

# Executive Committee

Tuesday, 26 March 2019

## MINUTES

### Present:

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

### Also Present:

Dan Johnson (Environment Agency)

### Officers:

Matthew Bough, Thomas Curwell, Clare Flanagan, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering and Paul Spooner

### Committee Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

### 105. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

### 106. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 107. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader circulated a written update in respect of his announcements at the meeting.

### 108. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019 be held as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

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Chair

## 109. ARROW VALLEY CATCHMENT RESTORATION PROJECT

The Waste Management Engineer, assisted by a representative of the Environment Agency, presented a report outlining proposals in respect of the Arrow Valley Catchment Restoration Project. Members were advised that the project had been launched following a fatality at the Arrow Valley weir in 2014. The Council had subsequently reviewed water safety and a review had been undertaken by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) which had identified a number of safety issues that needed to be addressed. Many of the recommendations detailed in the ROSPA report had already been implemented. ROSPA had raised concerns about the safety of children swimming in the River Arrow and had suggested that structural changes needed to be made at the sites which presented the greatest risk. The structural changes were very complex as the Council had to liaise with Historic England about what could and could not be done at the site. An application had been made for European funding to support the works required and Members were asked to agree match funding in the form of a capital bid, which added to funds previously agreed in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2022/23.

The Council had been working closely with the Environment Agency on the project since 2015. The Environment Agency had already contributed £50,000 towards design work in respect of the structures, which would be undertaken by external consultants. This would ensure that the project both addressed safety concerns and that any works did not increase the potential for flooding or associated risks. The catchment for the River Arrow was considered a priority by the Environment Agency. Rivers were assessed on an ecological basis by the Environment Agency and under the criteria that the organisation used the River Arrow was classified as a failing waterway. The project provided a good opportunity to address the causes of this problem.

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

- The family of the child who had sadly died at the weir had been informed about the Council and Environment Agency's work on the project. Members paid their respects to the family and thanked them for their hard work to raise awareness in respect of water safety.
- The financial costs involved in checking the safety equipment at the weirs and the amount of time staff spent undertaking safety checks.

- The ecological benefits of the proposed works, in terms of the positive impact that this might have on fish stocks in the River Arrow.
- The definition of a failing river. Members were advised that this was defined under the Water Framework Directive which assessed the health of a river based on fish stocks, water quality, and other related matters. Whilst the River Arrow had satisfactory fish levels and water quality exposure to industrial waste water resulted in a failing rating.
- The extent to which the funding from the EU had been secured. Members were advised that the EU funding was paid arrears and had already been provided to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council which would distribute the funding.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**the Council agrees to additional capital funding of £35,000 in 2019/2020 in addition to the £180K already included in the Medium Term Financial Plan for the proposed improvement works to the weirs in the Arrow valley Park; and**

**RESOLVED that, subject to Recommendation 1 being approved that:**

**authority be delegated to the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services to procure the works at each of the sites.**

**110. HOMELESSNESS GRANT, FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT AND HOMELESSNESS NEW BURDEN'S FUND REPORT 2019/20**

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Team Leader presented a report in respect of the Homelessness Grant, Flexible Homelessness Support and the Homelessness New Burdens fund and proposed expenditure in 2019/20. Members were informed that the Council had been allocated just over £193,000 for 2019/20 in the flexible support grant and over £30,000 for the New Burdens Fund. The New Burdens Fund had been introduced to help Councils manage the additional duties set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. A number of suggestions had been made regarding the use of this funding, which included investing in two new posts to assist with temporary accommodation and rents in the private sector. Financial support continued to be provided to Redditch Nightstop and Redditch Borough Council was working with Bromsgrove District Council to provide funding to the CCP Rough Sleeper Outreach Service.

