



Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

24th February 2010

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), and Councillors K Banks, G Chance, R King, W Norton, J Pearce, D Taylor and P Anderson

Also Present:

Councillor P Anderson (Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism)

Officers:

H Bennett, J Godwin, A Heighway, C Hemming and P Liddington, K Griffin (Wychavon District Council)

Committee Officers:

J Bayley, J Divala, S Skinner, D Sunman

175. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Smith and Thomas.

176. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or any party whip.

177. MINUTES

Members received an apology that the minutes for the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd February 2010 were not available. The Chair requested that the minutes for the meetings on 3rd and 24th February be available for the next meeting.

178. ACTIONS LIST

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

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a) Medium Term Financial Plans – Best Practice

It was reported that a letter had been sent to the Audit Commission requesting a best practice example of a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). To date no reply had been received.

b) Gender Equalities and Youth Employment

Members agreed that the members of the Executive Committee should be invited to attend the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th April 2010 when presentations on the Gender Equalities Scheme and Youth Employment in Redditch would be delivered by Officers.

c) Capitalisation Direction of the Single Management Team

It was reported that the information regarding the Capitalisation Direction of the Single Management Team had been circulated for Members' consideration by e-mail.

d) Convergence between Council and RSL property rents

It was reported that work was ongoing to provide the information requested by Members regarding the convergence between Council and RSL rents.

RESOLVED that

the reports be noted.

179. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

There were no call-ins.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

180. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no scoping documents for the Committee to review.

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181. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee received reports in relation to current reviews:

a) Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer reported that arrangements had been made to interview representatives of the Redditch Partnership and that the next meeting of the Task and Finish Group had been scheduled for 10th March 2010.

b) Joint Worcestershire Hub Review

Visits to Hub Centres across the County had been arranged. The next Task Group meetings would take place on 24th March and 14th April. All Chief Executives had been contacted to seek their views. Detailed performance information for the Hub would be obtained.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

182. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - CHAIR' S UPDATE

Councillor Chance reported that an initial training session had taken place and that further meetings had been arranged. He reported that at the meeting on 8th February discussions had taken place regarding the appointment of a Vice Chair for the Panel.

RECOMMENDED that

Councillor J Pearce be appointed as Vice Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.

183. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report on the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement, which had commenced on 31st March 2009.

Officers reported that during the first two weeks of operation no formal Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) had been issued. However, 'warning notices' had been issued to drivers who had contravened

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Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) thus providing them with additional information which supplemented warnings in public and press notices.

Members were informed that the formal partnership arrangement whereby Wychavon District Council operates CPE on behalf of Redditch Borough Council had worked well. Four Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) had been employed to patrol areas in Redditch subject to TROs. Enforcement could only be undertaken in locations where a TRO was in place and did not include other traffic offences (e.g. causing an obstruction by parking in front of a vehicular crossing) which could only be dealt with by the Police.

A small number of initial concerns had been raised including:

- a) parking in locations where previously no enforcement action had taken place;
- b) on a small number of occasions verbal abuse of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs); and
- c) the TRO in the Town Centre pedestrian area did not allow CEOs to take enforcement action with regard to unauthorised parking.

Officers reported that solutions to these concerns had been or were in the process of being identified and implemented.

Members outlined concerns raised by residents regarding the introduction of CPE and also the need for an increased number of Residents' Parking Schemes (RPS). Officers reported that a number of new requests for RPS had been received by Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and were being considered. Any requests by residents for new RPS in the future would need to be made through their County Councillor who would pass the request to Worcestershire County Council's Traffic Management Team.

Members were informed that following discussions with Worcestershire County Council the cost of Residents Parking Permits would be increased to £10 from 1st April 2010, a reduction from the £30 initially recommended by the County Council.

Officers were asked to provide the following information to Members:

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- i) a plan showing the CEOs patrol areas;
- ii) information regarding outstanding Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) and the cost of recovery; and
- iii) a breakdown of the number of PCNs issued and the areas affected.

Members agreed that this information should continue to be provided for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during annual monitoring reports on the subject of the Civil Parking Enforcement Scheme.

Officers were also asked to arrange a guided tour of the civil parking scheme in Central Ward for the Borough and County Councillors of the Ward.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive annual reports on the implementation of the Civil Parking Enforcement Scheme; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

184. COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT

Members received a report about the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), a new way of assessing local public services in England. The Committee was informed that CAA examined how well Councils and other public bodies, working together, met the needs of the people they served. For the first time a joint assessment of what it was like to live in an area had been produced. This was called One Place.

The Head of Community Services reported that One Place provided an organisational assessment of Redditch Borough Council together with an Area Assessment of the whole of Worcestershire.

The organisational assessment for Redditch Borough Council found that it performed adequately overall with priorities focused on issues that mattered to local people. However, there were service areas where improvements should be made.

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The Area Assessment for Worcestershire had been given a 'red flag' for the differences in quality of life in Redditch, mainly in health and education.

