central electronic database which would be used for the purposes of consultation with key partners in the Borough.

122. QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING

Members considered a report, which provided an overview of the Council's budget, including the achievement of approved savings as at the end of the second quarter of the 2009/10 financial year.

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The Committee discussed Cost Centres 0005 (Hewell Road Pool); 0021 (Arrow Vale Sports Centre); and 0025 (Kingsley Sports Centre). There had been a reduction in income for each of these locations and the number of staff in those centres had fallen. Members requested further information regarding the reasons for this reduction in income.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Officers be asked to provide further information about the reduction in income for Cost Centres 0005, 0021 and 0025; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

123. FORMER COVERED MARKET

The Chair reported that this item had been withdrawn and would be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 16th December 2009.

RESOLVED that

the deferral be noted.

124. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Committee received a report which provided a view on aspects of the Council's overall performance for the second quarter of the 2009/10 financial year. This report showed those performance indicators that, when compared to the same quarter in 2008/09 financial year, were: exceeding their target; were not on target; or where performance remained static.

RESOLVED that

the update on key performance indicators for the period April to September 2009 be noted.

125. SINGLE EQUALITIES SCHEME 2009 - 2012

The Committee was informed of the Council's statutory duty to publish and adopt Race Equality, Disability Equality and Gender Equality schemes.

Officers reported that the Single Equality Scheme, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, outlined the context in which the Council operated and its baseline position in relation to equality and equalities.

Members were informed that the initial deadline of 22nd December 2009 set by the Commission for Equality and Human Rights had been extended to 28th February 2010. The Executive Committee would therefore consider the Single Equalities Scheme on 27th January 2010. This extension would allow more time for consultation and to include amendments.

Members suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be fully involved in the process. In particular, Members agreed that this could involve scrutiny of particular equalities strands in turn. The Committee agreed that gender equalities was especially suitable for scrutiny and should be the first topic for review following approval of the Single Equalities Scheme.

RECOMMENDED that

the Single Equalities Scheme be approved; and

RESOLVED that

- 1) following approval of the single Equalities Scheme the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be further involved in the process through reviews of particular equalities strands; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

126. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP)

The Committee received a Power Point presentation on the role and work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

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Officers reported that the LSP:

- a) brought together the different parts of the public sector as well as private, business, community and voluntary sectors to tackle local problems;
- b) was a non-statutory, non-executive organisation;
- c) had no particular resources but relied instead on pooling of resources between Partnership member organisations; and
- d) facilitated strategic decision making enabling action to be taken at community level.

Members were informed that the Redditch Partnership, administered and supported by Redditch Borough Council staff, formed the Local Strategic Partnership for Redditch and was made up of the Partnership Management Board, Themed Groups and Task and Finish Groups.

Officers explained that the roles of the Redditch Partnership included:

- a) preparation and implementation of the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy. (SCS).
- b) assisting in coordinating delivery of the Local Area Agreement, both at County and District levels;
- c) taking responsibility and leading on performance of services in the locality, which was important for the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process; and
- d) bringing together local plans and partner initiatives.

Membership of the Partnership Management Board included:

- a) Redditch Borough Council;
- b) Worcestershire County Council;
- c) West Mercia Police;
- d) Worcestershire NHS;
- e) Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue;

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- f) Redditch NEW College;
- g) Chamber of Commerce;
- h) Redditch Community Safety Partnership;
- i) Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN); and
- j) a representative from the Redditch Community Forum.

RESOLVED that
the report noted.

127. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

128. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its current Work Programme.

During consideration of this item Officers reported that an invitation had been received from Bromsgrove District Council for Redditch Members to be involved in a scrutiny training event on 10th December 2009 at the Council House at Bromsgrove.

RESOLVED that
the invitation and the current Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.10 pm