

Executive Committee

12th January 2011

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Carole Gandy (Chair), Councillor Michael Braley (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton, Malcolm Hall, Gay Hopkins, Jinny Pearce and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors Roger Hill and Graham Vickery

Officers:

J Bayley, H Bennett, K Cook, C Flanagan, S Hanley, C John, J Pickering, G Revans, L Tompkin, A Walsh and A de Warr

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

145. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Malcolm Hall declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 10 (Learndirect – Relocation Update) as detailed at Minute 154 below.

146. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Greg Chance.

147. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised the Committee that the following items of business, scheduled on the Forward Plan to be dealt with at this evening's meeting, had been rescheduled to a later meeting of the Committee:

- River Revetment Works – Old Forge Drive and Park Way
- Quarterly Monitoring of Sickness Absence

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Chair

The Leader also advised that she had accepted late circulation of the following item:

- Item 7 – Update of Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/12 – 2013/14.
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148. MINUTES

In the absence of the minutes of the previous meeting, Members noted the decision notice of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 2nd December 2010.

149. EXTERNAL REFURBISHMENT OF HOUSING STOCK SHORT SHARP REVIEW - FINAL REPORT

The Chair of the External Refurbishment of Housing Stock Task and Finish Group, Councillor Graham Vickery, attended the meeting of the Executive Committee to present the Group's recommendations following its brief review of the external appearance of the Council's housing assets in the Woodrow area. Members had noted the poor external appearance of a proportion of the Council's assets and aspects of the environment in which they were located and suggested that these problems might contribute to social pressures and low aspirations amongst those living there. A number of relatively small-scale measures had been identified by the Group to help alleviate some of these difficulties and it was proposed that these could be translated to other areas of the town in due course.

Members of the Committee welcomed the report and largely endorsed both the analysis of the effect of a poor environment and the measures that were being proposed. There were concerns over several of the measures in respect of the possible cost and resource implications and Officers were requested to carry out further work on a number of the proposals. Notwithstanding these minor reservations, the Committee thanked the Group for a fine report that had the potential to improve the lives of a significant number of the town's residents.

RESOLVED that

- 1) light colour paints be utilised to decorate garage doors to improve their visual appearance (as detailed in paragraphs 4.2 – 4.2.3 to the report);**
- 2) the retaining wall to the rear of 1-12 Martley Close be redecorated as part of a Council arts project (as detailed in paragraphs 4.4 – 4.4.4);**

- 3) the Council ensure that, when replacing diseased and dead plants, different types of plants are introduced to ensure there is a variety of leaf colours and foliage in any given area (as detailed in paragraphs 4.6 – 4.6.3);
- 4) the remaining Section 106 money available for use on capital landscaping work in the Greenlands Open Spaces be allocated to soft landscaping work in the courtyard area located in Wishaw Close (as detailed in paragraphs 4.7 – 4.7.6);
- 5) in order to minimise the level of disruption experienced by local residents, a holistic approach to the delivery of frontline services be adopted (as detailed in paragraphs 4.8 – 4.8.2);
- 6) representatives of local schools be invited to participate in estate walkabouts (as detailed in paragraphs 4.9 – 4.9.6);
- 7) representatives of the local GP's Consortium be invited to participate in the estate walkabouts once the consortia have been introduced in 2012/13 (as detailed in paragraphs 4.10 – 4.10.4);
- 8) Worcestershire County Council Highways Officers be contacted to require them to repair the road surface entrance to Rushock Close (as detailed in paragraphs 4.12 – 4.12.4);
- 9) the Portfolio Holder for Housing, the Local Environment and Health be urged to consider the abolition of the garages in Wishaw Close as a priority case due to their bad state of repair (as detailed in paragraphs 4.13 – 4.13.3);
- 10) further information on the following matters be reported back to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

the decoration of the lintels featured on Council properties to improve the visual appearance of those properties (as detailed in paragraphs 4.3 – 4.3.2);

the Council assuming responsibility for the maintenance of small strips of land located close to private properties and public spaces in the Woodrow area (as detailed in paragraphs 4.5 – 4.5.3);

consultation with Council tenants and owner occupiers to find out whether they would support repainting of the pebbledash properties on Ombersley Close and Rushock Close using lighter colours and, if so, which colours they would prefer to use (it being made clear to owner occupiers that this service would only be made available to them at a cost) (as detailed in paragraphs 4.11 – 4.11.5);

13) the report be noted.

150. JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE HUB TASK AND FINISH GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Committee received a report that had arisen out of a joint Worcestershire Scrutiny exercise that had considered the operation of the Worcestershire Hub. The report was presented by Councillor Roger Hill, the Council's representative on the Group. The exercise had been instigated following a number of issues being identified with the performance and perception of the Hub. The main focus of the review had been on identifying ways to progress the performance of the service as opposed to concentrating on any difficulties that might have existed in the past.

The review had been undertaken primarily by County Councillors, with the District representatives attending the meetings and events as non-voting co-optees. A further issue for Redditch Borough Council had been a number of largely unavoidable changes in membership from the Council over the course of the review.

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the report previously and had had reservations over the outcome, not least because of the numbers of recommendations which had arisen, and the difficulty in trying to monitor progress against such a wide variety of measures.

RESOLVED that

the report of the Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny Task and Finish Group be noted.

151. UPDATE OF MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2011/12 - 2013/14

Officers set out the financial position that was facing the Council at the present time, with a requirement to achieve a 26% reduction in expenditure over the next two years which was clearly a challenging target. There was an unresolved issue over money allocated for the provision of the Dial-a Ride service by the Council and it was hoped that the £400,000 concerned would be reinstated on appeal.

The Council was working on the assumption that significant shortfalls would need to be met over the next two years and that, as a consequence, there would be a number of implications. The three-year Shared Services programme was to be accelerated in order that savings could be achieved over a shorter timescale. It was also intended to draw down balances to help achieve a balanced budget for the coming financial year. The focus for 2011/12 was on efficiency and the use of balances, giving Members greater scope to consider the options for achieving a further balanced budget for 2012/13.

The Committee had before it the proposals for capital and revenue bids for the coming three years and was being asked to determine whether it considered that the bids had been accorded the correct level of priority. Members highlighted their intention to accept only those bids that were categorised as high priority bids and the only proposal for a change in prioritisation was in respect of the Solar Panels capital bid.

It was noted that the figure of £13K for the Development Training Programme in the Revenue Bids was for all three years, not just 2011/12 as stated in the report.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the revenue bids 2011/12 – 2013/14 as identified in Appendix A be noted;**
- 2) **the new capital bids 2011/12 – 2013/14 at Appendix B be noted and the priority categorisation of the following bid be amended:**

**Solar Panels (POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS) -
upgrade from MEDIUM to HIGH; and**

- 3) **Heads of Service be requested to continue to review the budget with the aim of presenting a balanced position to the Executive Committee meeting in February 2011.**

152. COUNCIL TAX BASE

Members considered a report that asked them to set the Council Tax Base for the coming year, an integral part of the process for setting the Council Tax that was to be collected from the Borough's residents.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2011/12, as detailed in the Appendices to the report, be approved; and**
- 2) **in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the figures calculated by Redditch Borough Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2011/12 be 27,569.18 and for the parts of the area listed below be:**

Parish of Feckenham	<u>367.29</u>
Rest of Redditch	<u>27,201.89</u>

153. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2011 - 2014

The Committee received a report and presentation setting out the key features of a draft Customer Experience Strategy, which was highlighted as being the first joint strategy across the two Councils, Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils.

There was an Action Plan which set out the means of achieving the desired outcome and which covered four themes. These themes focused upon getting the basics of the experience right, transforming the service to meet customer needs, better understanding the customer and ensuring that staff were customer focussed.

Members welcomed the Strategy and noted that the staff working in customer services already did a very good job, often in quite challenging circumstances. It was anticipated that the success of the Strategy would be reflected in a further reduction in customer complaints.

RECOMMENDED that

the Every Customer, Every Time Customer Experience Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

154. LEARNDIRECT - RELOCATION UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the situation with the Learndirect service following the decision taken in August 2010 to cease activity at the REDI Centre. Services to customers had been maintained throughout the transition period and there were currently 87 active learners enrolled through Learndirect. Officers wished to put on record their thanks to the staff for continuing to deliver a service through trying times. It was recommended that options for

the future use of the REDI Centre premises be investigated by Officers.

