

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 21st March, 2019

MINUTES

Present:

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

Other Attendees

Mr Bob Baker, Ms Christine Bridges and Mr Simon Dunn (Diamond Buses)

Officers:

Sue Hanley and Paul Spooner

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and F Mughal

97. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Gemma Monaco. It was confirmed that Councillor Salman Akbar was attending as her substitute.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

99. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2019

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th February, 2019 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting

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Chair

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held on 20th February, 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

100. BUS SERVICES - INTERVIEW WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF DIAMOND BUS SERVICES

Representatives from Diamond Bus Services were present at the meeting to provide Members with an update in respect of bus services in the Borough of Redditch. The representatives provided answers to the list of Members' questions which had been provided in advance of the meeting.

In the ensuing debate, the following questions were raised:

What changes, if any, had been made to bus services in Redditch in the last five years?

The majority of the changes had been made due to changes to the contract with Worcestershire County Council, including fare increases and route alterations.

How were the changes to bus services communicated to Redditch residents?

Diamond Bus Services offered a wide range of information to bus user. Any changes to services were communicated on the company's website, on social media, on buses and also via Worcestershire County Council's website.

To what extent were the buses in service energy efficient?

The energy rate of vehicles was dependant on the routes and the type of vehicle used. It was further stated that there were no Euro 6 model buses in operation in Redditch. Vehicles that met Euro 6 emission were the cleanest in terms of emissions. However, should these be required in future Worcestershire County Council contracts the matter would be investigated further.

What were the strengths of the bus services in Redditch?

The management and staff were based in the local area, there was good network coverage and the bus service in Redditch was subject to some of the lowest fares in the country. Members stated that one of the concerns that the public had raised was that the fares were rising. In this context it was recognised that it would be

beneficial to the bus company to inform residents that the fares for Redditch bus services were some of the lowest in the country.

What were the challenges facing bus services in Redditch?

The challenges included some passengers' behaviour and funding cuts.

How can public sector organisations help to address these challenges?

The Council could work in partnership with Diamond Buses to help alleviate some of the issues with bus users. The Council could also help with the promotion of job vacancies for bus drivers which could be filled by local residents.

Members further raised a number of points in detail:

- Diamond Bus Services did not offer return tickets, however, offered a day ticket, which could be used on multiple routes throughout the day and was value for money.
- It was recognised that it was important to establish sustainable bus services in Redditch.
- In response to the query regarding breakdowns that occurred on bus services, it was explained that this could be due to the modern vehicles used, which were fitted with sensors and could be due to electrical faults.
- With regards to training, it was stated that all drivers were qualified and received the required training. New drivers were mentored and no drivers were left alone to operate a service until they knew the bus routes. Drivers also undertook induction training which included health and safety and relevant legal requirements.

101. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - MATCHBOROUGH AND WINYATES DISTRICT CENTRE - OUTCOMES OF SOFT MARKET TESTING

Members considered a report providing an update in respect of the Matchborough and Winyates District Centres' redevelopment.

Members were reminded that a report was presented to Executive Committee in January, 2019 and it was agreed that officers would undertake a soft market testing exercise with developers on the Homes England Delivery Partner Panel 3 (DPP3) in order to consider the best options for improvements in the District Centres.

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The Town Centre Advisor provided Members with a summary of the key findings which outlined the soft market testing exercise and looked at various development schemes that would be viable, sustainable and beneficial for the local residents.

Members were informed that four developers took part in the exercise, and they had indicated that would be interested in working with the Council.

