

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Wednesday, 7th April, 2010

## MINUTES

### Present:

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

### Also Present:

Councillor C Gandy

### Officers:

J Staniland

### Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and A Scarce

### 213. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

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

### 214. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any Party Whip.

### 215. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meetings held on 17th and 22nd March 2010 be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.**

### 216. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered the latest version of the Actions List and specific mention was made of the following matters:

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Chair

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a) Action 4 – Civil Parking Enforcement Scheme

Members confirmed that the tour of the areas where the civil parking scheme was in operation, had still not taken place. It was agreed that Officers should resolve this matter as quickly as possible.

b) Action 8 – Fly Tipping and Security Access Systems

Officers confirmed that the information regarding the impact of the secure access system on levels of fly tipping in the Woodrow Centre had been circulated via email on 1st April 2010.

c) Action 10 – Centre for Public Scrutiny's Annual Conference

Officers advised Members that a place had been booked for Councillor Thomas to attend the conference.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

## 217. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY

There were no call-ins.

Members were advised that, at the Executive Committee meeting held on 31st March 2010, the Communications Strategy 2010-2013 had been recommended for approval to full Council. Reference had been made in this strategy to a number of the Neighbourhood Groups Task and Finish Group's recommendations. This demonstrated that action was already being taken to implement the Group's proposals.

The Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group's interim report had been considered at the same meeting of the Executive Committee. The recommendations contained in that report had been referred to the next meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership for consideration.

The appointment of Councillor J Pearce as Vice-Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel had also been endorsed by the Executive and recommended to full Council.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**218. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS**

There were no draft scoping documents for the Committee to review.

**219. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Committee received reports in relation to current reviews:

a) Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The Task and Finish Group continued to gather evidence and had spoken to two witnesses since the previous report. Some of the wording in the recommendations had been changed and most of the recommendations had been endorsed by the Executive Committee, which had referred the report for the consideration of the LSP.

b) Joint Worcestershire Hub Review

One meeting had taken place since the last report to the Committee. Currently the Group were awaiting reports from the members who had visited the various hubs. The main action of the group seemed to be to review the governance of hub rather than the system in its entirety. There appeared to be some sensitivity amongst Members around looking at area hubs. One of the difficulties seemed to be that there were individual ways in which the area hubs were operated and this would not be conducive to working together as there was no consistency. It was difficult to see what the Group was trying to achieve as they were still in the early stages of investigation.

Councillor Pearce commented that if any members had questions they would like to have raised she would be pleased to pass these on to the Group.

**RESOLVED that**

**the reports be noted.**

**220. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - CHAIR'S UPDATE**

Since the previous report to the Committee no further meetings had been held. The next scheduled meeting would be on 15th July 2010 and prior to this meeting a training session would take place on 17th June 2010. Invitations to attend would be sent to all members.

It was confirmed that a letter had been sent to West Mercia Police to invite them to nominate a co-opted member to join the Panel. To date no response had been received.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**221. BUS PASS SCHEME: COUNTY PROVISION - UPDATE**

There had been no further developments since the previous meeting of the Committee.

The Chair explained that this subject had been put on the agenda as a standing item in view of the implications of the changes which would take place for both the district and the whole of the county. Members discussed the difficulties in monitoring the new scheme and the financial implications, which were likely to be significant.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**222. GOOD SCRUTINY AWARDS SUBMISSION**

The Committee noted that the submission had been sent to the Centre for Public Scrutiny and an acknowledgement had been received. The submission had been endorsed by Inspector Ian Joseph of the West Mercia Police, Councillor Gandy and the Chief Executive, Kevin Dicks. Members were advised that the submission deadline had been extended and therefore it was likely that the short listing date would also be affected by this.

Members asked that Councillor Gandy and the Chief Executive note their gratitude. They also agreed that a letter should be dispatched to Inspector Joseph thanking him for his support.

**RESOLVED that**

the report be noted.

## 223. PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP

The Chair welcomed Councillor Gandy, the Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Partnership, to the meeting. Councillor Gandy presented her report in accordance with the questions set out by the Committee.

a) What was your view of the LSP Task and Finish Group's recommendations?