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

- The need for the Council to support residents living in both social housing and the private rented sector. Members noted that the proposed use of the funding would support this objective.
- The additional Council duties arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the emphasis that this placed on preventing homelessness which required Councils to be proactive.
- The use of grant funding to support additional posts and the extent to which the Council could expect to receive this funding in the future. Officers advised that the Council had not been advised that the funding would be ending and therefore it had been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan for inclusion in the budget in future years.
- The announcement by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government that an extra £46 million would be invested in the Rough Sleeper Initiative and the impact that this funding could have on rough sleepers in the Borough.
- The number of rough sleepers in Redditch and the reasons why they were in this position. Members noted that there were eight rough sleepers and all had been and would continue to be offered assistance by the Council, though they had to date refused any help.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) **the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant is allocated to the initiatives in 1(a) and that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 New Burdens Funding be allocated to fund the required homelessness IT system with Housing Partners at £9,000 per year, additional staffing resources and any appropriate training requirements;**

a)

Initiatives	£
<b>Homelessness Reduction Act Prevention – funding for posts</b>  <b>Detail – the latest Act created two new legal duties – to prevent and relieve homelessness. As a result the numbers of households living in temporary accommodation could rise and it also becomes increasingly</b>	<b>60,000</b>

<p>important to help people remain appropriately housed. The proposed funding will therefore create 2 new posts to support the timely move-on from temporary accommodation, and tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector in Redditch. (see 3.8) The Executive has already agreed to support these posts as part of the Medium Financial Plan 2019/20-2022/23 when it met in February 2019.</p>	
<p><b>Rent Deposits and Spend to Save</b></p> <p>Detail – most local authorities operate a fund that helps people access the private rented sector, and which can also be used to intervene to prevent tenants losing their existing home. These interventions are far less than the cost of homelessness itself, so they represent good value for money, in addition to helping reduce homelessness in the borough. In the last two years the Council has provided over 80 rent deposits, so investing extra in this area and making spend to save interventions with local households should reduce homelessness in the borough.</p>	<p><b>17,060</b></p>
<p><b>Temporary Accommodation Management Fee replacement.</b></p> <p>The Council is legally obliged to provide temporary accommodation to eligible homeless households. The Temporary Accommodation Management Fee previously associated with this activity has now been rolled up into the new Flexible Homelessness Support Grant.</p>	<p><b>66,380</b></p>
<p><b>Redditch Nightstop - Outreach Worker up to 35yrs</b></p> <p>Detail – in August 2018, with financial support from the Council, Nightstop launched a new extended service to</p>	<p><b>27,000</b></p>

<p>provide emergency housing for people aged 21 to 35. This was in response to increasing demand from this client group, who have been subject to some of the most significant changes inside the welfare benefits system. Since August, Nightstop have assisted 23 single people, often with complex and multiple needs, aged 21 to 35 with emergency housing placements, providing short term practical and emotional support whilst also reducing demand on other services. Nightstop also work closely with the Council on addressing the longer term housing needs of this client group.</p>	
<p><b>CCP Rough Sleeper Outreach Service</b></p> <p>Detail – in the past year CCP have worked with 40 people, some of whom have been street homeless in Redditch, or have a street presence in the town centre since March 2018. CCP works closely with the Council to secure accommodation for these people, safeguarding their health and wellbeing, reducing costs and demand on other services such as the Police and Health, whilst ensuring the town centre remains an attractive and safe place for local residents and businesses alike. This funding also supports CCP interventions under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, which targets street homelessness at times of the year when temperatures are at their lowest.</p>	<p><b>34,990</b></p>
<p><b>Total</b></p>	<p><b>£205,430*</b></p>

- 1) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to use any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments to current initiatives as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grants for 2019/20.

## 111. WORCESTERSHIRE STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR TACKLING HOMELESSNESS

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Team Leader presented the Worcestershire Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness. Three priorities had been agreed for inclusion in the strategy and officers would undertake work in relation to each of these. Members were asked to note that there was a Redditch Homelessness Forum which hadn't been listed on the draft copy of the document provided for Members' consideration but would be included in the final version of the report. Further changes would need to be made to the strategy 12 months after the date of the meeting to ensure compliance with the new national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Members discussed the report and in so doing noted the following:

