

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 17th March, 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Debbie Chance (Chair), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Luke Court (substituting for Councillor Alex Fogg), Julian Grubb, Lucy Harrison and Emma Marshall (substituting for Councillor Karen Ashley)

Also Present:

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

Officers:

Claire Felton, Sue Hanley and Kevin Hiron

Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham

74. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Karen Ashley and Councillor Alex Fogg with Councillor Emma Marshall and Councillor Luke Court in attendance as their respective named substitutes.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

76. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2022 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd February 2022, be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

77. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers registered on this occasion.

78. DECLARATION OF LAND SURPLUS TO REQUIREMENT AT LODGE ROAD/UNION STREET, SMALLWOOD AND AVAILABLE FOR DISPOSAL

The Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services presented the report in respect of declaration of land surplus to requirement at Lodge Road/Union Street, Smallwood and available for disposal. It was reported that the site was currently vacant, and concerns had been raised regarding the site being used for fly-tipping and the disposal of items.

Members indicated that they were supportive of this proposal and welcomed the change and agreed that there had been a number of issues over the years with this site.

Some Members queried whether this would be an appropriate site for the Council to build a property. It was confirmed that it was deemed more appropriate to dispose of the land in this way and sell at market value.

At the end of the debate Members endorsed the recommendation as detailed below:

RECOMMENDED that

the land adjacent to Nos. 140 - 144 Lodge Road, Smallwood, be declared surplus to Council requirements and disposed of at market value.

79. PARKING ENFORCEMENT - VERBAL UPDATE

The Environmental Services Manager provided a Parking Enforcement update which had been requested by Members during the Committee meeting held on 2nd September 2021. During the update Members were informed that 35 monitoring visits had taken place at schools in the Borough between mid-September 2021 and January 2022 and that 1 Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) had been issued during those visits.

It was reported to the Committee that Worcestershire County Council (WCC) had been contacted in respect of the implementation of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) on all zig zag lines outside schools within the Borough. Although WCC confirmed that they actively investigated requests for TROs; this was not a priority for WCC at present. However, it was confirmed that they would be open to compiling a priority list of 5 schools. In addition to this the Environmental Services Manager reported that WCC were not planning on implementing a School Streets initiative within the Borough.

Members were disappointed with the response provided by WCC. However, it was suggested that those Members who were also Councillors at WCC could potentially raise the issues with their County colleagues. Further to this there was also a discussion regarding the potential for the Committee to recommend that a communications plan be put in place in order to raise the issue with residents. Members were reminded that as the pre-election period had recently commenced this kind of initiative would not be permitted under the rules of purdah. The Senior Democratic Services Officer reminded Members that the Road Safety Task Group had been agreed at the last meeting of the Committee and that this could potentially be an area for Members to consider as part of the Member-led task group process. The Committee agreed that this approach would be the most suitable.

RESOLVED that

The Parking Enforcement Verbal Update be noted.

80. DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Chair presented the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22 for consideration by Committee Members and took the opportunity to thank Members of the Committee for all of their hard work over the previous municipal year. She particularly thanked all those that were part of scrutiny working groups and Councillor Mike Chalk who had provided written reports in respect of the external scrutiny bodies.

Members of the Committee thanked the Chair for her work over the past year and commented that this was an informative report. In addition to this they requested that thanks be noted and passed on to former Councillor Jenny Wheeler who had resigned as a Councillor on 14th March 2022. It was acknowledged by all Members of the Committee that former Councillor Wheeler had undertaken some excellent work in her time as a Member of the Council.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reminded Members that the report presented was a draft report and that the items considered this evening would be included in the final report presented to Full Council on 11th April 2022.

RESOLVED that

Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22 be approved.

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

The Committee considered the Executive Committee minutes from the meeting held on 21st February 2022. During consideration of the Executive Work Programme the following items were added to the

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme for consideration:

- Tree Services Review Including Ash Die Back Update
- Asset Rationalisation for Community Centres and Easemore Road
- Council Plan (Including Recovery and Restoration Plan)
- Council Tax Support Scheme -Update
- Future Use of the Town Hall and Customer Access
- Staff Survey
- Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2040
- Climate Change Strategy
- Asset Strategy
- HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy
- Leisure Strategy
- Levelling Up Fund Bid
- Voluntary Bodies Scheme
- Environment Act - Changes to Waste Services – Implications

Some Members felt that it would be useful to have an update on some of the items prior to their consideration by the Committee, particularly in respect of the Levelling Up Funding Bid and the Environment Act - Changes to Waste Services – Implications reports. The Senior Democratic Services Officer noted the request from Members and undertook to make the changes to the Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

the Executive Committee Minutes and Scrutiny of the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

82. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

This item was considered as part of the previous item.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

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

(a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group

It was reported that the last meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had taken place on 7th February 2022 when the draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 was considered. In addition to this any additional items were agreed for consideration at the next meeting.

Members commented that there had been a very detailed debate during this meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, and it was noted that there were some difficult decisions to be made in the future.

(b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group

The last meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group had taken place on 1st March 2022. Members were provided with an update on Housing from the Head of Housing and Community Services.

Members confirmed that there had been a very robust debate at this meeting regarding the timeframes and responses from officers in respect of residents' housing queries. Members noted that this had been a very useful discussion and it was hoped that the responses would be processed more quickly going forward.

As Jenny Wheeler was no longer a Councillor it was announced that a new Chair would need to be elected for the final meeting of the Budget Scrutiny and Performance Scrutiny Working Groups. Nominations were received for Councillor Debbie Chance and on being put to the vote this nomination was carried.

RESOLVED that

(a) the Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups Verbal Update Reports be noted; and

(b) Councillor Debbie Chance be elected as Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and Performance Scrutiny Working Group for the remainder of the municipal year.

84. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Mike Chalk presented the External Scrutiny Bodies update. He reported to the Committee that these were very detailed meetings and often included 10 or 12 reports. He confirmed that the update reports provided a synopsis of the meetings and that the minutes of the meeting were also available online.

Members queried the status of the Garden Suite at the Alexandra Hospital and Councillor Chalk was pleased to report that plans were underway to return the chemotherapy unit to the hospital and that a report was to be considered by HOSC at a future meeting. Members were all in agreement that this would be the best outcome for the residents of the Borough.

As Councillor Chance was standing down as a Member at the end of the municipal year, Members once again thanked her for all of the hard work over the previous year. It was also noted that Councillor Grubb would not be standing for re-election and his hard work during his time as a Member of the Council was also acknowledged.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies - Update Reports be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.36 pm