

Executive Committee

10th March 2010

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Carole Gandy (Chair), and Councillors P Anderson, J Brunner, B Clayton, W Hartnett, N Hicks, C MacMillan and M Shurmer

Also Present:

Councillor R King and M Collins (Vice-Chair, Standards Committee)

Officers:

S Hanley, C Flanagan, A Walsh, H Bennett, T Kristunas, K Cook, J Godwin, D Taylor, E Hopkins, D Wheeler, M Bough and J Divala

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

257. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Braley.

258. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Anderson and B Clayton declared personal and prejudicial interests and Councillor Gandy declared a personal interest in Item 13 (Voluntary Sector Grant Applications 2010/11) as detailed separately at Minute 269 below.

259. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader announced, with great regret, the passing that afternoon of Councillor Jack Field. Those present were invited to respect a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Field and his service to the Council and local community.

The Chair advised that the following items of business, scheduled on the Forward Plan to be dealt with at this meeting, had been removed from the Forward Plan:

- Enforcement Policy; and
- Shared Electoral Services

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Chair

The Chair also advised that she had accepted the following matters as urgent business:

Item 4 – Executive Committee Minutes, 22nd February 2010;

Item 14 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes, 3rd February 2010;

Item 15 – Shared Services Board Minutes, 1st March 2010; and

Item 20 – REDI Centre – Procurement of Alternative Service Provider – Update

260. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 2nd February, 17th February and 22nd February be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

261. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 3, OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2009

The Committee received the latest quarterly report on the Council's performance against a range of local and national indicators.

It was reported that, generally, the indicators were demonstrating that the Council was performing relatively well. For those areas where targets were not being met recovery plans had been put in place to address under-performance.

Members expressed a particular interest in several of the targets. There was concern once again at the validation of the claims made in respect of concessionary journeys and questions raised around the use of smart card technology by the bus companies concerned.

Levels of detritus were an area where the Council was reported to be failing to meet targets. Members noted that that this may in part be the result of a lack of action by the Highways Authority in maintaining drains and that there were significantly fewer complaints about littering from local residents than had been the case.

Officers undertook to provide:-

- i) Councillor Hartnett with additional information on the numbers of concessionary journeys per year (ET 015) following the meeting;
- ii) Councillor Anderson with an update on the projected year end figures for the number of working days lost to the local authority due to sickness absence per FTE staff member (BV 012) following the meeting; and
- iii) Councillor MacMillan with additional information on the impact of fraud on Housing Benefits overpayments (BV 079b (iii)) following the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the update on key performance indicators for the period ending December 2009 be noted.

262. QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 3, SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2009

Officers reported that the Council was set to exceed the target for savings by £127,000 in the current year to bring the total savings for the year to around £800,000.

Anticipated income from a number of areas had failed to meet expectations during the current financial year, including that from the commercial hire of the Civic Suite and income from the imposition of off-street parking charges.

A significant variation from predicted income had occurred in respect of the Council's Leisure Centres and other sporting facilities. Income was higher than in the previous year but was failing to meet the enhanced projections that had been made for 2009/10. The under-achievement primarily resulted from the poor weather experienced during the winter which had had a particularly significant impact on outdoor facilities. The introduction of free swimming for under 16s and over 60s had also resulted in a loss of income to the Council. On a more positive note, it was expected that income during the fourth quarter would surpass that achieved during the first three quarters of the year.

Officers reported on a number of measures that were being initiated to maximise the use of the sports facilities and generate additional revenue, particularly during off-peak periods. It was anticipated that matters would be brought in hand by the summer to ensure that income targets were achieved for 2010/11.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

263. QUARTERLY MONITORING OF FORMAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS - QUARTER 3, SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2009

A report was received that provided an update on the performance of the Council in the handling of complaints. The key issues to arise from the report were that improvements were being experienced in most areas and the direction of travel was generally positive.

Officers undertook to speak to Councillor Shurmer following the meeting in respect of problems concerning the disabled blue badge scheme about which he had been notified by a number of residents.

RESOLVED that

the update on complaints and compliments for the period October – December 2009 be noted.