- The introduction of the Redditch Homelessness Forum in recent months and the positive contribution that this would make to tackling homelessness in the Borough.
- The location of the six officers referred to in the strategy who provided support in respect of rough sleeping. Officers advised that there were two officers serving Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District, though primarily their main demand for work was in Redditch.
- The arrangement by which it had been agreed that two officers would work in Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District and how this compared to other parts of the county. Members were advised that services in respect of rough sleepers had been determined at a local level and Redditch Borough Council had chosen to work with the CCP Rough Sleeper Outreach Service.
- The support provided by the staff to rough sleepers. Members were advised that the Officers worked with the Housing Options team and also engaged directly with rough sleepers.
- The complexity of rough sleeping cases, whereby individuals often had a range of mental health needs and substance abuse issues.
- The training provided to staff and whether this covered mental health needs. Members were advised that whilst specific details were not available about the training received by staff it was understood that this was comprehensive.
- The levels of homelessness nationally and how this compared to previous years.
- The need for the Council to work in partnership with other organisations to meet the needs of people who were homeless.
- The need to provide residents with secure accommodation.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) the Worcestershire Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness be endorsed and supported;**
- 2) this document expands on previously agreed high level actions within the Housing Partnership Plan that relate to tackling homelessness.**
- 3) this document will need to be updated and renamed within the next 12 months to ensure compliance with the new national Rough Sleeping Strategy with amendments being made at officer level.**

## **112. MATCHBOROUGH AND WINYATES DISTRICT CENTRES - UPDATE**

The Town Centre Advisor explained that the report followed a previous decision made by Members in January 2019 to permit officers to undertake soft market testing in respect of the redevelopment of Matchborough and Winyates district centres. The Council had approach five organisations from a range of backgrounds about the potential to redevelop the district centres. Four organisations had responded and had indicated that they would be interested in working with the Council in the future in respect of this matter.

In their feedback the four organisations had commented on the potential for housing and commercial units to be provided in the redevelopment. The majority had suggested that between 250 and 300 houses could be built, subject to planning permission. A range of ideas about the centres had been suggested in the feedback, including retention of two district centres, having one smaller district centre and one larger centre and retaining just one district centre. The organisations had all wanted to work not just with the Council but also with the public in respect of the redevelopment. Members were asked, however, to note that no decisions had yet been taken by the Council about the redevelopment of the district centres. A further report would be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee in June 2019 which would provide more information that would enable Members to make decisions that would lead to the Council going out to tender in July 2019.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the matter in detail and in so doing noted that there was a need to engage with the community in respect of the redevelopment of the district centres. The Council needed to ensure that an effective communications plan was in place as residents and local



businesses would be keen to learn about the project as it progressed.

During consideration of this item Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the report at a meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> March. At the end of their discussions the Committee had endorsed the recommendations detailed in the report. However, a number of questions had been raised by Members about the informal groups that had been established to discuss the redevelopment of the district centres and concerns had been raised that some ward Councillors had not been involved. A briefing note had subsequently been circulated amongst Members of the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees which provided clarification about the various groups. Members noted from this briefing note that:

- There had been an informal meeting at Christ Church, Matchborough, where Officers had met with business tenants to discuss the redevelopment. All ward Members had been invited to attend.
- There was an officer working group that was reviewing areas such as communications arrangements and legal requirements.
- There was a stakeholder group involving a range of stakeholders including the Leader of the Council in his capacity as the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- No minutes were taken at any of these meetings as they were only informal, and for information gathering.
- Ward Members would be welcome to attend future informal meetings and stakeholder meetings.
- The purpose of all of these meetings was to provide an opportunity for attendees to share information. Decisions would need to be taken by the Executive Committee and full Council.

During consideration of this item Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed an amendment to the recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

The amendment called for the following two additional recommendations to be added to the three recommendations proposed in the report:

“(d) All Winyates and Matchborough ward Councillors will be fully and meaningfully consulted throughout the process from this point forward including preparing the Council tender documents and the options.

(e) Consistent consultation with affected residents, Tenants and stakeholders will be undertaken from this point forward in the process.”

In proposing the amendment Councillor Hartnett explained that he was of the opinion that the Borough should continue to have two district centres in Matchborough and Winyates respectively, rather than one. This would ensure that income for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and from business rates would remain the same. Councillor Hartnett expressed concerns that not every ward Member had been involved in the project to date and that rumours were circulating within the community which ward Councillors did not feel in a position to address. Information about the redevelopment of the centres had been publicised in the local press and it was suggested that the time was therefore right to start engaging with the public, to provide reassurance and information rather than to wait until 2020. Lessons needed to be learned from the redevelopment of Church Hill district centre and the proposals were designed to address this.

