

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 5 February 2019

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

Also Present:

Ali Brill (Worcestershire County Council)

Officers:

Matthew Austin, Ann Dallison, Clare Flanagan, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering, Guy Revans and Judith Willis

Committee Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

82. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

84. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

85. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 8th January 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

86. REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY LOTTERY

The Voluntary Community Sector Grants Co-ordinator presented a report in respect of Redditch Borough Council's Community Lottery. The programme had been agreed in September 2018 but before the lottery was launched the Council had to approve a number of policies in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Gambling Commission. The policies had been circulated for the consideration of relevant staff in advance of the Committee meeting to ensure that they did not conflict with other Council policies. Delegated powers had also been requested to enable officers to update the policies quickly in response to any changing requirements set by the Gambling Commission.

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

- The basis for the projected figures that would be generated by the lottery, which were detailed in the report.
- The potential impact that the introduction of a community lottery would have on participation in lotteries for local charities, such as that held by the Primrose Hospice.
- The impact that the introduction of the lottery might have on the Council's grants programme.
- The lottery schemes that had been introduced by other local authorities in the country which had been relatively successful.
- The advice that Aylesbury Vale District Council had provided to the Council prior to the decision to introduce a lottery.

During consideration of this item Members referred to the recommendations that had been made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the community lottery. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had raised a number of concerns with respect to the lottery scheme and these had been detailed in a written summary of the discussions, which was tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a meeting on 4th February in respect of the community lottery be noted; and

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Business Plan and suite of Policies be approved, and implemented for the Redditch Community Lottery Scheme; and**

- 2) **the Head of Community Services in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder be granted delegated authority to adapt the policies as and when required to ensure ongoing compliance with the rules and regulations set by the Gambling Commission as per our lottery licence.**

87. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2019/20

The Principle Solicitor presented a report outlining the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in respect of Members' allowances. The IRP had made a number of recommendations which would lead to an increase in the allowances paid to Redditch Members.

The Committee was asked to note that at the request of the Chair the financial implications of an increase to Members' allowances had been reviewed. Officers had found that the proposed changes, should they be approved, would result in an increase of £60,000 to the budget, rather than the £51,000 that had been detailed in the report. This would be incorporated in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) should Members agree the rise.

Included within the report was reference to the position of members of the Executive Committee without portfolio. The IRP had not made any recommendations in respect of their Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA). This was because no other Council covered by the Worcestershire IRP had an arrangement whereby members without portfolio served on the Executive Committee so there was no comparable information available. The Chair suggested that it would be fair to provide Members in this position with an SRA and he proposed that this should be increased by a multiplier of 1, in line with the proposed rise to the basic allowance for all Councillors.

Members subsequently discussed the following matters:

- The fact that Redditch Borough Council had not agreed an increase to Members' allowances for ten years.
- The need to attract new candidates to stand as Councillors and the fact that the financial remuneration might impact on their ability to commit to the role.
- The potential for the Council to attract candidates from deprived backgrounds to serve as Councillors and the impact that enhanced remuneration might have on their ability to take up the role.
- The recent decision taken by the Council in respect of the pay model for staff and the fact that this would lead to an increase in wages for many staff.

- The allowances paid to Members serving on Bromsgrove District Council and the value of achieving parity in terms of allowances paid, given the shared services arrangements between the two Councils.
- The allowances paid to Councillors in other parts of Worcestershire and the significant differences in remuneration between Redditch and the other districts that had arisen over the ten years that Redditch Members had not increased their allowances.
- The increasing responsibilities of a local Councillor and the time that Members needed to dedicate to the role in order to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
- The impact that an increase in Members' allowances would have on the Council's ability to meet the authority's equality duties.
- The reasons why Members decided to serve on the Council. There was general consensus that this was not for financial reasons.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Basic Allowance for 2019-20 is £4,437, representing 2% increase;**
- 2) **the Special Responsibility Allowances are as set out in Appendix 1 to the Independent Remuneration Panel's report;**
- 3) **travel allowances for 2019-20 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance;**
- 4) **subsistence allowances for 2019-20 remain unchanged;**
- 5) **the Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged;**
- 6) **for Parish Council in the Borough, if travel and subsistence is paid, the Panel recommends that it is paid in accordance with the rates paid by Redditch Borough Council and in accordance with the relevant Regulations; and**
- 7) **the Special Responsibility Allowance for members of the Executive Committee without Portfolio be increased by a multiplier of 1.**

