

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Monday, 5th September,  
2022

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Joanna Kane (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Imran Altaf, Michael Chalk, Sid Khan and Timothy Pearman.

### Also Present:

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

### Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Peter Carpenter, Kevin Dicks and Judith Willis

### Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham

### 38. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clayton and Prosser with no named substitutes.

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

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

### 40. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 23rd June 2022, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022 were submitted for Members' consideration.

Chair

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**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd June 2022, 7th July 2022 and 21st July 2022, be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 41. PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chair welcomed Mr. G. Roskell as a public speaker to the meeting, who was invited to speak to the Committee.

His speech was delivered as follows:

‘Speaking both as a trustee of RCNT, the charity that runs Community House, and Chief Executive of Bromsgrove and Redditch Network, based at Community House and representing the voluntary and community sector.

Is Community House an Asset of Community Value? Yes, indisputably.

- It’s the home to 6 different charities
- Hundreds of people use the community hall every week
- Tens of thousands of people use the hall or access the support of the charities based at Community House every year
- Despite reports, the majority of the building is easily accessible and used by a wide variety of residents – young and old, from different communities, for leisure or support needs

Could it continue to support the local community?

Yes, absolutely. We just need a bit of time to prove it.

Is the business plan out of date? Yes, it is, and there’s a few reasons

- We’ve had a pandemic. Who could have planned for that?
- We have no lease. How can any charity fundraise without some sort of security of tenure?

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- We had no notice of any proposal to get rid of Community House, so could not plan for it. How can we formulate a fundraising strategy to address something we had no expectation of happening?
- But Community House can be viable
- There's evidence right here in Redditch, from the REDI Centre. Once a longer term lease or other predictable tenure is granted then funding can be attracted. In Malvern, the Cube was rescued by local people, and is now a vibrant community hub. There are examples like this all over the country
- Then there's Reimagine Redditch, a £1.5m Arts Council project, of which the Council is a partner, was about to move in because Community House is a vibrant hub at the centre of the community, and they can still do so. We can still attract tenants because the venue is absolutely unique in Redditch
- And the building doesn't just include Community House. Gemini Dance Studio, at the rear of the building, has a huge local presence, and has been going for 50 years. They are obviously sustainable.

There is also a hidden value. The services offered by the charities save the statutory sector thousands upon thousands of pounds every year, because the statutory sector would have to support those residents if the charities and community groups did not.

The Council have created the situation whereby Community House doesn't appear viable. By not giving us a lease, by not giving us any notice of this process, they have made it impossible for us to plan for the future.

Community assets have been rescued all over the country. But we need time to make it possible, and that's all this application grants us. Time.'

## **42. NOMINATION OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE AT EASEMORE ROAD - ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services presented the Nomination of the Community Centre at Easemore

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Road - Asset of Community Value for consideration by the Committee. The following was highlighted for Members' attention:

- Included within the Localism Act 2011 was a 'Community Right to Bid' enabling communities the right to identify a building they believed to be of importance to their community. It was reported to Members that as per the report and its appendices, a nomination of an asset of community value had been received from Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) in respect of Community House, Easemore Road. Members were informed that a statutory evaluation must be undertaken in order to register the property as an asset of community value. As the building was owned by the Council, on this occasion, the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services and Monitoring Officer had made the decision that the evaluation be undertaken by an independent barrister.
- Officers reported that the independent evaluation had noted that a Condition Survey carried out in November 2021 had identified costs of repairs and maintenance of £340,407 over a period of five years. It was confirmed that these costs would fall to the new owner. In addition to this the Committee were further informed that Community House had been valued between £1.2m and £1.5m. Following consideration of the business plan submitted by Redditch Common Neighbourhood Trust (RCNT) this sum was deemed well beyond RCNT's means.

Following the presentation of the report, Members queried what consultation had taken place with the tenants of the building and it was explained that there had been contact made with the tenants prior to the previous report presented to the Executive Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

Some Members noted that if Community House was listed as an asset of community value this would provide the tenants with more time within the building in order to raise funds. It was also noted that there had been examples in the past where residents had purchased assets of community value successfully. However, some Members felt that this would merely raise expectations and create a sense of false hope for the tenants.

