

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th January,
2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jennifer Wheeler (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Karen Ashley, Michael Chalk, Julian Grubb, Lucy Harrison, Luke Court and Emma Marshall

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Jo Gresham (via Microsoft Teams) and Sarah Sellers

55. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Councillors Chance, Clayton and Fogg with Councillors Marshall and Court as named substitutes for Councillors Clayton and Fogg respectively.

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

An 'Other Disclosable Interest' was received from Councillors Wheeler and Marshall in respect of minute item 58 due to their involvement in the Woodrow Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Steering Group. In addition to this, Councillor Marshall declared an additional 'Other Disclosable Interest' in respect of minute item 58 due to her involvement in Sports Redditch. It was agreed that all Members present would be able to take part in the discussions.

There were no declarations of any Party Whip.

57. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers registered on this occasion.

Chair

58. REDDITCH PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Chief Executive delivered the annual update in respect of the Redditch Partnership. Members were informed that Helen Broughton, the Redditch Partnership Manager, would be leaving the Council that she would be greatly missed by Officers. It was acknowledged that her work over the years had been invaluable, particularly during the past two years throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown.

The following was also highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) was produced by the Redditch Partnership and updated every three years. A mini refresh of the strategy was undertaken in 2015 and the four priorities of the SCS were reviewed each year by the Partnership. The current Priorities of the SCS were as follows:
 - Priority One – Health Inequalities
 - Priority Two – Education attainment, school readiness and raising aspirations of young people.
 - Priority Three – The economy of Redditch with a focus on providing a larger and more diverse job offer.
 - Priority Four – Lead on transformational change of services for citizens in Redditch.
- The work of the Redditch Partnership had been particularly important, and its benefits well received during the pandemic as it facilitated the coordination of communities in Redditch.
- The Redditch Business Leaders Group was chaired by Simon Hyde, CEO of Faun Zoeller, who was passionate about increasing skills within the Borough, particularly for young people. Members were informed that through this group an initiative called 'Power Up' had been rolled out. It was explained that this was a mentor scheme that worked with young people and schools within the Borough. During the pandemic the work of the Redditch Business Leaders Group had been crucial as it had worked closely with local

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businesses whose challenges included economic issues and staff shortages.

- Over the past two years, the work of the Redditch Community Wellbeing Trust (RCWT) had included working with those who had been impacted by Covid-19.
- The Redditch District Collaborative (RDC) was leading the partnership initiative in respect of the national agenda of Integrated Care Systems. It was reported that the RDC worked closely with Primary Care Networks. The Committee was informed that the RDC had three priorities: mental health and well-being, frailty and obesity. Although the demographic of Redditch did not necessarily experience the priority of frailty, it was noted that the Bromsgrove wards of Wythall and Hollywood were within the Primary Care Networks boundaries and that frailty was a priority in these wards due to their older demographic. Members were also informed that the RDC worked closely with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to align with their Here2Help directory.
- The work of the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) team was involved in the strengthening of assets within the local community. It was noted that an ABCD Steering Group had been established in Woodrow and this group had met regularly over the past year. Members were advised that funding had been awarded by WCC to establish Community Builders roles to work across Woodrow. These roles would be responsible to make connections between local people and services.
- The Wellbeing in Partnership newsletter had been initiated during the Covid-19 pandemic and had proved to be an extremely useful tool for communities and had provided information on a range of local services all in one place. This was also true of the Knowledge Bank which provided details of local services and could be found on the Council's website.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his update and requested it be noted specifically that her thanks be extended to Helen Broughton for her work over the years as Redditch Partnership Manager. It was noted that Helen was a lively, dynamic

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and hardworking officer who would be greatly missed. Members were in agreement and wished Helen well in her new career.

Members questioned who would be responsible for looking after the Asset Based Community Development work going forward. It was reported that the Head of Housing and Community Services would be looking after the work for the immediate future with a view to recruiting a new Community Services Manager post, which, it was explained, was currently vacant.