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

- Members expressed concerns regarding the re-development, as they had been mindful of mistakes which had been made in previous projects; in particular, the Church Hill redevelopment. The Town Centre Advisor reassured the Committee that lessons had been learnt and a different approach was being taken.
- The Committee raised concerns with regard to the lack of public consultation undertaken to date and noted that residents were aware of and in some cases anxious about the proposed scheme. The Town Centre Advisor explained that the Council had drafted a Communications Plan and this would be utilised should the Executive Committee agree the proposals detailed in the report.
- Members were informed that a meeting had taken place with some Ward Members, businesses and residents. Members asked for clarity of the arrangements for these meetings and the notes arising from them. The Committee further expressed their concerns that not all ward Members were informed of this meeting.
- It was specified that this was a soft market testing exercise and it was recognised that early engagement with the public was prudent and this would be undertaken once the developer was appointed.
- It was important that the district centres had continuity. Members were informed that it was envisaged that no existing houses or businesses would be demolished until the new development was completed.
- The Council would appoint a developer that they had full confidence in.
- A number of the developers had expressed the view that should they be successful in a future procurement exercise they would expect to have continuing involvement in the area once the development was completed. No options had been

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considered at this stage. A full report of the proposed scheme would be presented to the Executive Committee in June, 2019.

- It was important that the Council considered the financial implications when considering the options.
- Members agreed that the next report to the Executive Committee in respect of this matter, due to be considered in June 2019, should be subject to pre-scrutiny.

RECOMMENDED that

- a) the positive outcome of the soft market testing is noted and officers are instructed to continue to analyse the results;**
- b) as a preparatory to procuring a preferred developer, to instruct officers to continue to work to develop the Council's parameters for a potential scheme (economic, social and environmental) and the frame of reference for joint working with a developer and delivery of a scheme; and**
- c) Officers report back with specific proposals for the formal procurement of a suitable development partner to work with the Council, stakeholders and the local community to develop and agree a comprehensive regeneration scheme for Matchborough and Winyates.**

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinise the report in respect of the proposals for the formal procurement of the development on 6th June, 2019 prior to Executive consideration on 11th June, 2019.

102. PUBLIC SPEAKING REPORT

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch), presented a report which invited Members to determine arrangements for public speaking at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The committee was reminded that at a meeting of Council on 25th February, 2019, Members had agreed to introduce public speaking at certain Committee meetings where formal public speaking arrangements were not already in place, including meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that public speaking arrangements were already in place for some

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Committees, including Council, the Executive Committee and Planning Committee. However, at other public meetings public speaking rights were not formalised and could only be exercised at the discretion of the Chair.

The background to this change was that a complaint had been received from a member of the public who had called for formal public speaking to be introduced at all public Committee meetings. The complaint had been considered by the Constitutional Review Working Party, who had decided to recommend to Council that formal public speaking should be introduced for those Committees where it was not currently in place.

Members expressed the view that they wished to adopt the same approach as both Licensing and Planning Committees, whereby members of the public were allowed a time limit of three minutes for individual speakers and a maximum overall time limit of 15 minutes for all public speaking. Members also agreed that a cut-off point for registration of noon on the day of the meeting was efficient.

The Committee was informed that an item in respect of public speaking at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings would be included on the agenda at the start of the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the following arrangements for public speaking at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings be adopted:

- a) that members of the public wishing to register to speak at Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall notify Democratic Services officers of their intention to do so and the subject on which they intend to speak by no later than 12 noon on the day of the meeting;**
- b) that the time limit for individual speakers speaking at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings shall be three minutes; and**
- c) that the maximum time limit devoted to public speaking at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be 15 minutes.**

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103. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) highlighted a number of recommendations made through the Overview and Scrutiny process that had already been acted on. The Committee was informed that the outstanding actions would be followed up and an update would be provided to the Committee in due course.

Members were reminded that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made a recommendation that all Members should receive a briefing on the new finance system. The briefing session was held on 19th March, 2019, however, only six Members attended the session. Members agreed that in future consideration should be given to the timing of any such briefings as it was appreciated that Members might not always be available during the election period.

With regard to the Redi Centre Lease Arrangements, Members were advised that action on the recommendations remained ongoing. However, Members sought clarity on the progress of this as it had been thought that the actions required had been completed.

RESOLVED that

the recommendation tracker be noted.

104. DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The Chair presented the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2018/2019, which detailed the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year 2018 – 2019.

