

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 4th June, 2020

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Julian Grubb, Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services
Councillor David Thain, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management

Officers:

K Dicks, K Hirons, J Pickering and D Riley

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and J Gresham

100. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

101. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillor Joe Baker stated that he had been in contact with officers in order to clarify with them that he did not have a potential conflict of interest in respect of item 5, Parking Enforcement Task Group, as his business, Omega Therapies, previously received support under the Supporting Small Business Fund. It was confirmed by officers that he did not have a conflict of interest as his business was not eligible for a grant from the Discretionary Business Rates Fund which would be discussed as item 5 on the agenda.

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Chair

There were no declarations of any party whip.

102. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Monday 17th February 2020 be approved as a true and correct record.

103. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

104. DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS GRANT POLICY

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented the Discretionary Business Grant Policy report and in so doing highlighted the following matters for Members' consideration:

- Additional funding was from Government and was designed to capture those businesses that were not eligible in the initial round of funding.
- Some criteria was prescribed by Government including initial priority groups that would be awarded funding.

The Revenues Manager introduced the Discretionary Business Grant Policy and explained the scheme to Members and in doing so highlighted the following:

- The funding round would be opened in June for two weeks and that claims would be assessed at the end of the round and not on a first come first served basis.
- There was a fixed amount of funding and no other funding could be utilised.
- The claims would be prioritised taking into account a number of factors including the initial Government criteria.
- Just over 1,200 businesses were identified during information gathering for the previous funding scheme and

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out of that number the Council had paid out 1,045 (86%) grants.

- Organisations that were solely for political purposes were to be excluded from the scheme.
- There would be a post-assurance scheme in place to ensure that all businesses that were awarded funding were indeed eligible and a robust recovery plan was in place for any businesses that had not received funding because they had provided inaccurate information at application.

Councillor Thain, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, paid tribute to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources, the Revenue Services Manager and their teams for all of the hard work that been carried out in putting together the complex scheme. He confirmed that through all of the preparatory work that had taken place that, going forward, Redditch Borough Council had a clear overview of all businesses in the Borough and this data would be useful in the future.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the communication with businesses about available funding and it was clarified to Members that any businesses that had previously contacted the Council regarding funding but were not previously eligible would be contacted, the criteria made clear and to inform them that this new scheme had been introduced. The scheme would also be featured on social media channels and on the Council's website. It was explained to Members that all of the funds would be allocated and that the figures in the table of the main report were estimates based on the information that was available at the time the report was drafted.

Members questioned what the time frame would be from receipt of application to allocation of funds. The Revenue Manager stated that once the scheme had closed all available resources would be utilised in assessing the applications received. The funds would hopefully be available to applicants by the end of June 2020. Members questioned whether there had been any issues with the receipt of funding for businesses during the previous schemes and it was confirmed that in a small number of cases there had been issues with the eligibility of businesses which had been assessed

based on historic information. The Revenues Manager reiterated to Members that there was an assurance process in order to ensure that public funds were being used appropriately.

The Chair asked that it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked the Executive Director Finance and Resources, the Revenues Manager and asked that their teams be thanked for all of their hard work. The Chief Executive of Redditch Borough Council echoed the thanks for allocating as many grants as quickly as possible and in gathering information from local companies to establish a clear overview of businesses within the Borough.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

105. WORK PROGRAMME AND PLANNING

The Senior Democratic Officer presented Members with the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme in order to discuss and provide an opportunity for Members to add items for scrutiny in addition to considering if there were any items that might be suitable for Task Groups and Short-Sharp Reviews for the municipal year 2020-2021.

It was explained to Members that at a meeting attended by the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, suggestions had been made of possible work programme items to be included and the Chair was keen to see if Members were interested in taking these ideas forward.

The following was highlighted to Members:

- Any items selected for overview and scrutiny should be of interest to the local community.
- That, as per the Constitution, any Task Groups suggested would be subject to agreement of terms and reference in a scoping document.