88. ARROW VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE - CHANGE OF OPERATOR

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented a report outlining proposals for the change of operator at the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre. Members were advised that

the operation of the service at the countryside centre had been outsourced to an external company in 2011 with a ten year lease. During the course of their tenure concerns had been raised by Members, Officers and customers about a range of matters relating to the building and the consistency of the service. There had also been limited performance data provided to the Council over the past few years, despite this being a requirement in the contractual agreement. The current leaseholders had indicated to the Council that they would be withdrawing from the contract by March 2019, which was before the end of the lease. This provided the council with an opportunity to review future arrangements. The initial business case for Rubicon Leisure had noted that the local authority might seek to manage additional Council owned facilities once their leases expired and it was considered expedient to ask Rubicon Leisure to take over management of the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre. The Council was not required to undertake a tendering process in order to finalise this arrangement.

The Council was aiming to ensure that the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre in future operated in a manner that would meet the Council's strategic purpose 'provide good things to do, see and visit'. Rubicon Leisure had provided projected income figures for the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre. As a precaution these figures were low as it had been difficult to estimate potential income generation due to the lack of available data from the existing leaseholder. Should Members agree to transfer management of the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre the staff would be TUPE transferred over the Rubicon Leisure.

Members discussed the report and proposals for the future use of the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre and noted the following points during consideration of the matter:

- The need to improve the services available to customers at the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre.
- The alterations made by the current contractor to the countryside centre and the extent to which this had been made at a cost to the Council.
- The potential to recoup any costs from the current leaseholder. Members were advised that it was important to review the terms of the contract as well as to consider the potential court costs that might arise should the Council seek to recoup costs from the current leaseholders.
- The financial costs to the Council involved in making sure the building was in a good condition should it not prove possible to recoup the funding from the current leaseholder.
- The need to ensure that the office space, including the mezzanine level in the countryside centre remained available for community use. Members commented that they were not

willing to permit Rubicon Leisure to use the centre as office space.

- The need to ensure that the Council was clear about the terms of use of the Arrow Valley countryside Centre with Rubicon Leisure.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Council accepts the surrender of the current service provider's lease of the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre on 31 March 2019;**
- 2) operation of the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre be transferred to Rubicon Leisure Ltd from 1st April 2019; and**
- 3) the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is revised to reflect the reduction in the overall Rubicon Leisure management fee expected to result from the transfer.**

89. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND WIDER SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Council Tax Support Scheme and Wider Support Framework. The Committee was advised that the Council had had a scheme since 2013. The current system enabled working age applicants to receive up to 80 per cent relief on their Council Tax. In September Members had agreed that the Council should launch a consultation about the potential to introduce a banded discount scheme. This consultation exercise had subsequently been held and the majority of respondents had reported that they were not in favour of this proposal.

Officers had concluded that the current arrangements should remain in place for 2019/20. This would provide time to observe how changes to Council tax support schemes that were being introduced by other local authorities impacted in their communities and on this basis the most appropriate arrangements for Redditch could be selected. Changes were proposed however in respect of the Council Tax Support available to care leavers and proposals detailed in the report were designed to help them. These proposals corresponded with recommendations that had been made by the Care Leavers Short Sharp Scrutiny Review in 2018.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed a number of matters in detail:

- The needs of care leavers, including the benefits arising from further information being provided to care leavers about Council Tax and the support they were entitled to.
- The reasons why the Council decided not to introduce a banded support scheme.
- The number of residents who responded as part of the consultation exercise. Officers advised that they would provide this information outside the meeting.
- The problems that had been experienced by other local authorities that had already introduced a banding system. Some Councils had incorrectly inputted details about residents which had caused problems with the system.