It was reported that the budget allocated had been sufficient to fund the transition and a decision on a new contract for Learndirect was expected in May-June of this year. Officers undertook to carry out a general satisfaction survey of new and existing users of the service, the results of which would be reported back to Members in due course. Officers also undertook to provide Councillor Debbie Taylor with further information on the redeployment of staff from the REDI Centre following the meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the report be noted; and**
- 2) **a full review of the property known as the REDI Centre, 54 South Street, Redditch, be undertaken by Worcestershire County Council Property Services to identify options available to the Council for Members' future consideration.**

(Prior to consideration of this item, and in accordance with the requirements of Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000, Councillor Malcolm Hall declared a personal and prejudicial interest in view of his involvement with a group which was considering the acquisition of leasehold use of these premises, should it become available.)

155. COUNCIL RESPONSE TO "LOCAL DECISIONS - A FAIRER FUTURE FOR SOCIAL HOUSING"

A draft response to the Government's consultation document "Local Decisions: A Fairer Future for Social Housing" was considered by the Committee.

The consultation document highlighted a number of key proposals on matters such as the administration of housing waiting lists, flexible tenancies and closer working with tenants and local social housing providers.

It was suggested that the proposals recognised that the local authority was primarily there to provide housing for those who were unable to find accommodation through any other means. The changes were also seen as being of benefit to those who wished to downsize or otherwise alter their living arrangements where their circumstances had changed. The move to fixed term tenancies was seen as a means of increasing movement on the waiting list which would be of benefit to those who were in need of housing, in

particular groups such as young families. A contrary view was voiced which was concerned that the proposals might serve to make communities less sustainable going forward.

Members requested that the exclusion of applicants with more than £20,000 in savings from the social housing waiting list in the response to Question 17 be revisited, in order that the appropriateness of the amount and the relevance of an applicant's age or personal circumstances can be considered further.

The Committee was informed that, owing to the timescales within which the consultation response needed to be submitted, the Mayor's agreement had been sought to remove the capacity for this decision to be called in.

RESOLVED that

the response to the consultation paper: Local Decisions, A Fairer Future for Social Housing be endorsed.

156. GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE - OUTCOMES OF TRIAL

The Committee received the latest update on the trial Garden Waste Collection Service. Officers reported the findings of a consultation that had been undertaken towards the end of 2010 with potential and existing customers in the west of the Borough. The level of customer feedback was very low and the views expressed ambiguous over the future provision of the service.

Members were content that the service had been trialled, customer surveys subsequently carried out and that the outcomes of these should inform the decision to discontinue the trial service. It was proposed that the Council revisit the provision of garden waste collection at some point in the future as a possible shared service.

RESOLVED that

the trial service ends and that the Council revisits the garden waste collection service at a later date as a possible shared service.

157. REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL ESTABLISHMENT - QUARTERS 1 AND 2 - APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2010/11

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on vacant posts within the Council's establishment. It was noted that the Council currently had very few vacant positions.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

158. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17th November and 8th December 2010.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Redditch Borough Council endorse and support the need for a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in the West Mercia Police area;**
- 2) the Council issue a letter to the Health and Wellbeing Board highlighting the level of uncertainty for future provision of a SARC within the West Mercia Police area and the apparent gaps in the NHS White Paper *Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS* in this regard; and**

RESOLVED that

- 3) the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17th November and 8th December 2010 be received and noted;**

159. SHARED SERVICES BOARD

Progress Report

RESOLVED that

the improvements to performance management and monitoring of Shared Services, outlined at Section 15 of the Progress report, be endorsed.

(During consideration of this item, Members considered matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. Given that there was no discussion of the exempt matters under consideration, exclusion of the public and press was not necessary. There is nothing exempt in this record of the proceedings.)

160. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

161. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

Members noted an Urgent Business decision which had been approved in accordance with Standing Order 36, namely:

HMRS – Licence for use of Town Hall Premises
(Decision Reference 488)

RESOLVED that

the matter be noted.

162. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

163. ACTION MONITORING

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00pm
and closed at 10.08pm

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Chair