



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 2nd September,
2024

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Craig Warhurst (Vice-Chair) and Councillors William Boyd, Claire Davies, Andrew Fry, Joanna Kane, Sachin Mathur, David Munro and Rita Rogers

Also Present:

Councillor M. Stringfellow, Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services

Officers:

Guy Revans and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Pauline Ross

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chair announced that the running order of the agenda had been changed and that Agenda Item No. 10 (Minute No. 35) - Shopmobility Future Options (Pre-Scrutiny) would be presented after Agenda Item No. 4 (Minute No. 33) – Motion on Notice Concerning Acute Mental Health Services – Referral from Council.

30. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

32. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers registered to speak at this meeting.

Chair

33. MOTION ON NOTICE CONCERNING ACUTE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - REFERRAL FROM COUNCIL

The Assistant Director Community and Housing Services briefly presented the report on the Motion on Notice – Referral to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as follows:-

“That the Council asks Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust to reconsider the proposed closure of Hillcrest Ward in Redditch and the consequential transfer of all adult mental health inpatient treatment to the Elgar Unit at the Worcester Royal Acute Hospital site.”

As detailed in the report, the Motion on Notice was considered at the Council meeting held on 29th July 2024. In making this referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Council had noted that the subject of Adult Mental Health Acute Inpatient and Rehabilitation Redesign had been discussed at the meeting of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) held on 8th July 2024. Councillor D. Munro, the Council’s representative on HOSC had attended the meeting.

When this Motion was discussed at the Council meeting, the following was added to the start of the Motion:-

“Council asks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the proposals for Reconfiguration of Adult Mental Health Inpatient and Rehabilitation services.”

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Munro explained that he had proposed the Motion on Notice, following his attendance at the Worcestershire HOSC meeting held on 8th May 2024, whereby discussions as detailed in the preamble above had taken place.

Councillor Munro stated that questions needed to be asked as to what was happening / going to happen. Had the decision already been made to close Hill Crest Ward, which was another erosion of services in the Borough. The nearest adult mental health services would be in Worcester or Hereford. A recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) review of mental health services was quite damaging. The Council had no statutory powers to compel health bodies to attend meetings in order to provide evidence or to consider any recommendations the Council may make. However, questions needed to be asked and residents of Redditch needed to

be reassured that the Council would be asking questions, as follows:-

- Suitability of the building. Were there structural issues with the building?
- Was only the secure acute inpatient services closing?
- Would outpatient services be retained at Hill Crest Ward?
- Would Community Mental Health Services continue?
- What acute adult mental health services would be provided for the residents of Redditch, who used or needed to access services?.
- Were there staffing issues at Hill Crest Ward?
- How would future Adult Mental Health Inpatient and Rehabilitation Services look / be funded for Redditch?
- Where would the nearest secure facility be located for anyone sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983?

Whilst Members acknowledged that service delivery and organisational arrangements for the NHS Acute Health Trusts were out of the Council's remit, Members agreed that questions should be asked; and that further information was needed. Members were of the opinion that no real consultation had taken place and people should be held accountable for reducing / cutting services in the Borough without any consultation.

Members were in agreement that a Task Group was not the best way forward and that the quickest way to achieve answers would be to invite the Chair of Worcestershire HOSC and the relevant representative(s) from Hereford and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; with regards to questions being asked on the future of Adult Mental Health Inpatient and Rehabilitation Services for the Borough.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee investigate the subject of the reconfiguration of Adult Mental Health Inpatient and Rehabilitation Services Redditch, and the closure of Hill Crest Ward, by inviting the Chairman of Worcestershire HOSC and the relevant representative from Hereford and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust to attend a meeting with Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; for the reasons as detailed in the preamble above.

34. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 matter on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said act, as amended.

Minute Item No. 35 – Pre-Decision Scrutiny – Redditch Shopmobility Future Operating Model.

35. SHOPMOBILITY FUTURE OPTIONS (PRE-SCRUTINY)

The Assistant Director Community and Housing Services presented the report and in doing so informed the Committee that the Redditch Shopmobility Service customer visits had declined since Covid-19 and had never fully returned to the 15,000 customer visits each year that the service used to have; the customer visits now were approximately 3,000 per year.

