

Executive Committee

12th April 2011

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Carole Gandy (Chair) and Councillors Juliet Brunner, Brandon Clayton, Malcolm Hall, Gay Hopkins and Jinny Pearce

Also Present:

Councillors Bill Hartnett, Robin King, Brenda Quinney and Derek Taylor and Mr Graham Vickery

Officers:

J Bayley, H Bennett, M Bough, R Cooke, C Felton, L Hadley, M Hanwell and J Pickering and S Skinner

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

206. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Michael Braley, Greg Chance and Debbie Taylor.

207. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

208. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised that she had accepted the following matter as Urgent Business:

Constitution – Review 2011.

209. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 15th March 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

210. PROMOTING REDDITCH TASK AND FINISH GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The final report of the Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group was presented to the Committee by members of the Group, the Chair, ex-Councillor Graham Vickery and Councillors Brenda Quinney and Derek Taylor.

The report had been produced out of a consensus amongst Members that the town might more effectively be promoted and a sense of pride inculcated into local residents and businesses. It was noted that the review and report had identified three areas upon which the Council and its partners should focus their energy, these being the development of business within the town, the development of services for business visitors and the development of leisure tourism.

It was acknowledged by the Group that, whereas a number of the recommendations contained within the report might be implemented in the short term, other recommendations were linked to longer term aspirations for the future which the Committee was urged to endorse in principle. In detailing the background to the recommendations, the Group highlighted a number of more general points including the need for the Council to act as the support in these processes rather than as the leader and the lack of any substantial funding implications arising from the proposals.

Officers reported that the Chair of the Redditch Town Centre Partnership had clarified evidence that had been included in the report from her interview with the Group. In particular, she wished members to note that the town's industrial heritage could be used to promote Redditch, particularly when targeted at a specific audience and used creatively.

The Committee thanked the Group for a good, detailed report. It was noted that the views of many people and organisations had been sought and a number of proposals developed that were both interesting and worthwhile. Officers commented upon a number of the recommendations, endorsing much of what had come out of the review and identifying those areas where there was already work ongoing to address the issues which had been highlighted. In the area of leisure and arts it was particularly noted that the changes to the management structure for Cultural and Leisure Services would increase capacity and resilience and lead to increased focus on a number of issues which had been the subject of recommendations from the Group. Likewise, the Town Centre Partnership endorsed the contents of the report and was utilising the findings of the review to shape its activities going forward.

There was an acknowledgement that certain issues were more intractable and were outside of the power of the authority to directly influence. However, the efforts that were being made to achieve goals such as a more rounded shopping experience or a wider appeal in the night-time economy were recognised.

In responding to the comments of the Committee and Officers, the Group noted that one of their objectives had been to stimulate debate on these issues and, to that extent, the undertaking had been very worthwhile. The Committee was content to endorse the recommendations before it and consequently

RESOLVED that:

- 1a) leisure tourism marketing be targeted at families of all cultures within Redditch and a radius of 20 miles, highlighting the attractions of the Arrow Valley Lake and Countryside Centre and the shopping opportunities;**
- 1b) business marketing should promote Redditch's strategic and rural location, being vibrant and modern using strap lines which reflect these images;**
- 2) a significant festival and events programme be developed and marketed cohesively to raise the profile of the town in the region;**
- 3) promotional material be developed in partnerships and through Redditch Matters;**
- 4) the Palace Theatre, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre and a public arts programme be developed with increased management resource to provide increased audiences, more events and significant installations;**
- 5) the Redditch Town Centre Partnership should work to create a more rounded shopping experience in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and Church Green, with event based programmes to refresh the offer and a cohesive marketing strategy incorporating recognisable branding, key qualities and identifiers;**
- 6) Redditch market be developed to provide again a substantial marketing strategy for the town centre and develop opportunities for new entrepreneurs;**

- 7) the Council ensure that business promotion receives appropriate investment and provide an information resource fit for purpose;
- 8) the new North Worcestershire Economic Development Service and Strategy should recognise the importance of tourism to the local economy and ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the promotion of tourism in the area;
- 9) the need for the promotion of Redditch hotels as a business resource, not necessarily by the Council, should be recognised;
- 10) consideration be given to devising a Visitor Ambassador Scheme;
- 11) the Council endorse the Redditch Advertiser's proposal to introduce a Redditch Community Awards programme and work with the newspaper and other partners to deliver the scheme;
- 12) the Council ensure that deficiencies in road signage are addressed: location naming, systemic effectiveness and physical cleanliness;
- 13) the Council actively seek to establish promotion partnerships and ensure that commercial interests have a full and effective voice; and
- 14) the Council ensure that electronic promotion tools are constantly developed and exploited to the full. This should include introducing a virtual business centre and consistent provision of card payment facilities both online, in promotional materials and at all venues.

211. WORCESTERSHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY 2011 - 2016

The Committee considered a report which set out a Countywide Housing Strategy for Worcestershire for the next five years.

It was noted that the housing market did not respect local authority boundaries and that, increasingly, strategic housing functions were carried out with numbers of partners, both other local authorities and statutory and voluntary sector agencies. This was one of the drivers behind a move from District Housing Strategies to a Countywide approach.

Members particularly drew a number of details from the Strategy which brought to attention the good work that had been undertaken over a number of years to maintain the Council's housing stock. These included the Council's achievements in meeting the Decent Homes standards and the low levels of disrepair in the Council's housing stock.

RECOMMENDED that

the Countywide Housing Strategy and action plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

212. WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN AND AFFORDABLE HOMES PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

Members received a report which firstly set out a Local Investment Plan (LIP) for the county that had been developed by Worcestershire local authorities and other key partners and which set out shared priorities for housing, regeneration, economic development and supporting infrastructure and also summarised a range of proposed reforms to the means by which social housing was delivered.

It was noted that one outcome of the new Affordable Housing Programme Framework might be an increase in the numbers of people seeking to secure social rented property from the Council and a consequent increase in the number of people on the Council's waiting list.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Worcestershire Local Investment Plan be endorsed; and**

RESOLVED that

- 2) the range of proposed reforms to the delivery of affordable housing and the summary of the key elements of the Homes and Communities Agency's new Affordable Housing Delivery Framework be noted.**

213. CONSTITUTION - REVIEW 2011

Officers updated the Committee on changes that had been proposed to the Council's Constitutional documents. The biggest single change was in the overall structure of the Constitutional documents, with a move towards a format that would be easier for Members and Officers to use. It was noted that the proposed changes had been the subject of a number of informal meetings

with key Members, with the most significant issues being reported back to the Groups as appropriate.

The main issues that were raised were as follows:

Part 2, Paragraph 6.2 – there was discussion as to whether the Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be EITHER not from the controlling group OR from the opposition group;

Part 2, Paragraph 8.4 – there was discussion as to whether the qualifications for sitting on Regulatory and other Committees were appropriate;

Part 3, Table 2, page 2 – it was suggested that the special provisions as to the Chair be amended to make it mandatory rather than desirable that this be an “Opposition” Member. **Members agreed that this change be recommended for incorporation into the final document;**

Part 4, Paragraph 9.5 – it was highlighted by Officers that these provisions (Questions which may not be asked) were designed to avoid the debate of issues that were not relevant to the Council; and

Part 6, Paragraph 5 – it was noted that the Leader of the Opposition was not referred to in the Urgent Decisions provisions. **Members agreed that this change, with the Leader of the Opposition being consulted, be recommended for incorporation into the final document.**

From a more general perspective, there was concern that local residents had little knowledge or understanding of the Council’s Constitutional arrangements, despite the inclusion of a section in Part 2 on Citizens and the Council.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members’ comments, above, and subsequent adjustments, the draft document be noted.

214. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP, 31ST MARCH 2011 - REFERRALS

The Committee considered a number of recommendations that had arisen out of recent meetings of the Member Development Steering Group. Members required a degree of clarification as to the practical implications of the different options that were being made available in respect of Councillors’ ICT provision. The main issue

was around the extent to which the individual Councillor might rely on the use of their own ICT equipment and the corresponding level of technical support to which they might then be entitled.

The budget which had been set aside for Members ICT was discussed in the context of the present financial situation. The point was made that the budget set aside for this purpose represented a worst case scenario and the actual draw on the funds was expected to be considerably lower as many Members would choose to use either some or all of their own equipment. The provision of Blackberries to key Members was defended in that they would significantly improve the ability of Councillors to conduct their business at relatively little cost, thus contributing to the effective management of the Council.

In respect of the Member Development Programme, the need to make certain aspects of the training mandatory was considered. Whilst it was acknowledged that all Members could not make all training events, it was made clear that alternative arrangements could be made in such instances. Furthermore, it was argued that the taking on of the role of Councillor implied a certain amount of responsibility, including the need to ensure that one was in a position to carry out the role to the best of one's ability, including through the acceptance of training opportunities.

Members noted the proposed changes to the social networking arrangements.

Member Development Programme 2011/12

RESOLVED that

- 1) subject to clarification from Officers on the inclusion of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel amongst those bodies for which compulsory training was required, the programme be endorsed;**

Members' ICT Facilities – Policy

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) the policy, as attached to the report, be adopted and the proposals it contains be implemented for the municipal year 2011/12; and**

Social Networking

RESOLVED that

3) this change of position be noted.

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

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

216. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd and 23rd March 2011. There were no outstanding recommendations for consideration at the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd and 23rd March 2011 be received and noted.

217. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

218. ACTION MONITORING

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00pm
and closed at 9.35pm

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Chair