Councillor Gandy explained that many of the recommendations had already been implemented and confirmed that the Redditch Partnership Manager, who had recently been appointed, would assist the LSP with the delivery of work that had previously proved difficult to undertake. The Constitutional Review Working Party had recommended that from May 2010 'Leader's Items' should be a standing item on the agenda for full Council and the minutes of LSP management board meetings attached to the full Council agenda papers.

Concerns had been raised during the Executive Committee meeting over how the recommendations should be presented to the LSP as it was felt that the Council could not tell the LSP that it must adopt the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was therefore felt they should go directly to the LSP for endorsement. This view was subject to question because the Council was the lead organisation for the LSP. However, Councillor Gandy was confident that the recommendations would be accepted.

b) What do you feel should be the priority of your Portfolio?

Councillor Gandy felt that communicating with residents and promoting all the good things that the Council was doing in the town was a priority. This could be either on an individual basis, through the Redditch Community Forum or through third sector organisations. She expressed the view that the Council must continue to explain to residents what it was trying to achieve. Therefore, to date there had been seven road shows and she hoped to organise more of these events after the elections to provide an opportunity to talk to

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residents on a one to one basis. Members were also advised that the Leader's column in the local newspaper had been useful in promoting the good things that had been achieved in the town.

c) What do you believe are the (of working in partnership):

i) Strengths

Councillor Gandy felt that partnership working helped to avoid duplication and provided an opportunity to pool resources and knowledge, gained through input from a wider group of experts. Partnership working also spread the load and helped to encourage a shared ambition. Through working in partnership local organisations could develop greater understanding of local problems.

ii) Weaknesses

A lack of finance and staff capacity together with limited accountability and dissemination of information were felt to be weaknesses.

iii) Opportunities

Councillor Gandy felt the opportunities available included improved joint working and being able to get across a single message that the Council would not be able to achieve alone.

iv) Threats

Financial cuts were a serious threat and there was a possibility under those circumstances that people would retreat to "silo working". Consequently, there was a danger that the partnership would become a talking shop.

d) What approach do you intend to take to disseminate information about and performance details for the Local Area Agreement (LAA)?

The Partnership was committed to introducing a Communications Strategy, which would address the dissemination of information. Local LAA targets had to be

adhered to and monitored on at least a quarterly basis to ensure they were maintained. However, the Council had no control over the number of LAA targets, which were reported annually to Council. Furthermore, Councillor Gandy confirmed that the Council had no control over the national targets.

e) What has been most challenging about your role as Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Partnership?

Councillor Gandy advised that the biggest challenge was to encouraging people to believe that the Council did want to listen to and take notice of them. In addition, she had been working hard to gain a more powerful voice for Redditch at a regional level. In particular, this was being attempted through participating in regional/county partnerships as increasingly this was the most effective way to obtain additional funding for and attention to the area.

After general discussion, the Chair thanked Councillor Gandy for attending the meeting and for providing Members with a comprehensive response to the questions that had been raised.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**224. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee was advised that the Annual Report encompassed the four key principles of scrutiny as identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), the organisation set up to promote effective scrutiny in local government. The symbols representing these principles were featured, where appropriate, throughout the report.

Members discussed and agreed that the following points should be retained in the Annual Report:

a) The Council's Budget Setting Process

Attempts had been made during the year to enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to contribute to the budget setting process. However, in late 2009 members of the Committee had expressed concern that they had not been provided with an opportunity to pre-scrutinise the reports that had been produced as part of the budget setting process. This

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concern had been recorded in the Annual Report and members agreed to retain the request within the report that the Executive Committee and Officers help to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could play a more constructive role in the budget setting process in future years.

b) Areas for further development

The process of Portfolio Holder Annual Reports before the Committee had continued throughout the year. A number of members and Officers had suggested that this process could be strengthened to ensure that the Portfolio Holders were held to account for their work.