Members' attention was drawn to the 5 possible future operating models for the service, that Officers had considered; with a 6th option of no longer providing the service, as detailed on pages 8 and 9 of the additional papers 1 agenda pack.

The Vice-Chair commented that the opportunity to move the control of the service to Kingfisher Shopping Centre had been considered quite a while ago, why was this not Option 1 now?

The Assistant Director Community and Housing Services referred to Option 4 – The service was to transition to Kingfisher Shopping Centre and the one-off cost implications, of £54,000, to transfer the service. To move the service to a retail unit provided the opportunity to promote and expand the service. The other risk associated would be that the Council would lose control of the service and that Kingfisher Shopping Centre could decide that they did not want the service.

The Vice-Chair queried as to where was the public consultation, and that only 83 people had completed the survey, this was not a public consultation. With regards to the survey, 69% of

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respondents said maybe or no, when asked 'If the location of Redditch Shopmobility was to move to be within the Kingfisher Centre, would this help make the service more accessible?'

The Assistant Director Community and Housing Services informed Members that an Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services stated that the survey undertaken was one of things that Officers were looking at. The current service was not being properly promoted. It would have been nice to have had a larger survey, however, the survey did show that customers needed this service. If the service were moved to a retail unit within the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, this would provide Officers with an opportunity to promote and expand service.

The Assistant Director Community and Housing Services added to move to a site within the Kingfisher Shopping Centre would provide the opportunity to promote the service, review hours and staffing/opening times; with further opportunity to promote an assisted shopping service and delivering scooters to customers waiting in the Kingfisher car park or bus station. Staff occasionally took scooters out to customers, but this was not possible on a regular basis at the current site in Car Park 3; due to the Council's Lone Working Policy, which meant that for health and safety reasons, two members of staff were required for every shift at the current site.

Members referred to the cost implications, as detailed in the report, of moving the service to a retail unit within the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, as follows: -

- The first-year cost of improving the facility and service cost would be approximately £125,000.
- The future annual cost to the Council would be approximately £107,000.

In comparison the report showed that Kingfisher Shopping Centre would require the Council to purchase 5 new scooters, this would equate to a one-off cost to the Council of £54,000 if the service were to transition to Kingfisher Shopping Centre; as detailed in Option 4 (page 9 of the additional papers 1 agenda pack).

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In response to questions from the Committee, the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services explained the Council's current staffing levels to run the service.

Members further commented that it was a regrettable situation with a lot less customers accessing the service, but also with Kingfisher Shopping Centre struggling to draw people in. However, most shopping centres had similar schemes to shopmobility for accessibility for all customers. It was important to have such a service, but with declining customer numbers using the service, there was a need to monitor how the service was used going forward.

Members further commented that they liked the idea of delivering scooters to customers in Kingfisher Shopping Centre car parks and the bus station, however the quality of the scooters needed to be 'top notch' thereby reliable. Providing good equipment and promoting the service could draw customers in. The Council had a responsibility to make the Town Centre accessible. The Council's social responsibility was different to the social responsibility of Kingfisher Shopping Centre. This was highlighted in the report, which showed that the direct running cost of the service was originally 50:50 between the Council and Kingfisher Shopping Centre. This was capped at £40,000 for 2009/10, with a further reduction in 2010 to £30,000 per annum. The Kingfisher Shopping Centre then provided the accommodation at a peppercorn rent and covered the cost of utilities. This changed in July 2024 and the utility bills were now the responsibility of the Council. The Kingfisher Shopping Centre had also changed ownership and were looking to reduce costs.

Some Members therefore felt that Kingfisher Shopping Centre had no desire to fund or run Shopmobility going forward. If the Council retained the service, it would retain control. However, as mentioned during the course of the debate, there was a need to review the service after an appropriate period of time.

Some Members felt that Kingfisher Shopping Centre would not want the service to go as it was also beneficial to them, with non-residents of the Borough also visiting the shopping centre.

Members further commented that people using the service did not only use it to access the shopping centre, but they also used the service to access appointments in the Town Centre, e.g. Doctors

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appointments. Members needed to consider what was best for the residents.

In response to the Chair, the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services informed the Committee that 70% of users of the service were residents of Redditch. There was no viable option to change to a 'Tap and Go' credit card system and staffing costs were a huge inhibitor for the voluntary and community sector (VCS), so no interest had been expressed to run the service.