During consideration of this item a care leaver was invited by the Chair to speak about his experiences and the extent to which additional support through the Council Tax Support Scheme would be appreciated by care leavers. Members were informed that many care leavers struggled financially and emotionally when they left care and moved into alternative accommodation. The proposals in the report would help care leavers at a time when they were particularly vulnerable to regain some stability. Many care leavers would repay the community in the long-term as they were all keen to succeed in life.

RECOMMENDED that

the Local Council Tax Support scheme is revised to provide:

- 1) Care Leavers under 21 years of age are treated as a protected group and provided 100% Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR);**
- 2) Care leavers aged 21 years or over and under 25 years of age are treated as a protected group and provided up to 100% LCT;**
- 3) the scheme is updated in line with national welfare benefits; and**
- 4) Council Tax Hardship Scheme is amended to enable transitional support to be provided to care leavers under 25 whose income results in significant withdrawal of support.**

90. BUSINESS CASE - DOMESTIC WASTE COLLECTION RESOURCES

The Environmental Services Manager presented a report in respect of the resources for domestic waste collection services. The Committee was advised that the report had been prepared following significant disruption to waste collection services in the summer of 2018. This had impacted on 20,000 households, with 10,000 not receiving a waste collection service until the following week. The problems had occurred for a variety of reasons, including staff leave and sick leave. The Place team had provided support but this had distracted them from their work. Agency staff had also been employed to help, though this had occurred at a cost to the Council. Officers were proposing the introduction of three new posts in order to enhance resilience within the team.

So far in 2018/19 the Council had spent £91,000 on agency staff, whilst the previous year the cost had been over £100,000. There was no budget for agency staff so this represented an overspend. Officers were suggesting that the extra staff proposed in the report would help to address the problems that had caused the Council to employ agency staff temporarily, leading to a reduction in costs for the service. However, Officers noted that the Council might continue to need to use agency staff from time to time.

Members were asked to note that the Government would be consulting on proposed changes to waste collection services in 2019. There were a number of proposals detailed in the report which would have implications for Council services should they be approved. The proposals included the suggestions that:

- There should be compulsory weekly refuse collections.
- Garden waste collection services should be free.
- The range of plastics in use in the country should be reduced.
- Approaches to recycling should be standardised across the country.

Redditch Borough Council was working with the other local authorities in Worcestershire, as well as the County Council, to respond to these proposals from the Government. Members would be notified of the outcomes of the Government's consultation and the implications of any changes to the Council in due course.

Members subsequently discussed a number of issues relating to domestic waste collection services:

- The reciprocal arrangement with Bromsgrove District Council whereby the refuse collection teams collected waste in

locations close to their boarders. Officers confirmed that this would be continuing.

- The need for a budget for replacing bins.
- The positive impact that the chargeable garden waste service had had on the Council's budget. Members were advised that the number of customers for garden waste collection services had exceeded expectations.
- The need to ensure that expenditure on waste collection services was derived from relevant budgets.

RECOMMENDED that

Members agree the recommendation from the Business Case, and that £83,674 additional funding is included in the medium term financial plan to fund 3 members of staff to support the waste collection service.

91. HOUSING / HOUSING REVENUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a report in respect of the progress that had been achieved with the implementation of the Housing and Housing Revenue Improvement Plan.

During the presentation of the report the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- This was the first progress report in respect of the Housing Implementation Plan that had been presented to Members. Further updates would follow at six month intervals.
- The report had been pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a similar report was due to be considered by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee in April.
- The Council had a balanced Housing Revenue Account (HRA), though the financial position for the Council remained challenging.
- Service reviews were being undertaken and would be taken forward during the year.
- Consideration of the gas business case by the Executive Committee until June 2019. This would provide time to seek external expert advice.
- The Council was complaint with requirements in terms of gas services but Officers needed to review the boiler replacement programme.
- The number of voids had been reduced from approximately 120 to 51. Further reductions in the number of void properties would only follow once the Council had procured a new Housing IT system.

- In total 20 per cent of the stock condition survey had been completed.
- Service development continued to be treated as an area of high risk.
- Since the previous report to Committee on this subject a risk had been added in respect of seeking housing advice.
- Health and safety risks had been upgraded from medium to high. Whilst the Council was compliant with health and safety requirements some issues had been identified, including with the Council's high rise buildings, that merited the upgrade.

