

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 22nd October,
2020

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Michael Chalk, Peter Fleming, Ann Isherwood, Mark Shurmer and Jennifer Wheeler

Also Present:

Councillor Nyear Nazir – Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services

Councillor Craig Warhurst – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement

In Attendance:

Dr Liz Altay - Public Health Consultant, Worcestershire County Council

Officers:

Derek Allen, Sue Hanley and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and J Gresham

36. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Andy Fry and Councillor Pattie Hill with Councillor Yvonne Smith attending as Councillor Hill's substitute.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Chair

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Councillors Salman Akbar and Councillor Michael Chalk declared in respect of Minute Item No. 41, Housing Strategy, that they were private landlords. However, as the strategy related all forms of housing more generally it was concluded that they did not have a pecuniary interest and they remained in the meeting.

There were no declarations of any party whip.

38. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 26th August 2020 and Thursday 3rd September 2020 be approved as true and correct records and signed by the Chair.

39. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

40. PRESENTATION FROM PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND - OVERVIEW ITEMS

The Chair introduced the Dr Liz Altay and thanked her for attending the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. Dr Altay clarified that her role was Public Health Consultant with Worcestershire County Council and not Public Health England. It was explained to Members that her attendance had been arranged in order to give a brief presentation on items that had been identified as important for further investigation at a meeting between the Leader of the Redditch Brough Council, the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chief Executive of the Council and agreed by the Committee at a meeting in December 2019.

Flu Vaccinations

It was explained that flu vaccinations were a very important tool in tackling Winter pressures and particularly this year in light of Covid-19. In previous years residents eligible for flu vaccinations were those aged over 65, under 65 with specific underlying health

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problems and pregnant women. Historically, the uptake of flu vaccinations in Worcestershire and Redditch had been quite good and higher than the England national average. The figures from last year that were received from the then Redditch and Bromsgrove (Clinical Commissioning Group) CCG for over 65s flu vaccination uptake was 73.4% and more specifically information from GP practices based in Redditch showed a 72.1% uptake. It was reported to Members that the aim was to try and achieve 75%, however very few areas achieved that target. It was reported that in England the national average uptake for the under 65s was 44.9% and in Redditch it was 46.6%. This year, in light of Covid-19 it was more important than ever to protect vulnerable residents and Central Government and NHS England had extended the eligibility for flu vaccination recipients to include children aged 2-11, to those in care homes and carers, to household contacts of those who were shielding, front-line health workers, social care workers and those aged 50-64 (once the vaccination programme had been delivered to the priority groups identified above).

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

Members were informed that fruit and vegetable consumption in Redditch was below the national average level and had been for a number of years. The indicators were based on the percentage of adults who were eating five portions of fruit and vegetables on a daily basis. It had appeared that the figures had got worse over the past three years. It was reported that the national average was 55% and in Redditch it was lower at 46.4%.

Alcohol Admissions

The Committee was informed that the alcohol admission rates in Redditch had been worse than the national average admission rate for the previous three or four years. The rates of alcohol admission were recorded using various methods. However, it was confirmed that the rate of admission to hospital where alcohol had been identified as a contributing factor was higher than the English average and appeared to have been rising over the last few years.

Dementia Diagnosis

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Members were informed that the Dementia diagnosis rate had been falling in Redditch over the previous two or three years. The rates of diagnosis were an estimate that was calculated by the number of older people that had been diagnosed by their GP versus the age and gender of the population of the particular area. The diagnosis rates were reported to Members and it was noted that in the Redditch the rate was 59% compared with the national average of 68.7%.

Childhood Obesity

It was reported to Members that the rates of childhood obesity in Redditch were lower than the national average. The figures for childhood obesity were calculated as part of the National Childhood Measurement Programme. The data that was provided to Members was in relation to the prevalence of childhood obesity of Reception Class and Year 6 children in Redditch.

The figures were as follows:

	Redditch	National Average
Reception Class children	16.2%	22.6%
Year 6 children	32.1%	32.9%

Members expressed an interest in the cost of the flu vaccination if residents did not fall within the priority group and were informed that the cost was between £12-£15.

