

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Nyear Nazir (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Karen Ashley, Joanne Beecham, Peter Fleming, Lucy Harrison, Anthony Lovell and Emma Marshall

Also Present:

Councillors Joe Baker, Sharon Harvey and Ann Isherwood

Mr N. Stote

Officers:

Gavin Day, Kevin Dicks, Peter Carpenter, Claire Felton, Michelle Howell, Clayton Maponga and Victoria Swashorme

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

54. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Craig Warhurst.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Matthew Dormer advised that he had been granted a dispensation by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee to speak and vote on town centre regeneration matters as a member of the Redditch Business Improvement District (BID) and Town's Deal Board. He therefore remained present for the debates and votes in respect of the Redditch TIP Library Business Case and Town Hall Hub at Minute Item No.s 59 - 60.

Councillor Joanne Beecham declared that she would be leaving the room during consideration of Minute Item No. 58 – Petition – Save the Community House in Redditch - as she had professional contacts with representatives of the tenants of community house at Easemore Road, due to her business operating in a similar environment to Gemini Dance Studio. She therefore left the room

during consideration of the item and was not present during the debate or vote thereon.

56. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader explained that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th October 2022, Members had pre-scrutinised the Redditch TIP Library Redevelopment - Business Case and the Town Hall Hub reports. The reports had been discussed in detail and, whilst an amendment had been proposed to the Library business case, this had not been approved. The recommendations had been endorsed for the Town Hall Hub item.

57. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 6th September 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

58. PETITION - SAVE THE COMMUNITY HOUSE IN REDDITCH

Mr Neal Stote presented a petition, for which the petition prayer called to 'Save the Community House in Redditch'.

In presenting the petition, Mr Stote commented that community house on Easemore Road was a vibrant asset for Council tenants, their customers, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups and groups and people from outside Redditch.

There had been some anger within the local community, particularly with respect to the way that the process followed by the Council for the disposal of the community house at Easemore Road had been handled. The tenants had expressed concerns that they felt that they had been involved at the end of the process. However, the tenants had subsequently met with representatives of the Council and clarification had been provided at these meetings.

Alternative premises remained to be found for many of the tenants. A decision had therefore been taken to hand in the petition, which had been signed by well in excess of 1,200 people. This demonstrated how much many people in the local community valued this asset.

Following the presentation of the petition, the Leader thanked Mr Stote for attending the meeting and for speaking to the Committee on the subject of the petition. The Leader explained that the Council was in the process of exploring the support that could be

provided, wherever possible, to the tenants of community house, Easemore Road. However, this needed to be balanced alongside wider considerations about the Council's asset portfolio. Mr Stote was advised that the petition would be passed on to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services, who would consider the matter further.

59. REDDITCH TIP LIBRARY REDEVELOPMENT - BUSINESS CASE

The Programme Delivery Manager from the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit (NWEDR) presented the Redditch TIP Library Redevelopment – Business Case report.

Officers were proposing that there should be a public plaza and a pavilion in Redditch town centre. The pavilion would consist of three floors, comprising a ground floor dedicated to food and beverage and the other two floors used for office space. The proposal was for the library, subject to the outcomes of public consultation and decisions taken by Worcestershire County Council, to be relocated to a community hub, which was subject to consideration as part of the review of the Town Hall Hub.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the report had been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 6th October 2022. During this meeting, an amendment had been proposed to the recommendations detailed in the report but this had been defeated. The actual proposals had not been voted on.

Subsequent to the presentation of the report, Members discussed the following matters in detail:

- The shopping habits that people had developed during the twenty-first century, mainly involving the increasing use of online retail, and the implications of this for the High Street.
- The potential for High Streets in the UK to offer leisure activities and food and beverage outlets in order to entice people to the town centre.
- The need for economic growth in Redditch and the potential for regeneration of the town centre to contribute to that growth.
- The possibility of relocating the library to a public sector community hub and the benefits of retaining a library in the town centre.
- The libraries that had been closed in other parts of the country.
- The beneficial impact that the urban design associated with the proposals could have on rates of anti social behaviour (ASB) in the town centre.

