



Executive Committee

Tuesday, 6th December,
2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors Karen Ashley, Joanne Beecham, Peter Fleming, Lucy Harrison, Anthony Lovell, Emma Marshall and Craig Warhurst

Officers:

Peter Carpenter, Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Kevin Hiron, Matthew Mead, Deb Poole and Becky Talbot

Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham

79. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Nyear Nazir.

80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

81. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that during the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 1st December 2022, Members pre-scrutinised the Workforce Strategy which was due to be debated at the Executive Committee meeting. The Committee had endorsed the recommendation in the report. Members were urged to refer to this when debating this item.

82. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

Chair

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 25th October 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

83. HR AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT / PEOPLE STRATEGY

The Head of Transformation & Organisational Development and Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager presented the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy for the Executive Committee's consideration.

The Executive Committee was advised that the strategy set out the Council's aspiration for the Council's workforce now and for the future. It was reported that the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy was designed to ensure that the right people with the right skills were in the right place within the workforce.

In developing the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy, Officers had outlined three key themes. These were as follows:

1. Workforce Planning and Talent Management – this included how the workforce were recruited and retained.
2. Engagement - this included how the workforce could be motivated.
3. Health, Safety and Wellbeing – this included how to provide a safe and healthy workplace for Council staff.

Members were informed of the importance of a diverse workforce, and that the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy took this into account in the hope that this would produce a workforce that better understood customers' needs.

During consideration of the report Members were pleased to see that wellbeing had been given such a high priority within the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy. It was noted that showing an interest in the wellbeing of people was important as the biggest asset to an organisation was its people, and looking after their wellbeing would help to get the best out of staff. It was also noted that the work being undertaken in culture and engagement would also motivate staff and was fundamental to the success of a

workforce. In addition to this, Members expressed that it was pleasing to see that work was actively being undertaken to attract younger people to the Council and that planning, and succession plans were in place.

RESOLVED that

The approach taken by the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, to address the Workforce Strategy be endorsed.

84. INTRODUCTION OF VIRTUAL PARKING PERMITS FOR REDDITCH AND OFF STREET PARKING ORDER FOR STAFF CAR PARKS

The Environmental Services Manager presented the report on the subject of Introduction of Virtual parking Permits for Redditch and off street parking order for staff car parks. Prior to consideration, Officers informed Members that there were two errors on pages 48 and 52 of the Equality Impact Assessment appendix and that two extra rows within the table should have been removed prior to publication.

It was reported to Members that the Council had operated a Residents' Parking Scheme (RPS) since 2009 with an average number of 550 permits issued each year. Members were informed that currently the permits were printed, laminated and posted or emailed to residents for printing and the permit displayed in the windscreen in order to avoid a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). However, if the virtual parking permit system was agreed this process would effectively be eliminated. In addition to this, residents would be able to update their details through the online Mii Permit App. It was reported that this system had been successfully implemented in across the County in Worcester City, Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove and would certainly be beneficial in light of the shared future use of the Town Hall and Trafford Car Parks with the NHS.

The Executive Committee was advised that if agreed, it was hoped that the virtual permits would go live for staff car parks on 1st April 2023 and 1st April 2024 for residents' virtual parking permits. Members were advised that residents who qualified for the virtual parking permits, would be provided with information on how to access and use the Mii permit scheme and open evenings would be

arranged prior to the launch for any residents who required additional assistance.

During consideration of this item, it was reiterated by Members that support would be provided to residents during the transition to the virtual parking permits.

RESOLVED that

the Council adopts a Virtual Parking Permit system for all Residents' Parking Schemes and Town Hall Staff Car Parks, including adding these latter car parks to the existing Off-Street Parking Order.

85. IMPROVEMENTS TO VEHICULAR ENTRY AND EXIT ARRANGEMENTS, ARROW VALLEY CAR PARK, BATTENS DRIVE

The Environmental Services Manager was invited to present the Improvements to Vehicular Entry and Exit Arrangements, Arrow Valley Car Park, Battens Drive report.