In respect of the Dementia information that was provided, Members queried where the information regarding diagnosis of Dementia in the Borough was available. The Committee was informed that it was collected from GP lists and Public Health England profiles which provided dataset comparisons for Local Authority areas. It was agreed that the website information should be forwarded to the Democratic Officer in order to be circulated to the members of the Dementia Task Group.

Some Members expressed an interest in the number of the hospital admissions related to alcohol. The Committee was informed that the following information was available for 2018-19 years:

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- 610 admissions (narrow indicator)
- 2116 admissions (broader indicator).

There was further discussion regarding the impact that Covid-19 might potentially have on the diagnosis of Dementia and where information regarding any impact might be found. It was reported that the GP surgeries and CCGs held that information and currently, at this stage of the pandemic, the data might be more anecdotal and not as accurate.

The Chair invited the Head of Community and Housing Services to speak who reported some examples of the work that was being done in respect of the topics that had been presented. In doing so, she highlighted the following:

- Working with the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) in supplying volunteers for the flu vaccination programme
- The Starting Well Programme
- The Active Kitchen Project

The Chair thanked Dr Liz Altay for her detailed and interesting presentation and for her attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the presentation be noted.

41. PRE-SCRUTINY - HOUSING STRATEGY

The Strategic Housing Manager presented the Housing Strategy and in doing so highlighted the following:

- The Housing Strategy had previously been a County-wide strategy that was complex and a decision had been made to adopt a more localised approach to the strategy where tangible outcomes could be measured more easily.
- The Housing Strategy was divided into four areas Home Ownership, the Private Rental Sector, Social Housing and Homelessness.

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- The Housing Strategy was written prior to the Covid-19 pandemic however, Covid-19 had been included broadly in the document as a result of the pandemic.
- The Housing Strategy would be out for public consultation for four weeks.

The Chair invited Councillor Warhurst, as Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement to comment on the report and the following was highlighted:

- The new Housing Strategy provided actions and presented an opportunity to focus on housing growth.
- Redditch Brough Council, as the Borough's leading social housing provider, was increasing the amount of available stock of social housing.
- Home ownership was an important part of the strategy.
- This was a big piece of work and consisted of working with officers and partner agencies.

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

- Further clarification was requested on Housing First. Members were informed that the Council entered into a trial which involved getting rough sleepers off the street and provided a wraparound service for the needs of rough sleepers.
- The promotion of Right to Buy to tenants. The Committee was advised that the Right to Buy initiative resulted in a decrease of housing stock each year. It was confirmed that the details of the Right to Buy scheme were advertised widely and all information, that was statutorily required was available.
- The potential increase to Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the difficulties in regulating them and ensuring they were of adequate quality and standard. Members were informed that this was a difficult area to monitor and relied on tenants or landlords to inform the Council if there were changes made or complaints made.

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- The refurbishment of current housing stock. The Committee was informed that existing sites were being investigated for regeneration.
- The information in respect of the Right to Buy monies received by the Council and the importance of keeping Members informed of the timescales of the spend. It was confirmed, however that there was regular monitoring of the monies and this was reported bi-annually as part of the Strategic Improvement Plan. Officers undertook to provide information on the spend and to circulate accordingly.
- Further clarification was requested on the four areas in the Borough that were in the top 10% most deprived in England and what the challenges were for the strategy if it covers some of the most deprived areas in the country. It was explained that it was important to be flexible when implementing the strategy and how resources were used most effectively.
- The number of affordable homes that had increased year on year and the increase in building housing stock.
- The developments that had already received Planning permission which had not yet been built and the reasons for the delays.
- The stock condition survey that had recently been completed, which provided a programme of works for the next 20 years.
- Members requested a breakdown of those residents on the Housing Waiting List. Officers undertook to circulate this information to the Committee.
- It was discussed that there had recently been £445k awarded across Worcestershire to get rough sleepers off the streets. Members expressed an interest in the allocation of this funding for Redditch. It was agreed that this information would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

Members requested data from officers in respect of the numbers of houses that had been built and were still to be built in the Borough, this included housing that had been built with partners. Officers agreed that this information would be circulated to Members.

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The Chair thanked officers and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement for their attendance at the meeting and the detailed information they provided in respect of the Housing Strategy.

RESOLVED that

the Housing Strategy be noted.

42. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - CHAIR'S VERBAL UPDATE

The Chair invited Councillor Jennifer Wheeler in her capacity as Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel to present an update and the following was highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny panel met annually. The most recent meeting of the panel took place on 30th September 2020. Due to Covid-19 this meeting was held on Skype for Business. Along with officers, Councillor Nazir, as Portfolio for Community Services and Regulatory Services, was in attendance at the meeting.
- The agenda included an update on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP) and their strategic plan. Covid-19 had impacted on the timeline of the plan which had been delayed.
- £195k worth of funding had been awarded to the NWCSP by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for improvements to the CCTV scheme to upgrade. Further funding was awarded by the three District Councils: Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest which meant the total funding allocated for an ambitious scheme £339k. In addition to this, the PCC had recently awarded the scheme a further £65k to complete any outstanding work.
- The Nominated Neighbour Scheme had been very successful and information packs to support the delivery of the scheme were available. It was agreed at the meeting that Members of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel would all receive one of these packs for information.
- Due to Covid-19 there had been a delay in the delivery of school programmes due to lockdown. However, these

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programmes were due to recommence in October and future projects were planned.

- A report on Anti-Social Behaviour was presented by the officers, as previously requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Clarification of the number of tools and processes utilised when dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour had been provided in detail to the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked Councillor Wheeler and all of the members of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED that

the update in respect of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel be noted.

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

Members considered the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme which covered the period 1st December 2020 to 31st March 2021 and agreed that, in addition to those items already on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme, the following items should be pre-scrutinised:

- Church Green Draft Conservation Area and Management Plan consultation
- Matchborough and Winyates District Centres - Regeneration
- Redditch Town Deal Investment Plan.

The Senior Democratic Officer confirmed that the following items were due to be considered by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group:

- Finance Monitoring Quarter 2 - 2020/2
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2024/25 - Update Report
- Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant 2021/22

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- Housing Revenue Account Initial Budget 2021/22 to 2024/25

Further clarification was requested about the report in respect of the New Cemetery Provision and how this differed from the planning application for the site. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the report would follow after the application had been considered and would have a separate focus.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be updated to include the items for pre-scrutiny detailed in the preamble above;**
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 8th September be noted; and**
- 3) the content of the Executive Committee's work programme for the period 1st December 2020 to 31st March 2021 be noted.**

44. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Officer confirmed that there were no other changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme other than the changes that had been agreed under the previous item.

RESOLVED that

the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme be noted.

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

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

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

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Councillor Wheeler advised that there had been two meetings of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, held on 22nd September 2020 and 19th October 2020. During the meeting on 22nd September, a presentation was given by Professor Peter Latchford who provided an update in respect of the Commercialism Strategy including the development of business case planning. Professor Latchford had congratulated the staff on their engagement and the good work that had already been undertaken. It was agreed that Professor Latchford should be invited to attend a further meeting of the Working Group in January 2021.

At the meeting held on 19th October 2020, Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rate Collection was considered with a particular focus on Covid-19. Members had queried what was being done to help residents in the current financial situation. Fees and charges from the previous year were also considered prior to this year's draft proposal. This included a more streamlined approach to Fees and Charges with a clearer set of criteria. A recommendation was being considered by Members for the future setting of Fees and Charges and would be presented to the Committee in due course.

The Chair thanked all Members of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and officers that attended these meetings.

b) Dementia Task Group – Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk explained that there had been two meetings of the Task Group since the last Committee meeting. At the first meeting the scope of the Task Group was discussed and at the second meeting, Helen Broughton, Redditch Partnership Manager, was in attendance and provided a detailed presentation in respect of the Dementia services available in the Borough.

The Chair once again thanked all Members of the Dementia Task Group that attended these meetings.

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

In the absence of Councillor Andy Fry, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided an update for the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and informed Members that there had been no meetings of the working group since the last Committee meeting.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

46. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Michael Chalk introduced the item regarding External Scrutiny Bodies for Members' consideration and in addition to the written updates that he provided he directed Members to the relevant websites if they required further information on the topics discussed at the meetings.

The Chair thanked Councillor Michael Chalk for his written updates and noted that they were very useful when considering this item.

RESOLVED that

the updates be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.10 pm