- The number of visitors who might be attracted to visit Redditch, should these plans be approved.

RESOLVED that

the Redditch TIP Library Redevelopment business case be endorsed and used to present summary information for submission to the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities on the 14th October 2022.

60. TOWN HALL HUB

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented a report on the subject of the proposed Town Hall Hub.

The Executive Committee was informed that the report detailed proposals to convert Redditch Town Hall into a community hub. Redditch Borough Council no longer required office space on all of the floors in the Town Hall and could operate on the second and third floors only. This would include a new Members' and civic suite on the second floor of the Town Hall. As part of the proposals, external organisations would rent space in the community hub, including potentially Worcestershire County Council and representatives of the NHS. Subject to the outcomes of public consultation and to deliberations by the Cabinet at Worcestershire County Council, there was the potential to relocate the central library in Redditch to the community hub. Worcestershire County Council had been consulted on the initial specification for the plans.

The cost of the scheme would be £5.2 million and funding would be via capital receipts and borrowing (depending on the timing of receipts to give maximum value). The scheme would lead to revenue savings of circa £400,000 a year. In addition, one of the partner organisations would also invest significantly in the building's infrastructure if this proposal was taken forward.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The introduction of community hubs in other parts of the country and the impact that these buildings had had within local communities.
- The timescales for the Cabinet at Worcestershire County Council to review the proposals. Members were advised that the County Council's Cabinet was scheduled to discuss this matter further at a meeting on 27th October 2022.
- The date by which public consultation would be held in respect of proposals for the library. Officers clarified that further detail on this subject would be provided in the report that was due to

be considered by Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet later in the month.

- The important role of public consultation in respect of any changes to the library, both as an opportunity to hear from the public and to outline plans for the future.
- The funding required to support the proposals detailed in the report and the extent to which there were any risks associated with accessing this funding. Officers explained three specific capital receipts had been identified for funding purposes and with this source of funding the aim was to achieve best value. In addition, all other suitable options would be considered as part of the overall process.
- The condition of the building in which the library in Redditch town centre was currently located and the long-term maintenance costs that would be required to continue to locate the library in that building.
- The support services that could be accessed at the library.
- The fact that a library would continue to be available to access in Redditch town centre should the proposals be approved.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the Town Hall Hub report. At the end of a detailed debate, the Committee had endorsed the recommendations detailed in the report.

RESOLVED that

- 1) subject to the agreement of the Town's Fund Library Business case, which itself is subject to the required public consultation, the Town Hall be repurposed as a Community Hub;**
- 2) subject to approval of recommendation 3 below, authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer and the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services to finalise and implement the community hub business case and to procure and appoint contractors to undertake and deliver the works;**

The Executive Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

- 3) building works on the Town Hall of up to £5.2m, (or reduced amount in the event that for any reason the Town's Fund Library Business Case does not proceed to fruition) to be funded from Capital Receipts, for the purpose of remodelling the Town Hall in accordance with the Town's Fund Library business case, be approved; and**

- 4) **the capital programme is increased by £5.2m to deliver these works.**

61. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Leader advised that there were no outstanding recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5th September 2022 be noted.

62. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

The Leader advised that there were no referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any of the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

63. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The following updates were provided on the Executive Advisory Panels and other relevant groups:

- a) Climate Change Cross Party Working Group – Chair, Councillor Anthony Lovell

Councillor Lovell confirmed that there had been no meetings of the group since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

Members were asked to note that the Climate Change Strategy / Carbon Reduction Implementation Plan would be presented for Members' consideration at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees later in the month.

- b) Constitutional Review Working Party – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that the following meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party would be postponed to take place in November 2022.

- c) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Nyear Nazir

Councillor Nazir explained that she had not been able to attend the latest meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board

held in early October. However, she advised that she would review the content of the minutes of the meeting, once published, and would subsequently report back to the Executive Committee.

- d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

The Executive Committee was informed that a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group was scheduled to take place on Thursday 13th October 2022.

- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Members were advised that there had not been any meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.00 pm