The Chair stated that this had been a successful year for the Committee, although the Committee had not launched any Task Group reviews, Members had pre-scrutinised a range of items that were important to the community and had made a number of recommendations to the Executive Committee many of which had been approved. The Chair expressed his thanks to the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their valued contribution. He further expressed his gratitude to the Democratic Services Officers for all their help and hard work.

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Members were advised that the Annual report would be presented to Council at its meeting on 15th April, 2019 for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018/19 be noted.

105. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

Members gave consideration to a scrutiny proposal form which proposed a Short, Sharp Review in respect of suicide prevention. Members were asked to consider whether this would be a suitable topic for further scrutiny.

The suggestion of a Short, Sharp Review to look at suicide prevention in Redditch had been put forward by Councillor Debbie Chance. She explained that this was an important topic to be investigated in light of public health statistics from 2015 to 2017, which indicated that Redditch had a higher suicide rate than the national average.

Members acknowledged that this was an important topic as this had an impact on many people; therefore, the proposed review was welcomed.

The potential for the Committee to first receive a presentation in respect of this matter was briefly discussed. However, Members were advised that as the Council did not have internal expertise in this field, it might be more practical for relevant external partner organisations to be invited to attend meetings of a Short Sharp Review group; in order to share their expertise.

It was envisaged that the review might take longer to complete than anticipated. Members agreed that the review would take place in the new municipal year.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) advised Members that the Chair for scrutiny reviews were usually appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the same meeting that Members agreed to launch a review. However, as the proposal had been agreed close to the date of the local elections and Members were not intending to launch the review until the 2019/20 municipal year started Officers suggested that on this occasion the Chair should be appointed in the new municipal year.

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RESOLVED that

- a) **the proposed Short, Sharp Review in respect of suicide prevention be launched; and**
- b) **the Chair of the Suicide Prevention Short ,Sharp Review be appointed in the new municipal year.**

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

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 25th February, 2019 and the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st April to 31st July 2019.

Members were informed that the Executive Committee had noted the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's comments and concerns raised in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2022/2023, including the Pay Policy Statement and Council Tax Setting.

During consideration of the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme Members noted the number of items that had previously been identified for pre-scrutiny. In addition Members agreed to pre-scrutinise the Town Centre Regeneration (Community Hub and Railway Quarter) at a meeting of the Committee in June, 2019.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 25th February 2019 be noted;**
- 2) **the Executive Committee's Work Programme from 1st April to 31st July 2019, be noted; and**
- 3) **the following item be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for pre-scrutiny as agreed:**
 - a) **Town Centre Regeneration (Community Hub and Railway Quarter).**

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107. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) presented the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme. Members were advised that the new Government guidance for Overview and Scrutiny had not yet been published. The document would be presented for Members' consideration once it was in the public domain.

RESOLVED that

- a) **the item in respect of the Town Centre Regeneration (Community Hub and Railway Quarter) be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme; and**
- b) **the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

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

Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Andrew Fry

Councillor Fry informed Members that at the latest meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, held on 8th March, 2019, Members received an update in relation to the new Housing IT system and the new finance system. The group had proposed that Members of both Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council should be involved in any programme board managing the introduction of the new finance system.

Performance Scrutiny Working Group

Councillor Fry informed Members that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group had met on 18th February, 2019. Members were reminded that earlier in the year the group had agreed that each Member should take a lead on monitoring the performance of measures for a particular strategic purpose.

The group had agreed that it should set at least six meetings during 2019/2020. The dates of these meetings would be agreed in the new municipal year and once the membership of the group had been determined for 2019/20.

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To ensure there was adequate turnout at meetings, the group had proposed at its latest meeting that a quorum should be introduced of three Members.

It was suggested that any Members who were newly appointed to the group in 2019 should be required to attend the dashboard training session on 3rd June, 2019.

RESOLVED that

a quorum of three Members should be in place for meetings of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

109. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Chalk provided a written update in respect of the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee was informed that the meeting was again inquorate.

Councillor Chalk informed Members that he had submitted his apologies at the last meeting of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5th March, 2019. However, the items that were covered on the agenda for this meeting were in relation to the NHS Long Term Plan and Health Overview and Scrutiny Round-Up.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 9.30 pm