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Suggestions were made by Members in regard to the ideas that were put forward and it was decided that the following could be suitable topics for Task Groups investigations for the municipal year 2020-2021:

- Reception children overweight
- Dementia Diagnosis
- Clean Air Government Funding including cycle lanes
- Road Safety in Redditch

It was suggested that if Members were interested in initiating the above items for a Task Group investigation they should contact Democratic Services and complete a scoping document.

The Chair noted that some Members had conveyed an interest in doing a piece of scrutiny regarding Rubicon Leisure. The Chief Executive stated that the Committee should consider that this be put on hold until the end of the year as business plans for Rubicon were currently being reviewed. Members agreed that this would be satisfactory.

RESOLVED that

the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.

106. PARKING ENFORCEMENT TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor Shurmer presented the Parking Enforcement Task Group – Final Report. He thanked the members of the Task Group for taking part and explained the background of the Task Group and its importance given the number of enquiries Members received from residents regarding parking enforcement.

It was explained to Members that the Parking Enforcement Task Group had interviewed representatives of various organisations during its investigation including Worcestershire County Council (WCC), Wychavon District Council, West Mercia Police and each Member spent a day shadowing Parking Enforcement Officers working in Redditch.

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It was explained to Members that there were some issues that the Task Group felt needed to be addressed. In particular, introducing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) on zigzag lines outside schools in the Borough and the agreement with WCC that if excess income was generated from issuing Parking Contravention Notices the profit must be returned to Worcestershire County Council (WCC). However, Redditch Borough Council received no reimbursement if, at the end of the financial year, a loss was incurred by the Council from running the service. It was confirmed by the Chief Executive of Redditch Borough Council that in order to change the terms of the agreement between WCC and Redditch Borough Council two years' notice would need to be given.

Councillor Shurmer thanked the Senior Democratic Services Officer for all of her hard work in organising the presentations and interviews for the Task Group and congratulated her for producing a comprehensive final report.

Members of the Task Group stated that they had found the investigation extremely useful and this had helped them in their understanding of the complexities of parking enforcement.

The Environmental Services Manager stated that the Parking Enforcement investigation had been a great process for Members to undertake and was pleased that Members had enjoyed the process and commented that the report was very welcome. The Members discussed in detail the recommendations made in the report. In regards to the first recommendation it was suggested that a more formal process should be undertaken when contacting the Worcestershire Leaders' Board and rather than just a discussion undertaken, a letter be sent from the Leader of Redditch Borough Council regarding the introduction of TROs for all zig-zag lines outside schools in the Borough.

The second recommendation was subject to the successful implementation of recommendation 1. It was felt by some Members that given the service already sometimes ran at a loss, to spend further money on the employment of another Civil Enforcement Officer might not be a good investment. Members noted that it was

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important to consider the extra officer as it would help increase the safety of children and parents around schools but as it might take some time to implement the TROs around schools perhaps it would be more useful to re-visit this recommendation once the TROs were in place.

It was suggested that the phrase 'formally request' be added to recommendation 1 in order to give it more weight. The recommendation was made by Councillor Baker and was seconded by Councillor Fry.

On being put to a vote the proposal was agreed.

It was suggested that the phrase 'should consider funding' be added to recommendation 2 in order to reflect the financial implications of creating a new Civil Enforcement Officer role. The recommendation was made by Councillor Akbar and was seconded by Councillor Fleming.

On being put to a vote the proposal was lost.

At the end of the debate all five recommendations were considered, subject to the amendment that had already been agreed to recommendation 1.

On being put to a vote the proposal was agreed.