During further detailed discussion Members were interested in the following:

- The skills available in the local area and whether the delivery of skills met the needs of local businesses. Members were informed that it was not Redditch Borough Council's role to deliver the skills to the people of the Borough however it was important that the Council worked alongside relevant partners to better understand the needs of local businesses in order to upskill residents which could result in them securing better jobs. It was noted in particular that there was a need for digital manufacturing skills in the Borough. It was clarified, however, that not many courses were available that offered upskilling in this particular skills area. It was stated that manufacturing apprenticeships would be particularly useful for Redditch and the local businesses.
- The inclusion of young people in the plans that specifically affected them and their future. Members' attention was drawn back to the report which had included information regarding the Youth Forum and the projects that were being explored by this group. In addition, it was reported that an application was in the process of being made to the Connected Futures Fund which was a partnership bid particularly concerned with what young people wanted from employment support. Members were advised that it was hoped that should the funding be awarded it would assist with better understanding of the aspirations of young people within the Borough. In addition to this it would provide information on the effect on young people's mental health, particularly in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns experienced over the previous two

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years. Members were interested in how young people joined the Youth Forum, whether this was through a nomination or election scheme and what was the age range of the participants. The Chief Executive undertook to request the information from the relevant officers and circulate the information to the Committee.

- Engagement with schools across the Borough, particularly in the Early Years setting. Members were advised that as noted, it was difficult to engage with schools and sometimes increased engagement was not as successful as hoped. It was suggested by Members that Councillors who sat on governing bodies within schools could potentially be a way to better engage with schools.
- How to make Redditch a more attractive place to teach. It was reported to the Committee that it was not the Council's role to attract people to the Borough to teach, however, it was hoped that this would be an outcome of some of the projects currently being undertaken. It was highlighted that there were limited options within the Town regarding upskilling in various vocational jobs, and that there were limits to the training, which meant that at some point during the training students had to go further afield to access more in-depth and detailed training. Members pointed out that there was a local establishment offering excellent apprenticeships and training courses Midland Group Training Services (MGTS) but its operating levels were generally at capacity, leaving places limited.
- Whether it would be possible to link the four priorities of the SCS with other areas of the Council's work for example in order to limit the levels of obesity within the Borough e.g. could there be a mechanism within the Planning process that would limit the number fast food establishments granted planning permission. Members were informed that the SCS priorities did permeate through most of the Council's responsibilities, much like Climate Change. The planning process was legislative and prescriptive meaning that levels of obesity within the Borough would not be a material consideration when assessing a planning application.

RESOLVED that

The Redditch Partnership Update be noted.

59. RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

The Recommendation Tracker was presented for Members' consideration. Members were asked to note that all of the recommendations were currently at Amber status, largely due to the pandemic, and would need to remain on the Tracker until the recommendations had been completed. It was discussed whether this would necessarily be the case for all of the recommendations included in the Tracker, as some of the recommendations were now likely to become embedded in Council processes going forward and would therefore never be 'completed' due to their ongoing nature.

Although this was the case for some of the recommendations it was agreed that those with Amber status would remain on the Tracker for the time being and would be reviewed again when the document was brought back for consideration by the Committee.

RESOLVED that

The contents of the Recommendation Tracker be noted.

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

The Committee was presented with two sets of Executive Committee minutes and the latest version of the Executive Work Programme, as published on 4th January 2022. During consideration of this item, it was requested that an update item in respect of the New Cemetery Provision be placed on the Committee's Work Programme with a particular focus on any public consultations that were to be undertaken. It was confirmed that this would not be regarding any part of the planning process as this was entirely separate to the scrutiny process.

The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to add the item to the Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

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The Executive Committee Minutes and Work Programme be noted.

61. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

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

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

During consideration of this item the Chair requested nominations to fill the Budget Scrutiny vacant seat. Councillor Luke Court received a nomination and on being put to the vote this nomination was carried.

Councillor Wheeler welcomed Councillor Court to the group and explained the importance of the scrutiny work that the group undertook during the municipal year. Members were informed that some difficulties had been experienced this year in receiving reports due to the decreased capacity within the Finance team. It was explained that there had been a significant recruitment exercise for the Finance Team and that going forward that this would hopefully resolve any issues.

Members were advised that the Executive Director for Resources had presented a sobering Medium Term Financial Plan at the last meeting and that some difficult decisions would need to be made by the Council going forward.

b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jenny Wheeler

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Councillor Wheeler informed the Committee that no meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group had taken place since the previous update. However, it was confirmed that a meeting was scheduled for 15th January 2022, and she would provide an update at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

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

63. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Chalk updated the Committee in respect of the External Scrutiny Bodies and in doing so informed Members that the written updates that were provided gave an outline of the meetings rather than an in-depth update. He advised that should Members wish to look at the meetings in more detail the minutes were available online and most of the meetings had been live streamed.

It was explained to the Committee that the next meeting of the West Midlands Combined Authority Scrutiny Committee was due to take place on Monday 10th January 2022 and that an update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

The External Scrutiny Bodies Update Reports be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.31 pm