In seconding the amendment Councillor Chance commented that the amendment called for the Council to undertake consistent consultation with the public and other relevant stakeholders, including ward Councillors. This would provide them with an opportunity to shape the proposals. Information about the redevelopment had already been shared with the local press so it seemed appropriate to share details with the public too at this stage.

Members discussed the amendment and in so doing noted that the Council was at the start of the redevelopment process. No decisions had been made and it was considered too early to provide any information for public consultation. However, at the appropriate time consultation would form a key part of the process. There was still a lot of work to be undertaken in respect of the financial and legal implications of the redevelopment and this information would be built into a future business case which would form the basis for terms of reference and a specification. Concerns were also raised that it would be inappropriate for Members to become involved in preparing Council tender documents and considering the outcomes of the procurement process as this was an operational matter managed by Officers.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

Members proceeded to consider the recommendations detailed in the report and it was noted that the desire to enable ward Councillors to shape the project was implicit within the third recommendation. To clarify this Members agreed that the wording

of the third recommendation should be amended to acknowledge the role of ward Councillors and that all stakeholders referred to in the recommendation would be involved in both developing and shaping the redevelopment of the district centres.

**RESOLVED 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, the local community and ward Councillors to develop, shape and agree a comprehensive regeneration scheme for Matchborough and Winyates.**

**113. FINANCE SYSTEM**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented a report which updated Members on the progress that had been achieved with the procurement of the new finance system. The procurement exercise had been completed and the new system, once delivered would apply to HR, Financial Services, Payments, including cash receipting and Payroll. The systems would be fully integrated, though the full system would take up to 24 months to implement as Officers would review service delivery as part of the system's introduction in line with transformation principles. Unfortunately, the procurement exercise had revealed that the financial costs would be higher than had been anticipated and the Council would ask to provide additional financial investment in order to progress with the system. Savings arising from the introduction of the new system had not yet been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan, though it was anticipated that efficiencies may be achieved in the long-term.

A briefing had been provided to all Members in respect of the system on 19<sup>th</sup> March. The Budget Scrutiny Working Group had also scrutinised the proposals for the new system in detail and had made a helpful contribution to the work of officers on the project.

Members subsequently discussed the report and noted the following points:

- The new system would provide an opportunity for the Council to undertake digital transformation and change the ways in which the authority worked.
- The financial costs quoted in the report represented the maximum possible spend on the new system. There was the possibility that the Council would spend less than this if fewer implementation days were used during the roll out of the new system.
- The system was being procured jointly for Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils and Members questioned what stage had been reached in the decision making process in Bromsgrove. Members were advised that the report was due to be considered at a meeting of Bromsgrove's Cabinet on 27<sup>th</sup> March and at a full Council meeting in the district that same evening.
- The reasons why the Council had underestimated the financial costs of the new system. Members were advised that the original report had estimated costs based on soft market testing. However, the end specification and the outcomes of the procurement process had led to an increase in the costs.
- The benefits of the new system for the Council. Officers explained that the new system would provide managers with easier and immediate access to budget information for their departments which would help with financial management. At present officers were working with old fashioned spreadsheets and this caused delays.
- The potential to integrate the system with the new housing ICT system. The Committee was informed that Officers from the ICT department were working to ensure that the two systems were integrated.
- The potential to remove residents from the system once they had passed away to ensure that the Council's billing service was sensitive to the needs of family members. The Committee was informed that, subject to complying with GDPR requirements, it would be possible to remove the details of deceased residents.
- The need for the Council to work in a digital manner, in line with developments within society whereby people were working in a more integrated fashion. Members welcomed the fact that the Council had signed up to the Local Digital Declaration in 2018.

**RESOLVED that**

**the completion of the procurement exercise for the new Council enterprise system be noted and that if the project is to be progressed additional funding is required**

**RECOMMENDED that**

**additional capital receipts to the value of £208k are approved to fund the system in 2019/20 and that the Capital Programme is updated to reflect this expenditure.**

**114. FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 3 2018/19**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented a monitoring report updating Members on the Council's financial position in the period 1st April to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. Unfortunately there was a projected overspend of £236,000 for the end of the financial year. However, since the period covered by the report Heads of Service and managers had been asked to ensure that essential spend only occurred and based on this Officers were anticipating that the shortfall would be closer to £70,000. This gap was primarily in respect of the unidentified savings which had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 to 2021/22. Members were asked to note that no unidentified savings had been included in the Medium Term Financial Plan for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23 so this problem was unlikely to recur in 2019/20.