264. QUARTERLY MONITORING OF THE BENEFITS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - QUARTER 3, SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2009

Members considered a report setting out the performance of the benefits service during the third quarter of the year and against the Benefits Service Improvement Plan. Officers reported that progress against the targets set out within the Plan was positive. Among the achievements were the expectation of receiving a 100% subsidy, a reduction in the numbers of appeals and work that was being carried out with the third sector in respect of the take-up strategy.

Officers within the Benefits team were commended for the work that had been undertaken to reach the present position.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

265. HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

A report was received setting out proposals for the re-commissioning of the current Care and Repair agency services in partnership with Worcestershire County Council, Supporting People, the Worcestershire PCT and the six District Councils.

The risk to the Council in not proceeding with this course of action was spelled out to Members, with a decrease in the amount of central Government money being made available to fund the service within Redditch and, therefore, local residents receiving a poorer service than the remainder of the County. This was the outcome of the Supporting People contract being provided county-wide from 2010/11, replacing the existing arrangements whereby contracts were in place for both the north and south of the County.

The practical implication of the proposals was the expansion of the present service and a transfer of existing staff under TUPE arrangements to Festival Housing Group. There were ten staff currently employed by the North Worcestershire Care and Repair Service, based in Redditch, who would be affected. The team would be located in Redditch for the time being.

Members noted that the proposed contract with Festival Housing Group was for a three year period, with the option of a two year extension, at the expiry of which the contract would be subject to a tendering exercise.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Council agree the commencement of the new Countywide Home Improvement Agency (HIA) from April 2010 provided by Festival Housing Group;**
- 2) **the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services finalise and enter into the necessary legal arrangements to implement the transfer and commencement of the new service; and**

RESOLVED that

- 3) **the new HIA be supported through the use of revenue and capital base budget contributions that are committed to the current service arrangements with the North Worcestershire Care & Repair Agency.**

266. REDDITCH HOUSING ADVICE AND HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND ENHANCED HOUSING OPTIONS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Committee received the outcome of the review of the Redditch Homelessness and Housing Advice Review which considered current services, identified progress made since the Redditch Homelessness Strategy was published in 2003 and highlighted the lessons learned during the initial stages of the two-year 'Trailblazer Initiative'.

Members were delighted at the impact resulting from the change of emphasis within the service. The fall in the number of Statutory Homeless Acceptances had fallen very significantly during the previous 18 months and was continuing.

It was reported that the numbers of successful preventions had increased tremendously. Officers worked to process those cases where there was the greatest risk of homelessness, employing a triage system to prioritise those who were the most vulnerable.

Officers were commended for their work in improving the effectiveness of the service.

RECOMMENDED that

subject to community consultation and Members' comments, the Enhanced Housing Options Strategy be approved and implemented.

267. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2010/11 TO 2012/13 AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY

Members considered proposed limits to be set under the Prudential Code for borrowing which the Council was required to agree before the start of the 2010/11 financial year. Members' approval was also being sought for the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for 2010/11.

The meeting was informed that the Council was currently a net payer of interest which was a reflection on the present spending on the Council's Capital Programme. It was noted that the prevailing financial conditions could result in restrictions on borrowing and restrictions on future capital spending. In response to concern raised at the possible impact of constraints on future borrowing, Officers clarified that local authorities had the discretion to borrow in anticipation of capital schemes, but the implications for the Council's existing base budgets were highlighted. It was acknowledged that this was an issue that might be considered as an issue going forward.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Prudential Indicators as set out in the report be approved; and**
- 2) the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2010/11 be based on the estimated life of the assets financed from borrowing.**

268. TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT

The Committee considered a report setting out a Treasury Management Strategy for 2010/11. It was reported that the Strategy was largely unchanged from that in use at the present time.

Officers highlighted an amendment that was to be made to the Strategy, as printed, this being the reduction of the maximum amount placed with any single institution from £1 million to £500,000 [Appendix A, Paragraph 7.1 - Specified Investments – Monies placed on call or for less than 3 month]

RECOMMENDED that

the Treasury Management Strategy for 2010/11 be approved.

269. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANT APPLICATIONS 2010/11

The Committee considered the recommendations of the Grants Assessment Panel in awarding grants to voluntary sector organisations for 2010/11.

Members who had been on the Grants Assessment Panel commented that the new Policy had proved difficult to operate and a recommendation had, therefore, been made to the Committee requesting that this be referred for further review. Officers highlighted that the most significant issue was with the Shopping element of the Policy, resulting in it not being implemented in time for the current funding round. The Giving element had also proved difficult for Members to implement. It was anticipated that an improved process would be in place for the 2011/12 funding round.

Officers commented that the Shopping element of the Policy would cover those larger organisations from whom the Council could expect, in future, to procure services, whereas the Giving element would represent a much smaller portion of the overall budget and, consequently, very much smaller individual grant donations.

Members wished to clarify that the figure of £10,000 in paragraph 5.7 had been incorporated as a purely indicative figure and did not represent a financial limit imposed by the Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1) grants be awarded to voluntary sector organisations as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of this report, subject to Council approval of the budget;**

- 2) **£3,000 be donated to Redditch Arts Council, for 2010/11; and**
- 3) **the policy on funding the voluntary and community sector organisations be reviewed.**

(Prior to consideration of this item, and in accordance with the requirements of Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000, Councillors Anderson and B Clayton declared personal and prejudicial interests in view of their involvement in local voluntary sector organisations, and withdrew from the meeting. Councillor Gandy declared a personal interest in view of her spouse's nominal financial interest in a local voluntary sector organisation.)

270. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd February 2010 be noted.

271. MINUTES / REFERRALS - SHARED SERVICES BOARD, 1ST MARCH 2010

The Committee considered the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Shared Services Board.

RESOLVED that

the following targets be approved:

- a) **Cohesive Single Management Team.**
- b) **Achieve the savings targets associated with Shared Services / Joint working included within the Medium Term Financial Plan of both Councils.**
- c) **Ensure effective financial management arrangements are in place for shared service arrangements (Activity Based Costings).**
- d) **Ensure changes to the management structure / implementation of shared services are seamless from a customer perspective (to be monitored by self assessment and complaints and commendations).**
- e) **Harmonisation of Terms and Conditions.**
- f) **Implement medium term business cases – CCTV / Lifeline and ICT.**
- g) **Produce business case for North Worcestershire Shared Economic Development Unit and implement if agreed.**
- h) **Complete recruitment to the Single Management Team.**

- i) **Develop programme for consideration of further shared services between Redditch and Bromsgrove.**
- j) **Further implementation of shared services programme between Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils.**
- k) **Implementation of Regulatory Services.**
- l) **Ensure delivery of performance and financial aspects of agreed shared services.**
- m) **Ensure effective performance monitoring of shared service arrangements.**

272. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

Members received an update on the activity of the Council's Advisory Panels and other bodies. It was reported that the next meeting of the Church Hill District Centre Members' Panel would take place in April.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

273. ACTION MONITORING

Members considered the latest Action Monitoring report. It was reported that the visit by Members to the swimming pool in Coventry was scheduled to take place on 10th April 2010.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

274. EXCLUSION OF THE 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 paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

REDI Centre – Procurement of Alternative Service Provider - Update (as detailed at Minute 275 below);

275. REDI CENTRE - PROCUREMENT OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE PROVIDER - UPDATE

(During the 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 contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with a labour relations matter between the authority and employees of the authority.)

(This report had been accepted as a matter of Urgent Business – not on the Forward Plan and not having met the publication deadline – and was considered at the meeting as such, with the approval of the Chair, in accordance with the Council’s constitutional rules and the powers vested in the Chair by virtue of Section 100 (B) (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 to agree to matters of urgency being discussed by reason of special circumstances.

In this case the special circumstances were that the information, which was not available at the time of the agenda going to print, was required to be considered at the present meeting in order to provide the maximum opportunity for Officers to explore possible options and secure funding for adult education services at the facility.)

The Meeting commenced at 7.00pm
and closed at 9.03pm

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Chair