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Members subsequently discussed why the report on this matter was being considered by the Executive Committee as decisions regarding assets of community value were delegated to Officers. It was explained that although Officers had delegated authority to determine whether a property be listed as an asset of community value, the report had been submitted to the Executive Committee on a consultative basis and for transparency.

There were some questions regarding the valuation of the building and Members questioned whether it would be possible to separate the cost of the property and the land value. Officers confirmed that this would not be possible, and that the Council would not sell an asset separately as this would result in no car parking facilities being available.

After detailed debate, the following recommendation was proposed:

*'that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the contents of the report in relation to Community House and decide to support listing as an Asset of Community Value.'*

On being put to the vote this recommendation was lost.

The following recommendation was then proposed:

*'that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the contents of the report in relation to Community House and decide to not support listing as an Asset of Community Value.'*

On being put to the vote this recommendation was agreed.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the contents of the report in relation to Community House and decide to not support listing as an Asset of Community Value.**

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

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The minutes from the Executive Committee meetings held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022 were submitted for Members' consideration.

During consideration of this item Members requested that the following item be added to the Committee's Work Programme:

- Review of Governance Arrangements for Rubicon Leisure Limited

Members were informed that an extra meeting of the Executive Committee would be convened on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022 to consider the following report:

- Appropriation of Land off Ipsley Church Lane for Planning Purposes.

The Committee agreed that an extra meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be convened in order to pre-scrutinise the report prior to its consideration by the Executive Committee. The date of the extra meeting was confirmed as 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the contents of the Executive Committee Minutes of the meetings held on Tuesday 12th July 2022 and Tuesday 26th July 2022 and the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

## **44. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme was submitted for Members' consideration.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

## **45. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS**

Councillor Khan presented the Topic Proposal in respect of Health Inequalities within the BME Community in Redditch. In doing so the following was brought to Members' attention:

- The intention of the Task Group was to investigate what, if any, health inequalities, affected the BME Community within Redditch. As part of the topic proposal, objectives had been identified which included the following:
  - Gather evidence in respect of current health inequalities amongst Redditch BME Communities compared to the broader community.
  - Identify the top 5 prevalent illnesses and diseases among the top three BME communities in Redditch.
  - Identify the reason for poor health of BME Communities in Redditch.
  - Identify any differences in life expectancy within the BME communities within Redditch.
  - Identify the health engagement programmes that are currently in place to improve the health of BME Communities, particularly those where prevention is a focus.
  - Identify what other local authorities have done to improve health and wellbeing among BME communities with an aim to roll out similar initiatives.
  - Explore any areas of improvements that could be made in the health and wellbeing of Redditch BME communities including engagement of the BME community and the empowerment of elderly, women and young people for their health needs. These groups have been identified as those who have the least up take of physical activities nationally and are considered as hard to reach.

Following the presentation of the Topic Proposal, Members discussed in detail the potential for broadening the scope of the investigation to include social groups as outlined in the Single Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire 2011-2021. However, Councillor Khan confirmed that he wished the focus to remain on the BME Community within Redditch as stated within the proposal.

**RESOLVED that**

**subject to any changes agreed during the meeting, the proposed Task Group in respect of Health Inequalities within the BME Community in Redditch be launched.**

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

Councillor Kane provided Members with an update in respect of the Budget Scrutiny and Performance Scrutiny Working Groups. In doing so, Members were informed that a meeting took place on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022 when Members considered the best practice guidelines for budget scrutiny and discussed the Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year. It was further reported that the meeting that was due to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 had been rearranged and was now due to take place on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September. At this meeting Members would consider the Financial Recovery report.

The Committee were informed that a Performance Scrutiny Working Group meeting had taken place on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022 with further meetings scheduled for the remainder of the municipal year.

**RESOLVED that**

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

**47. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS**

Councillor Chalk provided an update in respect of the External Scrutiny Bodies. In doing so, Members were informed that there had been no meetings of Worcestershire Health and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) since the last meeting of the Committee.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022. However,



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Councillor Chalk informed the Committee that he had submitted his apologies for this meeting.

Therefore, on this occasion, there were no External Scrutiny Bodies updates available for Members' consideration. It was confirmed that updates would be provided at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED that**

**the External Scrutiny Bodies updates be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 7.42 pm

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