

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 6th October,
2010

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Diane Thomas (Chair), Councillor Anita Clayton (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Peter Anderson, Andrew Fry, Robin King, William Norton, Brenda Quinney, Mark Shurmer and Graham Vickery

Also Present:

Councillor Roger Hill and Michael Collins, (Independent Member of the Standards Committee).

Officers:

A Heighway, S Horrobin, A Marklew, G Revans, H Bennett, C Felton and R Griffin and S Skinner

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and M Craggs

102. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Bill Hartnett. Councillor Andrew Fry was named substitute in his absence.

103. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

104. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 15th September and 21st September 2010 be confirmed as correct records.

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Chair

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105. ACTIONS LIST

The Committee considered the latest version of the Action List and specific mention was made on the following matters:

a) Options for Public Speaking (Item 2)

Members were advised that Officers were undertaking research into the options for public speaking at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. A report on this subject would be presented at a following meeting of the Committee.

b) Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs' Scrutiny Network (Item 7)

Officers advised that the following meeting of the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs' Scrutiny Network would take place at Redditch Town Hall on 29th November 2010.

b) Pitcheroak Golf Course (Item 10)

Members confirmed that they had received the figures relating to the number of female members of Pitcheroak Golf Course prior to the meeting.

c) Stratford on Avon District Council (Item 11)

As requested at the previous meeting of the Committee, the questions which had been proposed by Stratford District Council for consideration during an interview with Redditch Councillors had been circulated for Members' consideration. The interview had occurred prior to the Committee meeting and Stratford Councillors were present to observe the Committee in action.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

106. CALL-IN AND SCRUTINY OF THE FORWARD PLAN

There were no call-ins and no items were identified on the Council's Forward Plan as suitable for further scrutiny.

107. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

Councillor Graham Vickery presented a completed scoping document for the consideration of the Committee, which contained

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the proposed terms of reference for a Task and Finish review of methods for promoting Redditch.

Officers explained that attempts had been made in previous years to promote the positive aspects of the town. The Council had recently successfully completed the 'It's My Place' campaign, which had aimed to enhance community pride as well as residents' familiarity with the facilities available within the town. Posters, advertisements in local newspapers, and other promotional materials had been produced as part of this process and residents had been consulted regarding their views of the town.

Some concerns were expressed about the proposed review. Members noted that Officers with expertise in marketing and communications were already undertaking work to promote the town. Under these circumstances there was the potential for duplication. Moreover, Members commented that the anticipated timeframes for the review might be unrealistic. As an alternative it was suggested that an additional section could be added to the Council's standard report template, requiring report authors to clarify how the proposals contained within the report would contribute to a positive image of Redditch.

However, it was acknowledged by Officers that further work needed to be undertaken to promote the town. For example, a Task and Finish review could enable the Council to identify a 'Unique Selling Point' for Redditch. This would help to provide a positive focus for future communications and marketing campaigns. Whilst the final membership that would be appointed to the Task and Finish Group might lack expertise in the fields of communications and marketing they would provide a fresh perspective on the subject. Under these circumstances Officers suggested that they would welcome the review.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a Task and Finish review focussing on promoting Redditch be launched;**
- 2) Councillor Vickery be appointed to Chair the Task and Finish Group; and**
- 3) the report be noted.**

108. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

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

a) External Refurbishment of Housing Stock

The Chair explained that he had attended a walkabout in the Greenlands ward that afternoon and in particular had focussed on the condition of properties and the surrounding environment in Martley Close, Rushock Close and Wishaw Close. During the walkabout Members and Officers had identified a number of issues that needed to be addressed. In particular, the urban design of a number of the buildings detracted from the general aesthetic of the area. In addition the cosmetic appearance of garage doors and building facades had been discussed and it had been noted that the use of bright colours on these surfaces would create a more pleasant atmosphere for local residents. The planting arrangements had also been assessed and it had been suggested that a greater variety of plants would contribute to a more appealing visual appearance. Examples of fly tipping and other detritus had been identified and cleansing work would need to be undertaken in the more immediate future to resolve these issues.

However, whilst there were problems in some parts of the ward the Chair emphasised that this was only in small, very localised areas. The majority of Greenlands ward was clean, safe and a welcoming place to live.

The Chair confirmed that he would aim to deliver a final report on the item for the consideration of the Committee on 17th November.

b) Joint Worcestershire Hub

Councillor Hill, the Redditch co-opted representative on the review, confirmed that he had attended two meetings of the Joint Worcestershire Hub Task Group. He had ensured that the Committee's recommendations had been considered by the Group and would be attending a further meeting of the Group on 14th October to discuss the Group's draft final report.

c) Work Experience Opportunities

The Chair, Councillor Anderson, confirmed that three further members had recently been appointed to the Group: Councillors Fry; Norton; and Shurmer. Members of the Group confirmed that they had arranged to attend a jobs fair which was scheduled to take place in the Town Hall on Friday 8th October, when they would have an initial opportunity to investigate the existing provision of work experience opportunities within the borough.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

109. COUNCIL PLAN 2011-14 PART 1

Officers attended to deliver a presentation on the subject of the Council Plan – Part 1 and specific mention was made of the following matters:

a) General Context in Redditch

Officers reported that in the last Comprehensive Area Assessment the Audit Commission had recognised that the Council was performing adequately. Furthermore, assessment in relation to performance indicators had revealed that steady improvements were being achieved in service delivery.