Details in respect of the capital budget were referred to during the presentation of the report. Members were advised that the Council had budgeted for borrowing to support capital expenditure of £4.8 million. However, the Council had only used £2.4 million in capital spending during the year. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) had therefore recently discussed the need for officers to more accurately manage the capital budget.

In relation to the Housing Revenue Account HRA the Council was aiming to use £876,000 in balances to balance the budget. There had been some overspends on voids, largely due to the fact that the number of voids turned around by the department had increased. This would ensure that those properties could be let to tenants at an earlier stage than in the past, which would have a positive impact on income for the HRA moving forward.

The Committee discussed the report and it was noted that the Council would be able to balance the budget in time for the accounts to be approved. Questions were raised about the action taken to promote the availability of disabled facilities grants to eligible residents and the reasons why an extra £96,000 had been allocated to this budget when it was generally left underspent each year. Members were advised that further information would be

requested from relevant Officers, though it was understood that the additional funding was in the form of a Government grant.

Reference was also made to the Feckenham Parish Recreation Ground and whether the funding referred to related to Section 106 monies. Members were advised by Councillor Brandon Clayton, in his capacity as local ward Councillor, that this funding was connected to a Section 106 agreement in respect of an application for Yates Acre in Feckenham. Members agreed that it was important that the Council ensured that Section 106 funds were spent on the projects to which the funding had been allocated.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **the Executive Committee note the current financial positions for the period April – December 2018 as detailed in the report.**

**RECOMMENDED that**

- 2) **the Council approve an increase in the 2018-19 Capital Programme of £4.5k s106 monies for use on undertaking a traveller/trespass function for the Council on land adjacent to Oakenshaw South roundabout.**
- 3) **the Council approve an increase in the 2018-19 Capital Budget of £96k for the Disabled facilities grant budget. This is due to further grant funding being received following the budget announcement in December 2018.**
- 4) **the Council approve the increase to the Capital Programme of £14.5k s106 monies for improvements to the play areas and open spaces on Feckenham Recreation Ground.**

**115. INVESTMENT STRATEGY - UPDATE TO THE STRATEGY**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented a report that proposed updates to the Acquisition and Investment Strategy that had been approved in January 2018. The Council had anticipated making investments worth £5 million in 2019/20 but none of the funding had yet been spent. Under the existing terms in the strategy any investment opportunities that were identified would have to first be reported back to the Executive Committee before any action could be taken. The update report proposed that Officers should be able to undertake initial financial modelling in line with KPMG guidance and an initial offer could be made by officers, subject to approval by the Executive Committee.

During the debate in respect of the strategy Members questioned whether the Council had identified any potential opportunities for investment. Officers confirmed that no opportunities had been identified by the date of the meeting, though the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit was monitoring local developments. As agreed in the policy the Council could choose to invest in projects within the Borough or in locations adjacent to the Borough.

**RESOLVED that**

**the Investment Strategy Report 2019/20 be approved and adopted.**

**116. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chair advised that there were no outstanding Overview and Scrutiny Committee minutes for consideration at the meeting.

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

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

**118. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORTS**

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

Councillor Dormer confirmed that there had been no further meetings of the Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP) since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee. The following meeting of the CRWP was scheduled to take place on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

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

Councillor Prosser confirmed that there were no updates to provide in respect of the Corporate Parenting Board.

- c) Grants Panel – Chair, Councillor Greg Chance

Councillor Chance confirmed that there were no updates to provide in respect of the Grants Panel.

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

Councillor Dormer confirmed that there had been no further meetings of the Member Support Steering Group (MSSG) since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee. The following meeting of the MSSG was scheduled to take place on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer noted that the latest meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) had taken place on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019. During the meeting Members had discussed the redevelopment of Matchborough and Winyates district centres as well as housing numbers in the Borough.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.47 pm