



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 5th September, 2019

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Debbie Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Mark Shurmer and Jennifer Wheeler

Officers:

Matthew Bough, Sue Hanley and Guy Revans

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

25. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Salman Akbar.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 4th July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

28. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

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Chair

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

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9th July 2019 as well as the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st October 2019 to 31st January 2020.

Members noted that there were a significant number of items scheduled for the consideration of the Executive Committee in October 2019. Should Members seek to pre-scrutinise many of these items it was suggested that consideration might need to be given to holding an additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9th July 2019 be noted; and**
- 2) the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st October 2019 to 31st January 2020 be noted.**

30. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted that a significant number of items were scheduled for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration in October. The majority of these items involved the Committee undertaking pre-decision scrutiny of items that were on the Executive Committee's Work Programme for consideration in October. The Chair suggested that should these items be debated in October an additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be required to ensure that Members could dedicate sufficient time to scrutinising each subject in detail. However, there was the possibility that some of these items might be postponed and therefore a decision would be taken by the Chair at a later date as to whether an additional meeting might be required.

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

The following updates were provided in respect of the work of various scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups.

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- a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jenny Wheeler

Councillor Wheeler confirmed that a meeting of the group was due to take place on 16th September 2019.

- b) Parking Enforcement Task Group – Chair, Councillor Mark Shurmer

Councillor Shurmer explained that the group had held a number of meetings since the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. During these meetings Members had interviewed the Head of Environmental Services and the Environmental Services Manager about the Council's existing contract with Wychavon District Council for parking enforcement services and the background to the introduction of this service in the Borough. The group had also considered the content of scrutiny reports produced by other local authorities on this subject as well as information that was published on the Council's website in respect of parking enforcement.

The group had issued a survey to all elected Members, which was designed to elicit information about the extent to which parking enforcement problems were reported by residents to councillors and whether there were any variances between wards. These surveys had been issued both electronically and in paper form. All Members were encouraged to complete a copy and to return this to Democratic Services as soon as possible.

Councillor Shurmer advised that a meeting of the group was due to take place on 9th September 2019. During this meeting Members would be interviewing a representative of West Mercia Police.

- c) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Andrew Fry

Councillor Fry advised that the group had held a number of meetings. Each Councillor had taken responsibility for monitoring performance in respect of the measures for a particular strategic purpose. The group had also scrutinised the content of a couple of the performance reports that had been issued during the municipal year and had interviewed Officers about the detail within these reports.

Meetings of the group in 2019 had already been booked. The Chair would be meeting with Democratic Services Officers at the end of the calendar year to book more meeting dates for 2020.

d) Suicide Prevention Task Group – Chair, Councillor Debbie Chance

Councillor Chance explained that the group had been undertaking a lot of research into the subject. A range of witnesses had been identified and interviews had been arranged which would help the group to gather further evidence. However, Members were advised that due to the complexity of the subject it was unlikely that the review would be completed by December 2019. To ensure that Members could undertake an effective review of an important subject Members agreed that the deadline for the Suicide Prevention Task Group should be extended.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the deadline for the Suicide Prevention Task Group should be extended to a future date, to provide Members with an opportunity to review the subject in detail; and**
- 2) **the update reports be noted.**

32. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

The following updates were provided in respect of external scrutiny bodies:

a) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council representative, Councillor Michael Chalk

Members were advised that during the course of the 2019/20 municipal year to date no meetings of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been quorate. Meetings of the Committee did, however, continue to take place and during a recent meeting the subject of the 5G network and how this should be rolled out across the region had been discussed.

During consideration of this item Members raised concerns about the fact that the meetings of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee were not quorate and questions were raised about the potential to change the quorum and the

action that was being taken to address the problem. The Committee was advised that the quorum for meetings of a Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee was set in statute so could not be change by the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee unilaterally. The WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee and combined authority staff had been working hard to encourage Members to attend the meetings to ensure that the meetings were quorate but unfortunately the number of Members required to be present was relatively high and many Members had a range of responsibilities which could impact on their availability to attend meetings. The WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee was trialling the circulation of meetings around the region and it was possible that this might have an impact on turnout.

