

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 8th July, 2021

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Debbie Chance (Chair), Councillor Jennifer Wheeler (Vice-Chair) (present from Minute Item No. 1-11) and Councillors Karen Ashley, Salman Akbar, Michael Chalk, Joanne Beecham, Alex Fogg, Julian Grubb and Lucy Harrison

Also Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer – Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships

Councillor Brandon Clayton – Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services

Officers:

Helen Broughton, Claire Felton and Carl Walker

Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham and Josef Galkowski

1. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

No apologies for absence were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillor Jenny Wheeler declared an Other Disclosable Interest in respect of Minute Item No. 13 due to the location of the site in relation to her residence. It was agreed that Councillor Wheeler would not be present for consideration of this item.

Councillor Joanne Beecham queried whether she should also declare an Other Disclosable Interest in respect of item 13 due to the location of the site in relation to her residence and business.

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Chair

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However, it was agreed that the location of the site was not considered to be in close proximity and therefore she would not be precluded from any discussions regarding this item.

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

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18th March 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRAINING AND WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING EVENT REPORT

The Democratic Services Officer presented the item in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Training and Work Programme Planning Event Report.

During consideration of the item the following was highlighted for Members' attention:

- Twelve non-Executive Committee Members were invited to attend an Overview and Scrutiny Committee training session on 7th June 2021. The training was facilitated by three Democratic Services Officers. Also in attendance at this was the Chief Executive, Kevin Dicks who provided an overview on the importance of scrutiny and its link to the Council's Strategic Purposes.
- Officers confirmed that additional training was organised for 1st July 2021. This was conducted as a 'mop-up' session for Members who were unable to attend previously. Three non-Executive Members were in attendance for this training.
- At both sessions, Members received a presentation on the various elements of scrutiny and the different methods by

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which it could be undertaken. Following this, members were split into several groups and were asked to take part in two interactive exercises. Members were first asked to reflect on issues that had been identified in their wards and assess whether they were suitable items for scrutiny. The second part of the exercise required members to determine how the overview suggestions linked to the Strategic Purposes of the Council, and finally, what the best way to scrutinise the topic would be.

- The following items were identified as potential Overview items during the next municipal year:
 - Parking
 - Landscaping
 - Speeding
 - Litter and cleanliness
 - Recreational activities for teenagers in the Borough
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - Housing Quality/ Houses of Multiple Occupancy and Void properties
 - Drug/ Alcohol abuse and addiction issues
 - Allocation of resources across the Borough

- Two Working Groups were currently underway and regularly reported back to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These were Performance Scrutiny Working Group and the Budget Scrutiny Working Group. In addition to these groups Members were reminded that there were two Task Groups being undertaken at present: the Dementia Task Group and the Short Sharp Review on Parking on Unicorn Hill. Members were informed that the Dementia Task Group report would be presented for Members' consideration at the meeting of the Committee due to be held in September 2021.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the items raised during the Overview and Scrutiny Training session would be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme; and**

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- 2) the issues raised as potential items for scrutiny, including pre-scrutiny, in 2021/22 as detailed in the report were noted; and
- 3) that members were encouraged to suggest items for scrutiny, including pre-decision scrutiny, throughout the year as and when they feel it would be appropriate be noted.

6. LANDSCAPING - OVERVIEW ITEM

The Head of Service for Environmental and Housing Property Services and the Environmental Services Manager were in attendance for the Landscaping overview item.

Members were reminded by the Chair that this area had been identified during the Overview and Scrutiny training discussed as part of the previous item.

During consideration of the item the Environmental Services Manager explained to Members that there were three Place Teams who carried out grass-cutting and litter-picking in the Borough. Each team covered a specific geographical area.

Some Members were particularly interested in the schedule of works for grass-cutting for each year. It was reported that there was not a specific schedule of works as so much of the cutting carried out was dependent on weather and ground conditions.

Members were keen to know which Place team covered which ward and Officers undertook to provide the information of the Place Team Coordinators and the areas they covered outside of the meeting. In addition to this, Members would be provided with the details of the Environmental Services Business Support Unit (BSU) where Members and residents could report any Environmental Services issues they had. It was highlighted to Members that reporting via the BSU was considered the best way to capture any requests and ensured that the service area was able to effectively manage the workstream and provide audit trails for any issues reported.

The Chair invited Councillor Brandon Clayton, who was in attendance in his role as Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services to comment on the update. He reported that a large number of staff were involved in grass-cutting across Redditch however he also stated that there had been delays experienced this year due to the replacement of the safety barriers along the Borough's highways by Worcestershire County Council.

RESOLVED that

the item in respect of Landscaping be noted.

7. COMMUNITY LOTTERY UPDATE

The Redditch Partnership Manager presented the Community Lottery update and explained that this was the regular 6-monthly update.

During the presentation of this item the following was highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The Community Lottery was established in 2019 as a mechanism for community groups to raise funds for themselves. It was facilitated by an External Lottery Manager (ELM), Gatherwell Ltd. who delivered the online Lottery on the Council's behalf.
- The Lottery took place every Saturday and the jackpot was a prize of £25,000 which was underwritten through the ELM contract.
- For each pound spent on the Lottery the following was allocated:
 - 50% to Good Causes
 - 10% for the operating costs
 - 20% towards prizes
 - 17% was allocated to the ELM with 3% VAT

It was explained to the Committee that the VAT could be claimed back by the Council.

- The Community Groups involved in the Lottery promoted it to their supporters. This meant that the more supporters the group had, the more funding would be received through the purchase of tickets.