Members discussed the report in detail and noted that Officers had worked hard to address the problems that had been identified with Housing Services in 2017/18. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also concurred that the staff had worked hard and Members had agreed that they should be thanked for this hard work. There had been a number of difficulties that had had to be overcome and both Officers and Members had found this stressful.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **thanks be extended to all housing staff, including the Deputy Chief Executive, the Head of Environmental Services and the Head of Community Services for their hard work to address the issues in respect of Housing Services that were identified in 2017/18; and**
- 2) **the Executive Committee consider the content of the report and endorse the progress reports for each of the items detailed.**

92. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the performance report and explained that the focus was on the performance of services in relation to the strategic purpose 'help me to find somewhere to live in my locality'. Key strategic measures had been included within the report, including one focusing on mental health issues which was being led by the Redditch Partnership Executive Board.

Changes were due to be made to housing services, in line with plans detailed in the housing implementation plan. As part of the process Officers were planning to involve tenants in the development of relevant new policies. Information had also been provided about the Council's compliance in relation to gas safety, electrics and asbestos.

There were pressures at the Council in respect of homelessness reduction. Nationally there were staff shortages and this was

having an impact in Redditch. The Council was working to address this and £250,000 would be invested in homelessness prevention.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

93. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - UPDATE REPORT

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented an update on the MTFP 2019/20 to 2022/23. Members were advised that the budget would not be finalised until the Executive Committee meeting that was due to take place immediately before Council on 25th February 2019. On the date of the meeting there remained a budget gap of £195,000 which would need to be addressed by 25th February. As the budget remained to be finalised Members were advised that details such as the budget bids would change and therefore Members were advised that it would be sensible not to make any decisions at this stage.

The gap over the four year period was projected to increase to £1.6 million. However, there remained a lot of uncertainty with respect to government funding for local government. Clarity still needed to be provided about how much revenue support grant, if any, would be received by the Council in future years, whether the Council would continue to receive any additional funding from the New Homes Bonus and how much funding would be received by local authorities from business rates. For these reasons the figures were estimates.

Officers were working on the basis that Council Tax would increase by 2.99 per cent and this had been incorporated into the MTFP. There was the potential that the Council would need to make a £150,000 contribution to the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP). As the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool had been approved by the Government it was likely that this would be funded from that budget. The £150,000 was an estimate based on the figure that had been noted by both Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest District Councils.

During discussions about the GBSLEP questions were raised about the payments that had been made to the Worcestershire LEP and the Staffordshire LEP and the reasons why this payment had not also been made to the GBSLEP. The Chair explained that it had recently been clarified that the GBSLEP should also have received this funding from the Government and this would happen in due course.

To address the budget gaps Officers would be reviewing the Council's reserves to assess whether these were all required.

There was also the possibility there would be funding opportunities for the Council in terms of social care and early help intervention services.

Members noted that reference was made in the report to funding for the Christmas lights. This had been included as a budget bid in the MTFP in 2018 but at the time Members had been assured that this would only happen the once. Officers were therefore asked to double check why a budget bid for Christmas lights was being requested for a second year.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

94. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee was informed that there were no outstanding recommendations arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd January 2019 that remained to be considered.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd January 2019 be noted.

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

The Chair confirmed that there were no outstanding recommendations from either the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any other Committees for consideration at the meeting.

96. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORTS

Constitutional Review Working Party – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that the next meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party would take place on Tuesday 12th February 2019. Any recommendations arising from this meeting would be reported to Council at a meeting on 25th February 2019.

Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Gareth Prosser

Councillor Prosser advised that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was due to take place on 7th March. As this clashed with the next meeting of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, which Councillor Prosser was also due to attend, Councillor Baker-Price would be attending the meeting as his substitute.

Grants Panel – Chair, Councillor Greg Chance

Councillor Chance informed Members that the Grants Panel had recently considered metal recycling issues and had made a recommendation about the organisation that would receive the associated funding.

Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that a meeting of the group that had been due to take place on 29th January had been postponed due to inclement weather and the limited availability of Members to attend the meeting. The meeting of the group had been rescheduled to take place on 26th February 2019.

Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

There had been no meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.28 pm