

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 21st October,
2021

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Debbie Chance (Chair), Councillor Jennifer Wheeler (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Karen Ashley, Joanne Beecham, Alex Fogg, Julian Grubb and Lucy Harrison

Officers:

Sue Hanley, Mike Dunphy and Mary Worsfold

Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham

28. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Chance informed the Committee that she may arrive late to the meeting. The Vice-Chair, Councillor J. Wheeler, chaired the meeting until 18:31 when Councillor Chance joined the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillors Akbar and Chalk.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no Declarations of Interest nor of any Party Whip.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 2nd September 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

Chair

31. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers registered on this occasion.

32. CHURCH GREEN CONSERVATION AREA

The Principal Conservation Officer presented Members with the Church Green Conservation area report including the Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Management Plan. During the presentation the following was highlighted for Members' attention:

- It was a statutory duty under s69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and conservation Areas) Act 1990 for the Council to designate any areas which they considered to be of special architectural or historic interest as a Conservation Area.
- The Conservation Area Appraisal had been prepared in order to provide a strategy to protect and enhance its character and support the wider regeneration of the town centre. The Conservation Management Plan identified strategies to protect and enhance the Conservation Area by addressing any issues that had been identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal. These issues had been identified as the following:
 - Poor state of the public realm
 - Poor state of shop fronts
 - Parking around the church
 - Parking on the corner of Evesham Walk/ Unicorn Hill
 - Vacant Units
- A consultation was carried out in February and March 2021 where letters were hand-delivered to occupiers of the Conservation Area and other interested parties which included Historic England and The Victorian Society. Thirteen responses to the consultation had been received, most of them dealt with issues that had already been identified and officers had dealt with the concerns that were raised.

Members were interested in particular areas of the Appraisal Plan and queried the outcome there would be for the church if

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they no longer received the income from parking around the church. Officers explained that the church would be approached, and a way forward would hopefully be identified that was suitable to both parties.

Also identified as an area of interest were the fountain and the Abbey stone located in Church Green. It was commented that both of these artefacts were in a state of disrepair and residents were keen to understand what the future plans were. Officers informed Members that the plans included the repair of the fountain, however they would undertake to provide further information to Members and circulate accordingly.

The Committee were pleased that the vacant shops would be included in the plans as they impacted on the look of the area. Members questioned whether it was likely that all of the Landlords would be happy to undertake improvements of their shop fronts. It was explained that the process would be a slow one. However, when plans like these had been undertaken before, once some of the Landlords had undertaken to make changes then other Landlords would be encouraged to make improvements, having seen that they were worthwhile.

The Strategic Planning Manager explained that some funding mechanisms had changed, and it was hoped that bids would be made in order to secure funding in the future. Members were advised that there were multiple parties included in this project and that it was not a one-person approach.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The 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**

33. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE

Councillor Wheeler introduced the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel update in her role as Chair of the panel. Members were informed that the panel meeting took place on 22nd September 2021 when they were presented with an articulate and highly informative presentation by Bev Houghton, the Community Safety Partnership Manager.

The Deputy Chief Executive was welcomed to the meeting to outline some of the background of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP). It was highlighted for Members' attention that the NWCSP covered three areas: Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest and that the annual update had focussed on the workings of the Partnership as a whole, not individual organisations and agencies. It was also made up of subgroups and tasking groups which functioned as the operational arms of the Partnership.

The Chair of the Panel presented the key areas to the Committee, as follows:

- Although the work of the Partnership had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic there had been a significant number of projects developed including work to prevent reoffending and the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol.
- Funding had been received from the Police and Crime Commissioner in order to improve CCTV including a digital upgrade.
- A large number of Youth Programmes had been undertaken both online and face-to-face. These projects included Empowering Young People Project, Young Citizens Challenge, Virtual Decisions Knife Crime Project and The Respect Programme. There were also projects carried out that ensured that some of the most vulnerable residents in the Borough were protected. These had included the Nominated Neighbour Scheme, the White Ribbon Scheme for victims of domestic abuse and security home improvement visits.
- Woodrow had been chosen as the recipient of the Safer Streets project funding in Redditch. It was explained that

some Members queried why Woodrow had specifically been chosen to receive the funding. It was noted that analysis of super output area data for safer street crime types in respect of Woodrow had reinforced its selection as the area of highest need. Members were informed that future funding would be available, and that residents should be encouraged to report incidents to the appropriate agencies.