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- There had been a slight dip in the numbers of players of the Lottery since the last report considered by Members at their Committee meeting held in January 2021.
- There was no allocated Council budget to promote the Community Lottery.

Members were interested in the table of data that had been provided as part of the report. The Redditch Partnership Manager explained that the information had been extracted from the dashboard and reflected the whole 18 months that the Lottery had been running. Some Members queried the discrepancies between the figures provided in the table and those that appeared in other areas of the report particularly regarding the amounts that had been received by Good Causes and requested clarification on these figures. Officers confirmed that they would provide further information and narrative on the table and circulate to Members.

During a detailed discussion Members expressed that it would be useful if future reports included the information on a year and year basis. This would help to provide a more useful comparison of how the Lottery was progressing. The Redditch Partnership Manager undertook to see if it was possible to present the data in this manner for future meetings.

It was explained to Members that prior to the Covid-19 pandemic research had been undertaken to establish the impact of the Lottery on local community groups. It was found that groups felt that they had been helped by the funding received by the Lottery. It was acknowledged, however, that some community groups had more local support which in turn resulted in greater funding being received.

There was interest from the Members regarding the prizes that were available. The Redditch Partnership Manager explained that there were a variety of prizes available. As well as the £25,000 jackpot there were smaller monetary prizes in addition to 'bolt-ons' which were provided by Gatherwell. Some Members felt that local residents might be more incentivised to buy tickets if the Lottery were better publicised and they were keen that some communications be released. Some Members of the

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Committee queried why residents would take part in this Lottery over alternative lotteries that offered higher monetary wins. Officers explained that most players chose to play to support local community groups and not necessarily to win a prize.

The Chair invited the Councillor Dormer, who was in attendance in his role as relevant Portfolio Holder to comment on the report. He explained that it was positive that the only a small number of participants had ceased playing the Lottery during the pandemic.

The Chair thanked Councillor Dormer for his attendance and took the opportunity to query the current position in respect of the Towns Bid. Councillor Dormer explained that although he sat on the Board the decisions made were not only Council decisions but a whole Board decision. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee queried whether it would be possible in order to better understand the process undertaken by the Board, the projects that were being considered and how the funding was allocated whether a Towns Bid Board member would be willing to come and talk to the Committee. It was agreed that this would be added to the Committee's Work programme for consideration in the future.

RESOLVED that

The Community Lottery Update be noted.

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

The Democratic Services Officer present explained that there had been some changes to the Executive Work Programme and that some items had been delayed. Any changes to items that had been selected for pre-scrutiny would be reflected on the Committee's Work Programme at the next meeting.

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- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 23rd March 2021 be noted; and
- 2) the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st August to 30th November 2021 be noted.

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to update any items on the Committee's Work Programme that had been suggested during the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

10. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORT

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

Councillor Wheeler reported that there had not been a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group so far during this municipal year. However, one had been arranged for early in September 2021.

At this meeting it had been agreed that an overview of the importance of the work of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group would be provided. It was hoped that this would be of particular use to newly elected Members of the Group.

- b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jennifer Wheeler

It was explained to Members that the first meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group had been arranged for 14th September 2021.

Councillor Wheeler advised Members that there would be changes to the way performance was scrutinised during this municipal year and that a more strategic approach would be taken.

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c) Dementia Task Group – Chair, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk explained that the final report for the Dementia Task Group was currently being written and was due for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee in September 2021.

d) Parking on Unicorn Hill, Short, Sharp Review – Chair, Councillor Joanne Beecham

Councillor Beecham informed Members that there had been a meeting of the Parking on Unicorn Hill Short, Sharp Review on 23rd June 2021. At this meeting information had been provided to Members regarding the work of the Licensing Committee and any potential overlaps with the work of the short, sharp review. An update would be provided to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED that

the Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups Update be noted.

11. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

a) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council representative, Councillor Chalk

Councillor Chalk informed the Committee that there had not been a meeting of the WMCA so far during this municipal year, but that a meeting was due to take place on 14th July 2021. He stated that he would provide an update at the next meeting of the Committee.

b) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council representative, Councillor Chalk

Members were provided with an update regarding the latest meeting of HOSC. Councillor Chalk explained that the majority of the meeting was concerned with Healthwatch. He provided contact details should Members wish to gather further information on the services Healthwatch offered.

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- c) Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) – Council representative, Councillor Chalk.

Councillor Chalk informed the Committee that there had not been a meeting of the GBSLEP so far during this municipal year, but that a meeting was due to take place on 9th July 2021. He stated that he would provide an update at the next meeting of the Committee.

During consideration of this item, the Chair of the Committee was keen to understand what The Garden Room's future was as part of the Alexandra Hospital and requested if there was any discussion in respect of the Garden Room meetings of HOSC that it be included in future updates. Councillor Chalk agreed that this was a very important area, and he would keep the Committee informed of any updates.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies Update be noted.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Under S100 A (4) 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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 of the said act, as amended.

Minute Item No. 13 – Land at Upper Norgrove, Webheath.

13. LAND AT UPPER NORGRÖVE, WEBHEATH - PRE-SCRUTINY.

RESOLVED that

the report in respect of the Land at Upper Norgrove be noted.

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(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which related to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

At the start of the debate in respect of this item Councillor Jennifer Wheeler left the meeting as she had declared an Other Disclosable Interest in respect of this item at the beginning of the Committee meeting due to the location of the site in relation to her residence).

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.14 pm