Councillor Grubb, Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services, welcomed the report and said he would happily support it at Executive Committee.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) that at a meeting of Worcestershire Leaders' Board the Leader should raise the need to introduce Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) for all zigzag road markings outside schools in the county. As part of this process the Leader should formally request that Worcestershire County Council write to the Secretary of State for Transport to request that additional, ring-fenced funding**

be provided to Worcestershire County Council that can be invested in introducing these additional TROs;

- 2) subject to the successful implementation of Recommendation 1 above, Redditch Borough Council should fund an additional Civil Enforcement Officer post dedicated to enforcement action around schools, to work term-time only;
- 3) Officers from Redditch Borough Council work with Worcestershire County Council, local schools and West Mercia Police to develop a strategy to tackle problem parking near schools;
- 4) the need for road markings to be replaced as soon as possible after resurfacing work has been undertaken should be discussed at a forthcoming Redditch Highways Forum meeting. All Worcestershire County Councillors representing a Redditch division should be provided with a copy of the group's final report to facilitate a discussion of this subject;
- 5) training in respect of parking enforcement arrangements in the Borough should be provided in a single training session each municipal year as part of the member induction programme. New elected Members should be offered the opportunity to shadow a Civil Parking Enforcement Officer; and

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

107. ANNUAL REPORT 2019 - 2020

The Chair presented the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2019-2020 and thanked the Vice-Chair, Councillor Debbie Chance, and the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their hard work over the previous year. He also thanked Democratic Services and Officers for all of their work and

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support particularly behind the scenes in the provision of reports and ensuring that Members were fully briefed. The attendance of the Portfolio Holders at the meetings was also noted and the Chair thanked them for their support of officers at meetings throughout the year.

There was discussion regarding the unusual nature of the work of the Committee at the end of the municipal year, given the outbreak of Covid-19 and Officers were once again thanked for the way all of the changes to their working practices during this time were conducted.

It was noted that there had been successes made in working together as a Committee over the last municipal year and that the majority of the recommendations made to Executive Committee were cross-party and, although not all were agreed, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role as a critical friend was carried out well. It was noted that all recommendations made to Executive Committee from the Budget Scrutiny Working Group were approved and the Chair thanked Councillor Wheeler, as Chair of Budget Scrutiny Working Group, for all of her hard work. It was hoped by the Chair that the meetings between the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny that were initiated during the year would continue in addition to the attendance at Overview and Scrutiny meetings of Portfolio Holders.

The Chair highlighted some of the varied areas that the Committee had worked on over the year and thanked Members of the Task Groups, the Chair, Councillor Jennifer Wheeler, of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and the Chair, Councillor Andy Fry, of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group along with Councillor Chalk who provided feedback from the external scrutiny bodies over the course of the year. Members of these Groups also thanked the Chairs in providing support and thanked Councillor Baker, in particular, in his role as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for a successful year.

Democratic Services undertook to make the typographical changes to the report as highlighted by Members.

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RESOLVED that

the report was noted

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

Members considered the minutes from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Monday 24th February 2020.

There was a brief discussion of the boundaries of the Parish of Feckenham and officers undertook to send a map of the parish to Members.

Members requested a presentation by way of an update on the Domestic Abuse Policy and it was suggested that this item could be a valuable topic for a Short Sharp Review or Task Group investigation alongside pre-scrutiny.

During consideration of this item Members also considered the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st June to 31st October 2020 and the Housing Revenue Account Strategic Improvement Plan Progress Report was added to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for pre-scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 24th February 2020 be noted; and**
- 2) the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st June to 31st October 2020 be noted.**

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

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

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

Councillor Wheeler explained that there had been one meeting of the group since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Budget Scrutiny Working Group Work Plan was discussed and it was decided that the group would like to meet with Professor Peter Latchford, from Black Radley, again to discuss the Commercialism policy. In addition to this it was decided that Head of Services would be invited to each meeting to discuss budgets in their specific service area.

b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Andrew Fry

Councillor Fry explained that there had been no meetings since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting therefore there was nothing to report to the Committee.

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

Councillor Chance explained that there would need to be one more meeting of the Committee in order to complete the final report and then report back to the Committee.

110. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Chalk explained that there had been no meetings since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting therefore there was nothing to report.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm
and closed at 8.20 pm

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