

MINUTES

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 26th October,
2021

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors Brandon Clayton, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, Mike Rouse, David Thain and Craig Warhurst

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Kevin Dicks, Mike Dunphy, Clare Flanagan, Chris Forrester and Sue Hanley

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

26. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Peter Fleming and Gemma Monaco.

Councillor David Thain arrived after the start of the meeting, during consideration of Minute Item No. 29.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader explained that a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had taken place on 21st October 2021. During the meeting, Members had pre-scrutinised the Church Green Conservation Area report and had concluded their discussions by endorsing the recommendations in the report. The Executive Committee was asked to note this point when debating the item.

29. CHURCH GREEN CONSERVATION AREA ADOPTION

The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager presented a report in respect of the adoption of the Church Green Conservation Area.

A report on this subject had previously been considered by the Executive Committee in the 2020/21 municipal year, where draft proposals had been agreed. Officers had subsequently launched a

Chair

consultation exercise in February and March 2021. All local business owners in the conservation area had been directly contacted about this consultation process, which had also received coverage in the local press and had been promoted on the Council's website and social media accounts. The feedback provided in the 13 responses that had been received in this consultation process had been listed in the report alongside Officer responses to the points that had been raised.

The Council was working with partner organisations, including Worcestershire County Council and the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit (NWEDR) in respect of the Church Green Conservation Area. A number of key issues had been identified that would require partnership working, including actions in respect of the public realm and parking on Unicorn Hill and the Church Green area.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the consultation process that had been undertaken in relation to the Church Green Conservation Area. Members expressed some disappointment in the relatively low response rate to the consultation process. It was noted that those people and businesses that were not directly impacted by the proposals detailed in the report could still respond during the consultation process and this had been highlighted in the press coverage.

Reference was also made to the proposed amendments to the Church Green Conservation Area. Members agreed that it was important to protect the Borough's heritage and the Church Green Conservation Area would help in this process. In addition, Members welcomed the extension of the Church Green Conservation Area to include additional properties located on Alcester Street, as Members commented that many of these buildings had been constructed in the same period in which the buildings on Church Green East had been built.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Council approves the Church Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, and endorses its contents as a material consideration for planning purposes; and**
- 2) Council approves the designation of the proposed extension to the Conservation Area to include 5 – 11 Alcester Street.**

30. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services presented a report on the subject of the Redditch Local Development Scheme.

The Executive Committee was informed that the Council's Local Plan review process, for the preparation of Local Plan no. 5, had commenced. As part of the process, the Council was required to prepare the Local Development Scheme no. 7, which detailed the process and timetable for the preparation of the new Local Plan. The Local Development Scheme did not address the policies that would be included in the Local Plan No. 5, as this would be considered at a later date.

As part of the Council's work on the Local Development Scheme, consideration was being given to the requirement for other local authorities to seek the Council's views of their Local Plans, under a process known as the Duty to Co-operate. Officers prepared responses on behalf of the Council, though these could be amended by Members through the democratic process. In relation to the correspondence with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, the Council was agreeing a Statement of Common Ground, whereby a statement was agreed with Solihull regarding each Council's Local Plan.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the consultation process that would be followed for the Local Plan no. 5. Officers explained that there was a statutory period of at least six weeks of consultation, though Officers usually advised that the consultation period should be extended to eight weeks. In previous years, a range of methods had been used for consultation purposes in respect of the Local Plan, including press releases, social media and consultation with Feckenham Parish Council. Consultation events had also been held in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and other prominent locations in the Borough and, subject to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was possible that similar events could be held for the Local Plan no. 5, including potentially hybrid events.

Reference was made to the potential for local residents to submit their views during the consultation process. Members urged the public to participate in this consultation process, as this provided an opportunity for the public to influence the content of the Local Plan and this would ultimately have implications for future decisions on planning applications.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the update on progress on the Redditch Local Plan Review be noted;**
- 2) the Local Development Scheme No.7 for the production of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.5 be approved;**
- 3) the consultation responses provided to neighbouring and nearby authorities be retrospectively approved; and**
- 4) the Statement of Common Ground with Solihull Borough Council be approved.**

31. BUDGET FRAMEWORK REPORT

The Head of Finance and Customer Services presented the Budget Framework report for Members' consideration.

The report detailed the approach that the Council would be adopting to the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25. This work was being undertaken in a context in which the Section 24 Notice had been lifted from the Council but financial challenges remained in place for the authority. The Council's reserves and balances were only slightly above the minimum levels set for the authority. There was also a lot of uncertainty regarding local government finances as the Fair Funding Review had still not been completed by the Government. It appeared likely that the Council would only receive a one-year revenue grant settlement from the Government for 2022/23, which made it difficult to plan the Council's budget over a three-year period, though this would probably not be confirmed until late December 2021.

Officers intended to involve elected Members more in the budget setting process and this would take place at an earlier stage than in previous years. However, this would be challenging, particularly in relation to aspects of the budget setting process that would only be confirmed in late December to early February. A proposed timeline had been recorded in the report and as part of the process for Member engagement, Officers would be consulting with the Budget Scrutiny Working Group.

A new template would be introduced for financial reports, which would be presented in a manner that would reconcile the budget position to the previous budget. Officers were aiming to include information about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's finances in the report.

Members discussed the report and in so doing welcomed the proposed new template for reports about the Medium Term Financial Plan to Committee. The Committee also welcomed proposals to involve Members in the budget setting process at an earlier stage. The Financial Services team was praised for their hard work at a challenging time for the Council.

During consideration of this item, Members expressed concerns about the continued uncertainty in respect of Council budgets. Members called for the Government to provide greater certainty over a longer period of time than one year in respect of budget settlements to help Councils plan for the future.

Reference was made to the financial challenges that had been faced by Rubicon Leisure Limited during the Covid-19 pandemic and the implications of this for the Council's finances. Members commented that many leisure service providers had been similarly impacted by the requirement to close services during the pandemic. It was also noted that Rubicon Leisure Limited had made some difficult decisions designed to address the financial challenges.

RESOLVED that

the updated member engagement plan for the 2022/23 Budget and MTFP Report is noted and supported.

32. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair advised that all of the recommendations detailed in the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2nd September 2021 had been considered at the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd September 2021 be noted.

33. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

There were no referrals through the Overview and Scrutiny process or from the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

34. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The following updates were provided in respect of the Executive Advisory Panels and other groups:

- a) Climate Change Cross Party Working Group – Chair, Councillor Anthony Lovell

Councillor Lovell explained that a meeting of the Climate Change Cross Party Working Group was scheduled to take place in early November 2021.

- b) Constitutional Review Working Party – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party was due to take place on 3rd March 2022.

- c) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Nyear Nazir

Councillor Nazir commented that a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was scheduled to take place on 29th November 2021.

- d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Members were informed that a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group had taken place on 5th October 2021. During this meeting, Members considered information provided in completed surveys by new Members about the Member Induction Programme. Councillor Dormer expressed some disappointment concerning the number of new Members who had completed the survey. The group had also held an initial discussion about arrangements for the Member Induction process in May 2022.

During consideration of this update, Members briefly discussed the potential for Committee meetings to be live streamed, particularly meetings of the Executive Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chair explained that the Council did live stream some meetings, where significant public interest was anticipated in items on the agenda. However, the matter could be explored further.

- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

The Executive Committee was informed that a meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel had recently taken place. During this meeting, Members had considered proposals in respect of the Redditch Local Development Scheme.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 7th September 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.05 pm