The Vice-Chair asked if the possibility of some people purchasing and transporting their own scooters had also added to the decline in numbers of customers using the service.

Following a very lengthy debate the Vice-Chair proposed an Alternative Recommendation in that Members considered Option 4 - The service was to transition to Kingfisher Shopping Centre; this was seconded by the Chair.

On being put to the vote, the Alternative Recommendation was lost.

In response to the Chair, the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services explained that 5 new scooters may not be enough and that eventually all of the existing equipment would need modernising. During peak times, the 5 new scooters could be a minimum requirement with a clear booking system being put in place.

Members sought clarification on some of the suggestions made during the course of the debate, and what they were to be asked to vote on.

The Democratic Services Officer clarified that Members had suggested that the following caveat / conditions be applied: -

- that the Shopmobility Service be reviewed after an appropriate period of time.
- that the Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services and the Assistant Director Community & Housing Services look at the possibility of reducing the costs to the Council, by scoping if a retail unit is needed and if the Shopmobility Service could be run by volunteers.

With Members in agreement, and on being put to the vote, it was

RECOMMENDED to the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE that

- 1) Redditch Borough Council provide the Shopmobility service from a rented retail unit within the Kingfisher Centre as set out as Option 3 in the report; and**
- 2) The caveats / conditions as detailed in the preamble above, be included.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 3) The additional costs of £46,835 the Shopmobility Service in 2024/25 are met from balances; and**
- 4) The ongoing position be integrated with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025/26 process to reflect the additional ongoing costs of £28,835 thereafter.**

(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 of exempt matters on the grounds that information would be revealed which related to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) However, there was no exempt information in this record of the debate)

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

The Executive Committee Minutes from the meeting held on 29th July 2024, were submitted for information only.

The Executive Committee Work Programme from 1 October 2024 to 31 January 2025, was submitted for Members' consideration.

It was noted that the DRAFT Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

Officers confirmed that there would be an All-Member Briefing on the Food Waste Business Case and Associated Waste Related Issues.

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The Chair queried if the HRA Rent Setting 2025/26 would be going to a Budget Scrutiny Meeting, if so, there was no need for the Committee to pre-scrutinise this item.

RESOLVED that the following items be presented to future meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for pre-scrutiny: -

- **Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy**
- **Carbon Reduction Strategy and Implementation Plan Annual Review**
- **Independent Remuneration Panel Recommendations**
- **Shareholders' Committee Annual Report**

37. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated to include the items, as agreed by Members (and detailed at Minute No. 36), from the Executive Work Programme 1 October 2024 to 31 January 2025, for pre-scrutiny.

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

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

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

Councillor Dormer reported that he had attended the Group meeting held on Friday 30th August. Councillor Warhurst had submitted his apologies.

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

The next meeting was still to be scheduled. The Democratic Services Officer agreed to scope a future meeting date.

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

The Democratic Services Officer to review progress to date and agree a future meeting date with the Chair and Members of the Task Group.

- d) Post-16 Education Task Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

The date of the first meeting to be arranged once the terms of reference for this Task Group had been approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor C. Davies asked if any work / research had been carried out prior to agreeing to a Speeding and Road Safety Task Group. The Democratic Services Officer agreed to look into this.

RESOLVED that

the Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups Update Reports be noted.

39. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Updates on the meetings of External Scrutiny Bodies were provided by the representatives as follows:

- a) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council Representative, Councillor Kane

Councillor Kane reported that a meeting had taken place (that morning) 2nd September and that she had drafted a brief report. At the suggestion of the Chair, Councillor Kane agreed to email out the brief update to all Members of the Committee and the Democratic Services Officer, for noting.

- b) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny – Council Representative, Councillor Munro

Councillor Munro reported that there was nothing to report that was of relevance to the Borough.

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- c) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council Representative, Councillor Munro.

Councillor Munro reported that he attended the last meeting of this body (8th July) and as a result of the discussions held with regards to the Adult Mental Health Acute Inpatient and Rehabilitation Redesign, specifically the proposed closure of Hillcrest Mental Health Unit; that he had asked for Council to consider a Motion on Notice, as referred to at Agenda Item No. 4 (Minute No. 33). Councillor Munro further informed the Committee that the next meeting of Worcestershire HOSC was scheduled for 9th September.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies updates be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.50 pm