The Head of Community Services reported that plans were in place to address these inequalities through:

- a) Redditch Partnership raising the profile of the inequalities issue;
- b) Head Teachers and representatives of the Redditch Partnership working together to prepare an Action Plan that would address inequalities in education;
- c) Health Group meetings;
- d) Teenage Pregnancy Group meetings; and
- e) Scrutiny of the Local Strategic Partnership.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

185. COUNCIL FLAT COMMUNAL CLEANING - FIRST STAGE MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received an update on progress in implementing some of the recommendations of the Council Flat Communal Cleaning Task and Finish Group as follows:

- a) Decisions on what to do with the cleaning contract that would expire on 10th June 2010 had been put on hold because of the WETT programme. Potentially it would be separated into three contracts for Housing Communal Areas; Sheltered Accommodation; and public buildings.
- b) A revenue bid to clean and reseal the flooring of the three storey flats had been approved and work would commence in April 2010.
- c) Electric Meter readings on the communal lighting had been carried out at Abberton House and occupancy sensors would be installed in March 2010. If savings and safety levels prove acceptable funding would be pursued to roll out the

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programme to all other blocks. Residents' feedback would be obtained during weekly clinics.

- d) An air freshener and security cage has been ordered and would be installed by the Council before the end of February. Feedback would be requested from the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASBO) staff based at Winyates.
- e) No smoking stencils had been trialled by the Housing Capital team. They had been found to be unsuitable for use on uneven surfaces. Rigid plastic signs were now to be fitted.

Officers were asked to provide an update on progress with regards to the consultation which was to be carried out regarding changes to the cleaning contract.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **Officers to provide further clarification about the progress with the consultation process; and**
- 2) **the report be noted.**

186. PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LEISURE AND TOURISM, COUNCILLOR P ANDERSON - ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair welcomed Councillor Anderson, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism to the meeting. Councillor Anderson presented his report in accordance with the questions set by the Committee.

- a) Can you guarantee that Redditch's Leisure Services will continue to be delivered in the 'Redditch way' and not in the 'Bromsgrove way'? (i.e. We won't be begging Wychavon District Council to run our Leisure Services).

He reported that some leisure services, particularly sports facilities, had been affected by the recession with fewer people attending and income being reduced. However, the Council had continued to work with clubs, e.g. the swimming club at Hewell Road Pool, which had been successful at County level.

The Council had attracted funding from the British Cycling Federation, which together with Section 106 monies had

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been used to provide one of the best BMX facilities in the country.

In respect of Community Centres he reported that three continued to be operated by the Council, three had new uses and three were now managed by other operators. Meanwhile, discussions were ongoing with NEW College regarding the REDI Centre.

Plans for changes at the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre had received all party support. The Head of Leisure and Culture informed Members that work on proposals for the future of the Centre, including the types of activities which could be provided from the site, was ongoing. Further reports would be made to the Executive Committee for their approval.

Visitor numbers at the Forge Mill Museum had fallen during the year because of the inclement weather.

A new operator had become responsible for Pitcheroak Golf Club in the summer of 2009. Their first year had been challenging because of bad weather but improvements were expected in 2010.

b) When will Shopping, Investing and Giving (SIG) be fully implemented?

Councillor Anderson reported that SIG would be fully implemented during the next financial year. Funding had been obtained to employ a Grants Officer for one year who would work with the Third Sector to help them shop for, or procure, services.

c) What have you instigated to involve more people in the arts in Redditch?

The Palace Theatre attracted middle aged and elderly audiences except for community based performances. It was felt that more young people needed to be attracted to performances to ensure continued use in the future. The Head of Leisure and Culture reported that Worcestershire County Council was consulting on a draft Arts Strategy for the County. He said that this would include an Action Plan for Redditch.

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- d) What do you do in your capacity as Portfolio Holder with responsibility for education?

Sure Start had been successful in Redditch but was an education service controlled by central government and Worcestershire County Council.

- e) What are you doing to help remove the red flag on educational inequalities?

The Head of Community Services informed Members that this subject would be dealt with more fully in the item covering the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

- f) What are your views about the two-tier, as opposed to the three-tier, education system?

Councillor Anderson said that he felt that both systems showed some merit. However, statistically he felt that it was very difficult to prove which system was better.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

(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 during the debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to the financial or business affairs of any person including the authority holding that information and contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with a labour relations matter between the authority and employees of the authority.)

(There is nothing exempt, however, in this record of proceedings.)

187. QUESTIONS FOR THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

Members were asked to suggest questions to be put to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The following suggestions were made:

- 1) Why has the Community Safety Advisory Panel not met this year?

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- 2) What do you view as being the remit of this Panel as opposed to the remit of the new Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel?
- 3) What evidence supports the assessment that fire coverage in Redditch has not been adversely affected by the reduction in manpower?
- 4) Which projects that have been delivered do you think have had the greatest impact on Community Safety in the Borough and why?
- 5) Are there any plans to extend CCTV coverage in the Borough?

188. CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY - ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer informed Members that the Centre for Public Scrutiny's Annual Conference would take place on 30th June to 1st July 2010 in London. Members were invited to express their interest in attending the conference.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **Officers circulate the invitation to attend the conference to all Members; and**
- 2) **Officers note Councillor R King's request to attend the conference.**

189. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

190. WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer reported that pre-scrutiny of the Business Centre Review had been postponed to the meeting of the Committee on 7th April 2010.

No dates had been identified for the pre-scrutiny of reports on the subjects of: Church Green Improvements; and the Private Sector Home Support Service. This was because no date had been

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identified for these reports to be delivered for the consideration of the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

191. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that

under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism – Annual Report [as detailed in Minute 186 above.]

The Meeting commenced at 7pm
and closed at 9.30pm

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Chair