



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 7th September,
2023

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Sid Khan (Chair), Councillor Sharon Harvey (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Imran Altaf, Chris Holz, Joanna Kane, Timothy Pearman (substitute), Jane Spilsbury and Monica Stringfellow.

Also Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships (on Microsoft Teams)
Councillor Luke Court – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling

Officers:

Peter Carpenter and Claire Felton (on Microsoft Teams)

Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham and Mat Sliwinski

22. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ashley and Marshall. Councillor Pearman attended the meeting as a named substitute for Councillor Marshall.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 20th July 2023 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

Chair

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the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th July 2023 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

25. PUBLIC SPEAKING

It was announced that one public speaker had registered to speak but was not in attendance. Following deliberation by the Committee, it was decided that the statement provided by the public speaker when registering to speak should be read out by the Democratic Services Officers present.

The statement provided upon registration by the public speaker, Ms. Bish, was read out as follows:

“Would like to ask questions regarding the library in the town hall at the Thursday meeting 6.30. I have only just seen the agenda so can't yet state the exact questions. They will be about climate impact, energy saving measures and financing allowing for inflation, bearing in mind that Mr Dormer has assured us many times that the £4.2million is the only money being spent on the library area and that construction costs have increased in 2022 by 15% plus 8% inflation in 2023. The allowance was only 6.6% over the whole construction period plus 10% contingency which is supposed to cover all problems, not just inflation. In addition, I would like to know why we are using space in the town hall for a rent free library when it could bring in an income of £200,000 pa. If let to starter businesses – still compatible with the hub idea with business training and economic benefits to the town from generating innovation in local business. (Housing is still another important revenue option, too). Plus, where is the climate impact report? Demolition has major impacts on the environment through carbon emissions. The new library is energy inefficient in design compared to the old and has no room for the extra solar panels that won't fit on the new smaller building. There are very many flat roofs on the new design despite the knowledge that these lose more heat and require more maintenance – every 25 years. Will the council be paying a service charge towards these maintenance costs and what happens if we have another Mr Dormer style leader who fails to keep his buildings up to standard through regular maintenance and then declares the repairs too expensive and demolishes the town hall. What precautions have been taken to ensure we would have a rent free library immediately reinstated in another building?”

26. MEMBERSHIP OF THE FLY TIPPING AND BULKY WASTE TASK GROUP

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It was confirmed that the membership of the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group would consist of the following Members: Councillor Sid Khan (Chair), Councillor Monica Stringfellow, Councillor Kerrie Miles, Councillor Karen Ashley and Councillor Anthony Lovell.

It was noted that Members of the Task Group and Officers would be contacted after the meeting to agree dates for the meetings.

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

The Committee reviewed the Executive Work Programme and requested that the following items be added to the Committee's Work Programme as pre-scrutiny for consideration at future meetings:

- Garden Waste Service
- Proposal for a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Redditch Town Centre
- Play Audit
- Carbon Reduction Strategy – Annual Review
- Decarbonisation of the Council Fleet.

RESOLVED that as detailed in the preamble above, the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated with items from the Executive Committee's Work Programme.

28. 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, and any additional items identified during the course of the meeting be added to the Work Programme for consideration at future meetings.

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

Updates on the Task Groups and Working groups were provided as follows:

- a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Kane

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Councillor Kane provided a brief update on the meeting of Budget Scrutiny Working Group on 24th July 2023. Councillor Kane stated that another meeting of Budget Scrutiny Working Group took place on 6th September 2023 at which the following recommendations to the Executive Committee had been proposed in respect of the Executive Committee reports:

Provisional Financial Outturn Report 2022-23

Recommendation: *“That the Executive Committee ask Officers to prepare a public statement on the Council's position regarding the submission of the Statements of Accounts to external auditors in order to provide assurance to the public about the Council's financial situation.”*

Finance and Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 1 2023/24

Recommendation 1: *“That the Executive Committee be asked to consider a review of how the Council secures external grants and trust funding, to be undertaken at the end of this financial year.”*

Recommendation 2: *“That the Executive Committee be asked to review all grant spending commitments as a matter of urgency and consider risk relating to inflation and the Local Authorities overspend this year.”*

On being put to the vote, the recommendations above were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Holz

Councillor Holz informed Members that a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group due to take place on 4th September 2023 had been cancelled. Alternative dates were being looked at.

- c) Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group – Chair, Councillor Khan

An update on the Task Group was provided earlier in the meeting.

RECOMMENDED

- 1) that the Executive Committee ask Officers to prepare a public statement on the Council's position regarding the**

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submission of the Statements of Accounts to external auditors in order to provide assurance to the public about the Council's financial situation;

- 2) that the Executive Committee be asked to consider a review of how the Council secures external grants and trust funding, to be undertaken at the end of this financial year;
- 3) that the Executive Committee be asked to review all grant spending commitments as a matter of urgency and consider risk relating to inflation and the Local Authorities overspend this year.

30. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

As Councillor Marshall had submitted her apologies for this meeting, there was no update on external scrutiny bodies at this meeting.

31. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was agreed that, in relation to the Town Hall Refurbishment – Final decision (Minute Item 32), the Committee would remain in the open session for the initial Officer presentation relating to the Final Design Plans for the Town Hall and be asked to decide whether to go into the private session for the remainder of the consideration of the aforementioned item.

After the initial presentation provided Town Hall Refurbishment – Final Decision (Minute Item 32), the Committee agreed to the following:

RESOLVED that:

Under S100 A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 of the said act, as amended.

Minute Item No. 32 – The Town Hall Refurbishment - Final Decision.

32. THE TOWN HALL REFURBISHMENT - FINAL DECISION (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

Prior to the Committee deciding to move to exclude the press and public on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular authority (including the authority holding that information), a presentation was provided relating to the Town Hall Refurbishment floor plans and timescales for the building works.

An update was provided on the progress with the move of the Community Hub to the Town Hall. It was stated that significant work had been undertaken with Worcestershire County Council and their subtenants to ensure the design delivered to their existing requirements and at RIBA Stage 3 all partners had signed off that the design met their requirements. There was no reduction of space or facilities for the Library or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as a result of the designs. It was noted that any requirements over and above the core existing services were chargeable. Examples of chargeable costs included a separate lobby for the DWP which was up for negotiation and the audio recording equipment for the civic centre meeting spaces.

There was significant additional documentation in the appendices, with the greatest change for the Council being the movement of the Civic Suite from the Ground Floor to the Second floor. Planning permission for the changes was agreed on the 27th July 2023. A remaining key change that would be needed would be an improvement to access to the building from the disabled parking bays in the Town Hall car park. It was noted that during the refurbishment, Council and Committee meetings would need to take place at an alternative location, with several locations being considered. A separate report on the choice of location for Council meetings during refurbishment would be submitted for Members' consideration in due course.

The Leader of the Council was invited to address the Committee and stated that he fully approved of the Town Hall Refurbishment in that it pushed the Council in the right direction as it was a move to provide modern facilities. He stated that he was pleased with the direction the Council was taking. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling that he concurred with the Leader's statement.

During further discussion, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the updated financial implications of the Town Hall Refurbishment and the design plans for the NHS part of the Town

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Hall. The Committee deliberated on the alternative recommendation to the Executive Committee and on being put to the vote it was:

RECOMMENDED that the Executive Committee undertakes a root and branch review to ensure that this project is still achievable within the original budget, that is £5.2 million, and that contractual arrangements are brought back to the Executive Committee.

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). However, there is no exempt information in this record of the debate).

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.31 pm