Members were advised that the new Lidl retail store located on Battens Drive, Redditch shared access with Arrow Valley Country Park. It was noted that this current format was not ideal. The Executive Committee were informed that Officers had negotiated with the consultants for Lidl, the Woodbine Group Ltd, that these access arrangements be improved. As part of negotiations regarding an easement located on Council land, the Woodbine Group Ltd had agreed to provide funding for changes to access arrangements and Members were advised that the monies had already been received by the Council.

During consideration of this report, it was discussed that the outcome had been a result of Officers within Environmental Services and Leisure Services working together to progress these plans. It was highlighted that these changes would improve safety in terms of access. It was noted, however, that a number of parking spaces would need to be removed from Arrow Valley Park as a result of the new access arrangements. There was a suggestion from Members that perhaps a plan could be implemented in the future to replace any lost spaces.

RECOMMENDED that

A budget of £28.3k be added to the 2022/2023 Capital Programme to be funded from monies already received from Woodbine Group Ltd in order to pay for the improvement works set out in this report.

86. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 2 2022-23

The Interim Director of Finance presented the Financial and Performance Monitoring Report - Quarter 2 2022-23 and in doing so explained that this was the second of such reports presented to Members during this municipal year.

The Executive Committee were advised that in Q1 2022/23 the budget had included £595k of organisational cross-cutting efficiency targets which had not been allocated to services. The projected figure at Q2 was reported as a £369k overspend. It was noted, however that this overspend did not take into account the pay award which had been agreed by employers at £1,925 per pay point. This pay award would result in an extra £700k of pressure on the Councils' finances and as it was not funded would have to be funded from reserves.

In terms of Capital Monitoring, it was reported to the Executive Committee that projects included in the Capital Programme of £4.1m approved in March 2022 were moving forward. Furthermore, Members were advised that as at Q2 the overall spend was £1.5m of the £4.1m overall budget.

Members were advised that £15.2m of spending would be available as a result of the Towns Fund. In addition to this, it was hoped that the outcome of the Levelling Up 2 funding application would soon be available. Members were informed that the Towns Board had recently met regarding the UK Shared Prosperity funding.

During the presentation of this report Members were reminded that as previously reported any projects that had not been started in Q1 would have to be reviewed. This would allow resource to be allocated as necessary to the Towns Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects which were a priority and needed to be delivered within a specific time limit.

Members were informed that one of the recommendations contained within the report, if agreed, would result in the allocation £150k of funding split between HR and ICT. The funding would be used to clear any current backlogs in HR, and to invest in automated and robotics projects in ICT in order to provide more streamlined processes in the future and deliver savings to the Council.

In respect of the HRA, it was reported to Members that currently there was a surplus in the region of £141k which would be transferred to HRA Balances. In addition, Officers noted that its Capital Programme was £10.1m against £14.m budget. Members were reminded that this was a result of a number of projects that had only recently been through the procurement process and that spending would catch up at the beginning of the next financial year.

The Interim Director of Finance advised that the report set out the second series of Performance Indicators for the Council. The areas of collections rates were highlighted for Members' attention, and it was noted that the collection rates on Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates were below expected levels. Officers noted that this was expected to continue as a result of the current cost of living crisis.

During discussion of this item Members noted that this was a robust and comprehensive report. Further clarification was requested in respect of the collection rates and Members were keen that any debt management schemes be signposted to local residents. It was confirmed that there were schemes in operation and that the Council, could arrange payment plans for residents who required assistance. In addition to this, it was noted there had been communications produced that contained information of support available during the cost of living crisis. Furthermore, Members were advised that the new Civica Housing system that had recently been implemented would enable the Council to work more proactively with its tenants.