In addition to the work of the NWCSP's work in Redditch, an update on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) was also provided to the Panel at their meeting. The Chair informed Members of the Committee of the various types of preventative action that could be undertaken in situations where ASB was identified. These were as follows:

- Introductory Tenancies
- Community Protection Warnings
- Community Triggers
- Restorative Justice

Councillor Wheeler thanked Bev Houghton and the team for their hard work over the past year and commented that more Members should be encouraged to attend the meeting when it occurred the following year. It was also noted that such was the value of the meeting that the scheduling of meetings should be increased.

Members were informed that the statutory requirement of the scrutiny of the Partnership was only once per year. However, it might be possible to have an additional scheduled meeting during the year on a specific topic that involved the Partnership. The Deputy Chief Executive undertook to speak to officers and establish what could be an appropriate level of meeting support and wider communications given the capacity of the team. It was also highlighted for Members' information that the Portfolio Holder attended the Partnership meetings and could potentially be a Member conduit for the future.

Some Members were keen to understand the process for reporting resident complaints in both Council homes and private properties. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this was dependent on the circumstances. However, it was explained that Members were

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always welcome to contact the relevant Senior Officer in order to progress the query or complaint.

RESOLVED that

The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel Update be noted.

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

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

The Chair reported that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had met on 6th September 2021, when the group had discussed the purpose of the Working Group, including the way it had worked in previous years and of the importance of regular scrutiny of the Council's Budget.

It was highlighted for the Committee the importance of working as a Critical Friend to the Executive. It was clarified that any recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group would be considered by the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to them being considered by the Executive. Members were informed that all previous recommendations made to the Executive had been agreed.

Councillor Wheeler provided information on some of the items that would be considered by the Group over the next municipal year. These included:

- Towns Fund
- Fees and Charges
- Budget Framework
- Budget Outturn
- Covid-19 Grants Update
- Brexit and the impact on the Borough

The Committee were informed that the next meeting of the Group was scheduled for 9th November 2021.

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

The Chair reported that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group had met on 14th September 2021. During that meeting, Members had been presented with an update from the Head of Housing Services. It was explained that an all-Member briefing had taken place in September regarding the Housing Service. It was stated that another session would be held again for any Members who had not been able to attend the initial session.

Several items had been included on the Work Programme for the next municipal year including understanding the Green Thread and its impact on Council's services and an introduction and training on the new Council dashboard which was due to be implemented by the end of 2021.

The next meeting was scheduled for 2nd November 2021.

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

Councillor Beecham informed Members that a meeting of the Parking on Unicorn Hill Short, Sharp Review had taken place on 21st September 2021.

At that meeting the Head of Planning and Regeneration and a representative from the Licensing Committee had provided an update regarding the licensing work that was currently underway in respect of the location of Taxi Ranks in the Borough. It was decided that since the Licensing Committee were undertaking work in this area, that the Short, Sharp Review would be paused until such time as this work had been completed.

RESOLVED that

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

35. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

The External Scrutiny Bodies Update reports were presented to the Committee for their consideration.

There were no questions regarding the updates from Members at the meeting. However, having noted that Councillor Chalk had submitted his apologies, it was agreed that should there be any questions they could be raised at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

The External Scrutiny Bodies Update reports be noted.

**36. SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK
PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY**

The Executive Committee's Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

It was noted by the Committee that the Financial reports were to be considered at the Budget Scrutiny Working Group meetings, and that if there were any recommendations, these would be presented to the main Committee for their consideration.

It was requested that the Growth Options for the Garden Waste Service be placed on the Committee's Work Programme in order to be pre-scrutinised prior to its consideration by the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED that

Subject to the preamble above, the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

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37. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.

38. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 7th September 2021 be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.35 pm