

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 15th
September, 2010

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Diane Thomas (Chair), Councillor Anita Clayton (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Bill Hartnett, Robin King, William Norton, Mark Shurmer, Graham Vickery, Adam Griffin and Peter Anderson

Also Present:

Councillor Roger Hill

Officers:

E Hopkins, A Heighway and J Pickering

Committee Services Officer:

M Craggs and I Westmore

78. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Quinney. Councillor Griffin was the named substitute in her absence.

Members were informed that Councillor Banks had been replaced on the Committee by Councillor Anderson.

79. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip

80. MINUTES

The wording of minute 69 was amended to clarify that Mr Simon Oliver was a local resident and consultee on the Climate Change Strategy rather than a consultant by occupation.

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Chair

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RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 25th August 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.

81. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered the latest version of the Action List and specific mention was made on three of the Actions, namely:

a) Courses available after the closure of the REDI Centre – Action 1

Officers would report back to the Committee in the near future with information on which courses were to be discontinued.

b) Work Programme – Action 4

Members were informed that Councillor Vickery had met with Jess Bayley to discuss the matter of undertaking a Task and Finish Group on the issue of *Promoting Redditch*. A preliminary report was expected to be received at the forthcoming Committee meeting on 6th October 2010.

c) Budget Scrutiny Workshops – Action 10

Members were informed that the first workshop, to take place on 25th October 2010, 5.00pm, would predominantly be an information sharing session which would allow for more informed discussion at the second budget scrutiny workshop that was due to take place on 22nd November 2010 at 5.00pm.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

82. CALL-IN AND SCRUTINY OF THE FORWARD PLAN

Members were informed that the Forward Plan was the same version received at the previous meeting.

The members received the decision notice from the Executive Committee meeting of 8th September 2010. Councillor Vickery informed the Committee that, having raised concerns over the work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the Executive Committee

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agreed to task the O&S Committee with pre-scrutinising and auditing each of the strategies involved. The Chair commented that this had represented a particularly important piece of work for the Committee, especially in terms of helping to raise educational attainment and easing health inequalities through the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

83. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

No draft scoping documents were received.

84. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reviews in progress:

External Refurbishment of Housing Stock

The Committee was informed that a number of Councillors had contacted the Chair prior to the meeting to propose that the scope of the proposed Task and Finish Group review of housing stock within Woodrow should be widened to encompass the whole of the Borough. It was felt that this might prove more beneficial to the Borough as a whole.

However, proponents of confining the review to Woodrow argued that the review needed to be specific to Woodrow as its housing stock was unique within the Borough and should therefore be reviewed in isolation. Concern was also raised that widening the scope of the review might make it difficult to complete a thorough review within a mutually agreeable timeframe.

Following further concern that it would be unusual to alter the scope of a review after it had been initially agreed by the Committee, it was suggested that the terms and conditions of the review could be widened.

It was subsequently proposed that a short sharp review of Woodrow's housing stock could be undertaken before the Committee further considered whether to pursue a wider review.

The review of the Joint Worcestershire Hub was covered within item 8.

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RESOLVED that

Councillor Vickery to work with officers in undertaking a short-sharp review of Woodrow housing stock before reporting back to the Committee meeting on 6th October 2010.

85. JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE HUB TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Members considered the Joint Worcestershire Hub Task and Finish Group Review. The Committee was invited to produce a written submission for the consideration of the Task and Finish Group for consideration at the meeting of the Group on 29th September and made a number of suggestions:

- 1) Users should be notified of their position in the queue if placed on hold.
- 2) The 'Hub' should be renamed to more accurately define and represent the service given.
- 3) A face-to-face walk in service should be installed to the particular benefit of older people.
- 4) Staff should be adequately trained to cater to district council specific queries
- 5) The service must be more efficiently run and the costs involved more transparent.
- 6) The Highways Department must be more responsive to public demand.
- 7) The accuracy of HUB responses should be subject to more rigorous monitoring.

In addition, it was commented that the staff responsible for the Hub should be focused on delivering continual improvements to the service in line with improvements in technology rather than inviting suggestions for improvement through a task and finish group review. On the contrary, the Chair argued that it was essential that the responsible officers at the County Council received the written submission from the O&S Committee as planned.

RESOLVED:

Officers to incorporate the Committee's proposals within a written submission to the Joint Worcestershire Hub Task and Finish Group for their consideration.

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86. SUB-REGIONAL CHOICE BASED LETTINGS - PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation on the Sub-Regional Choice Based Letting Project. This included background information, financial information, and potential advantages and disadvantages of joining the Project.

Having received the presentation, Members raised a number of concerns regarding the prospect of the Council joining the Project. In particular, concern was expressed that it would reduce the availability and subsequent choice of housing stock for Redditch residents by enabling non-Redditch residents within the sub-region to bid for its housing stock. Members thought that the potential demand from non-Redditch residents would be considerable due to the absence of existing housing stock across other parts of the sub-region.

Members also suggested that it would not be in the best interests of Redditch to adopt a regional housing allocation strategy in place its own through joining the Project.

Members doubted that the supposed benefit of providing greater housing choice for residents across the sub-region would be realised as council house tenants were traditionally less mobile in terms of moving to a property in another location compared to private tenants.

It was suggested that it might be appropriate to forward the report onto the Borough Tenants Panel for their consideration.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Council retain the local Housing Allocations Policy and Redditch Home Choice System for the reasons stated in the preamble, above, and review in accordance with the existing constitutional framework;**
- 2) **the report be forwarded to the Borough Tenants' Panel for consideration; and**

RESOLVED that

- 3) **the report be noted.**

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87. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 1 - APRIL TO JUNE 2010

The Committee received an oral summary of the provided report. In particular, members heard that the entire performance framework was currently undergoing a period of change.

Regarding BV 012, members queried whether the Executive Committee had a plan to tackle increasing levels of staff sickness. Officers informed the Committee that, although the Executive did not currently have such a plan in place, the Corporate Management Team was in the process of reviewing corporate sickness levels and were piloting new policies which had been successful within other local authorities and also the private sector in reducing sickness levels.

Members raised concern that it had been recorded that the Council had recycled fewer items. It was subsequently suggested that this was largely due to problems with recycling equipment at the Norton recycling plant and did not necessarily reflect current recycling levels at the Council.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted

88. QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 1 - APRIL TO JUNE 2010

The Committee received an oral summary of the provided report and were informed that future reports would follow a different approach with a greater focus on providing an analysis of the figures.

It was proposed that future reports provide more detailed information on Council revenue in order that they more accurately reflect the Council's budgetary position.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted

89. WORCESTERSHIRE SCRUTINY CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS NETWORK - FEEDBACK

Councillor Hartnett provided the Committee with an oral report from the Worcestershire Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Network

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meeting in Kidderminster on 13 September 2010 which Councillor Thomas had also attended. The Committee was informed that Councillors Hartnett and Thomas had, in principle, supported the Council's continued involvement in the Network, subject to a number of caveats. The Network agreed to meet either three or four times per annum, with the intention to hold the next meeting before the end of the year in Redditch.

A member suggested that the Network should be ambitious in terms of its scope for scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted

90. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

91. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were informed that dates had been set for portfolio holders to individually attend future Committee meetings.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.20pm