Redditch had a relatively young population in comparison to other districts in Worcestershire. However, younger people were more likely to reveal during consultation that they were dissatisfied with local services and with living in the area.

b) Participation in sporting activities

Members were advised that Redditch had the lowest levels of participation in sporting activities in the county. A large number of sporting facilities are available in the Borough, so the indicator suggests that these facilities are being utilised by a keen cohort of local residents. Delivery mechanisms need to be identified to encourage more people to participate in sporting activities. There is a clear link between participation in sport and healthy outcomes.

c) Areas of deprivation

There are five super-output areas within the town, consisting of relatively small local populations of approximately 1,000 residents, which were considered to be areas of deprivation i.e. in the top 20% most deprived nationally. Members were advised that within these areas there had been a number of positive developments, so whilst there remained a need to regenerate those locations there also needed to be some recognition of progress, for example the areas of highest need project and the Church Hill regeneration scheme.

Particular areas of Winyates and Church Hill wards were designated as in the top 10 per cent of deprived areas in the country. However, Members noted that this level of deprivation was very localised as it did not apply to locations such as Church Hill North, Winyates West or Winyates Green, which were all neighbourhoods located within those wards.

d) Net Migration

Members agreed that Redditch was strategically located within the region, close to the urban conurbations of Birmingham and Coventry, and within reach of the motorway network and Birmingham International Airport. Members concurred that this represented an excellent local context and that it should have ensured that Redditch was an economically vibrant town. However, there had been a slight net population migration out of the town. Whilst the figures remained low this development is concerning and needs to be addressed.

RECOMMENDED that

**the proposed content of the Council Plan – Part 1 be approved;
and**

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

110. REVIEW OF DIAL-A-RIDE - PRESENTATION

Officers attended to deliver a presentation updating the Committee on the performance of the Dial-a-Ride service and contained proposals for its future delivery. Members were informed that the

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service continued to provide residents with good value for money although usage had slightly decreased during the past three years. Delivery costs were also increasing and the financial value of the current fleet was steadily depreciating. The Council had consequently reviewed that viability of outsourcing the delivery of the service and compared these potential benefits with retaining in-house service provision.

Members spoke of their support for the service. It was felt that there existed real potential benefit through working in conjunction with both Bromsgrove DC and Worcestershire CC by gaining knowledge of best practice and obtaining greater funding opportunities.

RECOMMENDED that

the Committee postpone making recommendations to Executive on the future of the service until it received a more detailed report at the next meeting on 27th October 2010; and

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

111. GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION - PRESENTATION

Officers attended to deliver a presentation informing the Committee of the outcomes of the Garden Waste Collection Service trial.

Members heard that the service was offered to 4,800 residents across trial areas within the west and east of the Borough and had been taken up by 322 customers. Customer feedback on the service was positive, although uptake was disproportionately higher in the west compared to the east. Officers acknowledged potential risks of: low customer uptake; customer dissatisfaction if the service was not rolled out Borough wide; and increased transport emissions from a larger transport fleet. However, Members were also informed that widening the provision of the service was likely to increase the Council's performance against NI 192: increasing waste re-used, recycled and composted.

Members raised concerns that potential costs accrued by the Council in providing a free service could be considerable and difficult to sustain in the longer term. It was felt however that imposing a charge for service use would deter many residents from using the service

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Members expressed further concern that only residents with larger gardens and subsequent greater demand, typically within the more affluent areas of the Borough, would obtain real value for money from the service. Members also felt that take up would be constrained within less affluent areas as it would be difficult in many cases to accommodate another bin in front of a household due to space constraints.

Members suggested that focus should be placed on improving the current recycling rates of household waste rather than shifting emphasis towards recycling garden waste. Officers responded that the rejection rate of household recycling at the Norton Plant had recently decreased considerably.

Members commented also that clear criteria measuring the success of the trial was not evident within the report. Officers acknowledged this and also the suggestion that any future reports contain a comparison between trends of tonnages of garden waste going to Household Recycling Centre against the tonnages collected.

Based on the information provided and Members' concerns regarding delivery of the service, Members agreed that the first option proposed by Officers, to discontinue the service, should be approved by the Council.

RECOMMENDED that

the Garden Waste Collection Service be stopped; and

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

112. FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY TRAINING EVENTS

Members agreed that, due to the late hour of the meeting, the feedback from the training events should be delivered at the following meeting of the Committee. As part of this process the Chair requested that Councillor Quinney, who had attended the Future of Overview and Scrutiny Conference, hosted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny on 5th October, present a written report for members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be amended accordingly.

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113. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

114. WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted that the first budget scrutiny workshop for 2010/11 would take place on Monday 25th October.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.10 pm
and closed at 9.50 pm