The level of public awareness of the scrutiny process in the borough was also considered to be a weakness, though it was acknowledged that the extensive consultation undertaken by the Neighbourhood Groups Task and Finish had started to address this to some extent. Members agreed that further work should be undertaken in the new year to promote scrutiny further and it was suggested that topics of interest to the public would need to be selected for policy reviews to encourage public engagement with the process.

c) Good Scrutiny Awards

It was agreed that on balance the Overview and Scrutiny process in Redditch was operating very effectively and this had been demonstrated through the Council's first submission in the CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards. Members agreed that the Council should continue to submit applications to this awards process in future years to highlight the Council's positive work in this area.

The Committee concluded that although Officer support had been reduced they were happy with the amount of work that the Committee had been able to achieve in the year. The Committee took the opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Officer for her hard work in supporting them over the year. The Committee also thanked the Chair for chairing the meetings and giving members the opportunity for open discussion.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

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## 225. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY: WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING EVENT

The Committee was advised that it should plan collectively for the Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Event and it would be helpful if Members could identify suitable dates as early as possible.

Members discussed the following potential topics that could be included on the agenda for the event:

### a) The Budget Setting Process:

The Committee agreed that it might be useful to invite a senior Financial Services Officer to attend the event alongside members of the Executive Committee. A full and frank discussion could then be undertaken regarding ways in which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could realistically contribute to the budget setting process in a constructive manner.

### b) Communications

Members commented that it might be appropriate to invite an Officer from the Council's Communications Team to attend the event. This Officer could help to advise Members about ways to increase public awareness and engagement with the scrutiny process.

### c) Portfolio Holder Annual Reports

To address one of the weaker elements of the scrutiny process identified in the committee's Annual Report it was noted that the subject of Portfolio holder Annual Reports could be discussed with members of the Executive Committee during the course of the event.

### d) Topics for Scrutiny 2010/11

A primary aim of the event would be to discuss and identify topics that could potentially form the focus of policy review and development work during the course of the year.

Members also discussed scrutiny related training opportunities. They agreed that it would not be suitable to suggest this for inclusion on the event's agenda as it could elongate the process and distract attention from planning the Work Programme for the

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year. However, they agreed that, due to the minimal funding available to support individual Councillors' training requirement in house training events provided a greater opportunity for Members to attend.

The Committee felt that the final programme for the event should be agreed by the new membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the 2010/11 municipal year. They therefore concurred that their suggestions should be noted for consideration at the first meeting of the Committee in 2010/11.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) the agenda for the Work Programme Planning event be considered in further detail at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2nd June 2010; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

## **226. WORCESTERSHIRE JOINT SCRUTINY MEETING**

The Committee was informed that this had been a productive meeting producing some good ideas following in depth discussion covering the pros and cons of joint scrutiny. Topics for discussion had included the current Worcestershire Hub Task and Finish review, the Worcestershire Enhanced Two Tier (WETT) process and partnership working.

During the course of the meeting it became apparent that scrutiny operated in different ways in each area. An agreement had been reached that a joint working protocol should be developed as soon as possible. This would be dealt with through the Worcestershire Scrutiny Officers' Network. The Scrutiny Officers met quarterly and it was agreed that the Chair, Vice Chair and Officers' meetings would similarly be held quarterly. It was anticipated that the next meeting would take place in July 2010.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

## **227. REFERRALS**

There were no referrals.

## **228. WORK PROGRAMME**

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It was noted that at a meeting on 24th February 2010 it had been agreed that Executive Committee members be invited to attend the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28th April 2010. This invitation had been extended to provide an opportunity for both sets of members to consider presentations on the subjects of the Gender Equalities Scheme and Youth Employment at Redditch Borough Council.

Members were advised that an Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny training session would take place on 10th June 2010 and would be delivered by the Scrutiny Officer. In addition, on 17th June training on the subject of Crime and Disorder Scrutiny would be extended to all members as only the members of the Panel had received this training to date. This session would be delivered by the Scrutiny Officer and the Head of Community Services, together with a member's perspective from the Chair of the Panel.

**RESOLVED that**

**the Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.05 pm