There was a discussion regarding the impact of inflation and Members highlighted the difficulty in predicting what could happen in the future and the importance of remaining cautious when managing the budgets in such an uncertain landscape. Another area that was highlighted by Members was the potential that a

higher number of residents may require housing support from the Council in the future due to the cost of living crisis. It was reported that £263k had already been provided in respect of this area and that more funding may be available in the future.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the current financial position in relation to Revenue and Capital Budgets for the period July to September 2022 be noted; and**
- 2) the Q2 Performance data for the Period July to September 2022 be noted; and**
- 3) That £150,000 is allocated from the Financial Services Reserve to fund cross council improvements in HR and ICT.**

87. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 TO 2025/26 - UPDATE

The Interim Director of Finance provided the Executive Committee with the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26 – Update.

As Members were already aware, the Council's budget was being delivered in two tranches for this financial year. The first tranche had been published on 17th October 2022 and had identified over £1.5m worth of savings. In addition to this, it was reported that as detailed in the previous report, that £400k of unallocated savings had been addressed. It had been hoped that more detail would be available from Government, however at the time of the meeting the details of Local Government Settlement was not available and would not be until the final week in December 2022, much later than in previous years. It had been recognised by Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) that this would make the budget setting difficult for local authorities and an update on the provisional Settlement would be provided imminently by DLUHC.

Although there were a number of areas that were still to be confirmed there were some known areas within the budget setting process. These were the potential to increase Council Tax by 1% providing £70k. In addition to this, the Council no longer were

required to pay National Insurance contributions of 1.25% on all salaries. The Government had reported that a cap would be placed on rents at 7% and further detail would be made available in a future Executive Committee report. In addition to this, the Government had announced £13b worth of funding for protection of rate payers alongside a further £1b worth of Household Support funding.

Inflation was again highlighted during the presentation of this report and Members were informed that the Council was being extremely cautious in terms of the potential inflation on utilities in the future. The Interim Director of Finance reported that he had allowed for an increase of 200% on utilities but it could potentially be more. It was highlighted that the Council's utilities contracts were due to expire in April 2023 and due to the long notice period in concluding such contracts, it may be necessary to extend the existing contracts. This could help mitigate any potential increases if contracts were made with a new provider.

Members thanked Officers for a clear and comprehensive report and were pleased that the Finance team were operating with caution at such an unpredictable time.

RESOLVED that

That Officers continue to work on additional options, as outlined in the Strategy section of the Tranche 1 Report for presentation to Executive in February as Tranche 2 of the Budget.

RECOMMENDED that

The Tranche 1 savings proposals, the updated WRS Fees and Charges proposals and the single Growth item in respect of the Climate Change Officer are approved for implementation to ensure maximum benefit as at 1st April 2023.

88. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Interim Director of Finance presented the recommendation from the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee as recommended at its meeting that took place on 27th October 2022.

It was reported that number of cyber-attacks across the Public Sector had increased by 42%. As a result, it was reported that it had been very difficult for the Council to obtain insurance in respect of cyber security for this year. It was envisaged that insurance renewal may not be possible for future years as had already been experienced by a number of Councils nationally.

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee had felt, that in light of the difficulties experienced in securing insurance for this year, it would be prudent to contact the Local Government Association to see what plans were in place in order to facilitate a process to help Local Government in the future.

RESOLVED that

given the possibility of no Cyber Security insurance in future years, recommend to the Local Government Association (LGA) that they facilitate a process to help local government cover this deficiency.

89. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee was advised that there were no minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration on this occasion.

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

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

91. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

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

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

Councillor Lovell explained that the fourth meeting of the Climate Change Cross Party Working Group was due to take place on 21st December 2022.

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

The Executive Committee was advised that the next meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party was due to take place in March 2023.

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

As Councillor Nazir had submitted her apologies for this meeting there were no updates from the Corporate Parenting Board on this occasion.

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

Councillor Dormer explained that the next meeting of the Member Support Steering Group was due to take place on 14th December 2022.

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

Members were informed that the next meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel was due to take place on 4th January 2023.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.06 pm