- b) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council representative, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk advised Members that there had been no formal meetings of HOSC since the previous meeting of the Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, a number of partners with an interest in health services had recently been invited to attend a meeting at Chateau Impney, which had provided an opportunity for those present to discuss health challenges in Worcestershire.

33. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - DISPOSAL OF HRA ASSET AT GREEN LANE, STUDLEY - TO FOLLOW

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Team Leader presented a report in respect of the disposal of a Council asset in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) located at Green Lane, Studley and the removal of a railway bridge from an adjacent site.

Number 65 Green Lane was an asset owned by Redditch Borough Council but situated within Stratford-On-Avon District Council's boundaries. The property was void and was not considered to be in a habitable condition. A significant amount of expenditure would be required from Redditch Borough Council to make the property fit for purpose. The railway bridge was also considered to be in a poor condition and this required a lot of financial investment in structural works to rectify. Should the bridge remain in situ it would be subject to annual inspections, which could result in additional financial costs to the Council. In this context Officers were proposing that the bridge structure should be completely removed and the site realigned to allow for two new four-bedroom properties to be built at

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the site. This would be subject to planning permission that would need to be granted by Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

Members discussed the site highlighted in the report and questions were raised about the potential historic value of the bridge. Officers advised that it was an original brick built bridge. There was the possibility that railway enthusiasts would have a view on the historic value of the bridge and these points could be raised through the planning process.

Concerns were raised by Members about the condition of the railway bridge and the potential safety risks in terms of the bridge continuing to remain on site in its current condition. Furthermore, it was noted that it was unlikely that the bridge would be in the correct condition to bear the weight of modern trains, should a railway route be reintroduced on that track.

During consideration of this item reference was made to the Sustrans Route that incorporated the bridge and concerns were raised about the potential impact that the removal of the bridge could have on this route. The Committee was informed that following the removal of the bridge the site would be graded and a crossing point would be provided as part of the realignment works. Therefore the Sustrans route would remain in place.

The reasons why the Council owned the bridge were also debated. Members were advised that officers believed that the bridge had been transferred to Redditch Borough Council ownership as part of the transfers from the Commission for New Towns.

Members also discussed the planning process that would need to be followed in order to make the proposed changes at the site. The Committee was advised that public consultation had not yet taken place but would occur as part of the planning process. Members were assured that as the planning application would be considered by Planning Officers and potentially the Planning Committee at Stratford-on-Avon District Council, proposals by Redditch Members at the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees would not compromise any Redditch members of the Council's Planning Committee.

At the end of the debate on this item the Committee

RECOMMENDED that

- i) No. 65 Green Lane, Studley be declared surplus to requirements and officers to dispose of the site;**

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- ii) any HRA capital receipt achieved based on the current market value of No. 65 Green Lane, be used to increase the HRA stock;
- iii) Option C - The Capital Engineering Scheme be approved, with Authority be delegated to the Head of Environmental Services to submit a detailed planning application to Stratford-on-Avon District Council, for the complete scheme. If successful, the Planning consent will include an outline approval for the erection of 2 No. 4 bed houses;
- iv) the sites for the 2 No. 4 bed houses be marketed and the received monies, after deduction of the amount as described in ii) above, shall be used as Capital funds towards the cost of the Engineering Works;
- v) the additional funds required to complete the Engineering Works be taken from the Capital Locality Scheme Budget, as the proposed works are of the nature that the budget was set up for in the first instance; and
- vi) the estimated cost of the Engineering Works cannot be finalised at this time, as Officers are currently endeavouring to determine the most cost effective method of disposing of the extensive surplus material from the excavated embankments. However, subject to the satisfactory outcome of this analysis the total Engineering Works should not exceed £200k.

(During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to the financial affairs of any particular body (including the authority holding that information.) However, there is nothing exempt in this record of the proceedings)

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.01 pm