

Overview and Scrutiny

Committee

Tuesday, 21st September, 2010

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Diane Thomas (Chair), Councillor Anita Clayton (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Peter Anderson, Jack Cookson, Bill Hartnett, Robin King, William Norton and Brenda Quinney

Also Present:

Councillor Carole Gandy and Roy Banks, (substitute co-opted representative for UNISON).

Officers:

R Cooke, J Godwin and J Staniland

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and M Craggs

92. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Shurmer and Vickery. Councillor Cookson was named as the substitute for Councillor Shurmer.

93. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

94. SCRUTINY OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the Forward Plan and considered which items were suitable for scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

the Committee scrutinise both the Review of the Dial a Ride Service and also the 2011/12 Grants Policy prior to consideration of both items by the Executive Committee.

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Chair

95. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

Councillor Carole Gandy attended the meeting to propose that a Task and Finish review be undertaken on work experience opportunities for young people in Redditch.

The Committee was informed that young people within Redditch, in particular those around the ages of 13 and 14, had very limited choice from where to undertake their work experience. Members heard that, in many cases, the scheme was ineffective as the lack of choice was leading to young people undertaking work experience not in area of their interest. The apparent shortcomings of the scheme was seen as a significant area of concern as it was commented that the Borough contained a significant number of young people who were neither in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Members were further informed that key member organisations of the Local Strategic Partnership were unaware of the work experience scheme and consequently how to attract students through the scheme. Members raised concern that this lack of awareness from potential providers was possibly commonplace across the Borough.

Further investigation into the scheme's apparent failings was required to discover how it could be improved. An acknowledgement that the scheme was sufficiently funded increased the sense that its ineffectiveness needed to be tackled. It was also proposed that the availability of apprenticeships for, typically, 14 year olds, could be worth investigating.

Members suggested that entry to the scheme could be staggered to help ensure that the available work experience opportunities for eligible young people were not significantly reduced. Members also suggested that young people should be given the ability to experience a variety of different sectors to help develop their own sense of how they might wish to be employed in future.

Members cautioned that it was not within the remit of the Council to direct the work experience scheme. The Council could instead focus on educating the appropriate bodies on the scheme's current shortcomings and act in an advisory role to help improve its effectiveness. It was therefore proposed that the Council should liaise with the local schools as part of the review to learn their perspective.

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Members further commented that the scheme could be extended to 16/17 year olds, in particular recent school leavers, as they arguably had a clearer idea of where they would like to pursue future employment.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) a Task and Finish review of Work Experience Opportunities be launched;**
- 2) Councillor Anderson be appointed to Chair the Task and Finish Group; and**
- 3) the report be noted.**

96. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

The Committee considered the following reports in relation to current reviews:

a) External Refurbishment of Housing Stock

The Committee noted that it had been resolved at the previous meeting that a short-sharp review would be undertaken on housing stock in Woodrow. Relevant Councillors were due to visit Woodrow on 6th October along with Officers to observe the conditions and would report their findings to the Committee in November.

b) Joint Worcestershire Hub

Members noted that Officers had submitted a written report containing the Committee's recommendations for service improvement recorded at the previous meeting to the Joint Worcestershire Hub Task and Finish Group. The submission would be considered at the Group's next meeting on 29th September 2010.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

97. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel provided a summary of the written report of the Panel meeting held on 7th September 2010.

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RESOLVED that

the report be noted

98. ARROW VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE CENTRE - AUDIT TRAIL REPORT

The Committee received a presentation concerning an audit trail for the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre's (AVCC) contractual arrangements, due for consideration by the Executive Committee on 29th September.

The Committee was informed that the contract took the form of a management operation contract and not a Service Level Agreement. This approach corresponded with the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when members considered the subject earlier in the year.

The proposed term of the agreement for ten years would provide the contractor the scope to increase the value of the centre through service innovation.

The Committee heard that pre-qualifying questionnaires were distributed in advance of the specification to help ensure that the new contract would be operational from the outset of the 2011/12 financial year. The contract lease was to be for a fixed term of ten years. This would prevent the contractor from being able to automatically roll the contract over into a new ten year period.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the informative presentation.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted

99. PITCHEROAK GOLF COURSE - OPERATIONAL OPTIONS

The Committee received a presentation concerning the review of the operation of Pitcheroak Golf Course over the previous eighteen months and considered the options for future provision.

The Committee heard that the host club of the Pitcheroak Golf Course, Kingfisher Golf Club (KGC), had performed extremely well in terms of attracting increased membership and casual players against the backdrop of a sharp national decline in golf participation and golf club membership. However, despite this, it was expected

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that KGC would not meet the Council's annual income target. This was largely attributed to disappointing revenue figures of non-golf services.

Members gave their support to KGC and praised its performance in the current economic climate and falling golf participation. Members also encouraged Officers and KGC to continue to work with local schools to help attract young people to the sport to the potential short and long term benefit of the Council and KGC.

The Chair thanked the officers for the informative presentation.

RECOMMENDED that:

the Council extend the current arrangements for a further operating period to enable the Council to:

- 1) determine the long term commitment of the Hereford & Worcestershire Golf Partnership; and**
- 2) review the non-golf related elements of the operation; and**

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

100. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

101. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were reminded that a delegation from Stratford District Council were to due to attend the Committee meeting on 6th October 2010 to learn from the Committee's approach to undertaking overview and scrutiny. Stratford Councillors would submit questions regarding the Committee's approach ahead of the meeting as part of their preparation. Officers would forward these questions to Members for their consideration.

The Committee was also informed that the Charging Policy Update report and Disabled Facilities Grants report, due for consideration during the meeting on 6th October 2010, would be received at the following meeting on 27th October 2010.

RESOLVED that

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the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.20 pm