

Executive Committee

21st June 2011

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillors Peter Anderson, David Bush and Mark Shurmer

Officers:

H Bennett, M Craggs, K Dicks, C Felton, T Kristunas, D Taylor and A de Warr

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

15. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Derek Taylor.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised the Committee that the following item 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:

- Consolidated Revenue Outturn – Financial Year 2010/11.

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Chair

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 31st May 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - FINAL REPORT

Councillors Peter Anderson and Mark Shurmer presented the report on Work Experience Opportunities on behalf of the Task and Finish Group.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the provision of work experience in Redditch as it existed at the present time. The majority of students only received one week of work experience whilst at High School and the constraints on schools and their staff worked against this provision increasing. The benefits to both students and potential employers of effective work experience provision was outlined and a number of measures suggested such as ensuring more and higher quality placements, greater flexibility over the timing of the placement and greater involvement of parents where appropriate.

The proposal to increase the school leaving age incrementally to age 18 by 2015 was seen as a retrograde step as many of the students who would be impacted had little interest in academic pursuits but would benefit tremendously from practical experience in the workplace.

The benefits of work experience were extolled, exposing, as it did, students to the workplace environment and allowing them to make better choices as to their future career paths. The work of the Worcestershire Education Business Partnership was praised and the hope expressed that they could continue to deliver their unique service following the removal of County Council funding.

Members of the Committee agreed in principle with most of the recommendations of the Group, subject to some amendment. It was acknowledged, however, that the County Council was making adequate arrangements for the rise in the school leaving age in the years up to 2015. It was also acknowledged that the Council could continue to promote work experience by setting a good example and by encouraging the Council's partners to do likewise. It was proposed that the Council could encourage the provision of work experience opportunities through the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit and the Local Strategic Partnership.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the current work experience scheme, which provides work experience opportunities for 14 and 15 year olds at Key Stage 4 at school, should be continued locally;**
- 2) **the work of the Worcestershire Education Business Partnership be supported;**
- 3) **those local employers that already participate in providing work experience opportunities be thanked for their efforts and others be encouraged to deliver presentations to local students for their own benefit as well as the students, and to strengthen the existing links between schools and local industries, with Officers pursuing these aims through the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit and the Local Strategic Partnership; and**
- 4) **there should be a clearly identifiable point of contact at Redditch Borough Council for schools to arrange work experience placements at the Council.**

20. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 4 - JANUARY TO MARCH 2011

Members considered the latest quarterly report for the authority detailing performance up to the end of March 2011.

It was reported that there were only a few areas of significant concern which were discussed at paragraph 3.8 of the report. In response to the increase in the number of working days lost due to sickness absence a Corporate Sickness Working Group had been established. The drop in recovery rates for housing benefits overpayments appeared to Officers to reflect the imposition of an unrealistic target at the start of the year whereas the increase in the numbers of violent offences was to be seen in the context of low absolute figures.

The Committee sought clarification on a number of specific indicators. In respect of swimming usage, the numbers of visits to leisure centres and the apparent anomalies that these corresponding figures threw up, Officers undertook to provide Members with additional information following the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the update on key performance indicators for the period ending 31st March 2011 be noted.

21. QUARTERLY MONITORING OF THE BENEFITS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - QUARTER 4 - JANUARY TO MARCH 2011

Officers updated the Committee on the performance of the Benefits Service and the progress against the Benefits Service Improvement Plan.

The Committee was informed that the Service was continuing to improve its performance, as demonstrated by the progressive decrease in the average time taken to process new claims and change events for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit claims. The investment by the Council in this Service over the period of the Improvement Plan was noted in this regard.

It was noted that data for the average time taken to process claims for neighbouring authorities included separate average figures for the three authorities in South Worcestershire who participated in a shared service. Officers undertook to contact their counterparts in these authorities and provide Members with an explanation following the meeting.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

22. QUARTERLY MONITORING OF COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS - QUARTER 4 - JANUARY TO MARCH 2011

The Committee received the report on complaints and compliments for the final quarter of 2010/11, the last occasion the information would be provided using the recently superseded recording process.

Performance over the course of the year had demonstrated an improvement in response times to complaints, notwithstanding a dip in performance in the final quarter. This was largely attributed to the nature and complexity of a number of recent complaints. Officers informed the Committee that the new recording process would hopefully lead to an increase in the numbers of complaints being reported as they were an invaluable tool in driving forward improvement across the range of Council services. Likewise, the low numbers of compliments recorded was attributed to the difficulty in capturing this data.

The telephone answering times for the Council's contact centre were an area that had been the subject of much interest over a significant period of time and Officers reported that staffing levels were profiled to take account of anticipated periods of high activity.

RESOLVED that

the update on complaints and compliments for the period January - March 2011 be noted.

23. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24th May 2011.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24th May 2011 be received and noted; and**

Petition – Unicorn Hill – Taxi Rank

- 2) the petition and an accompanying Officer report be submitted to the Licensing Committee for consideration by that body.**

24. WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

The Protocol for referral of decisions from the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee to participating authorities, as agreed at a meeting of the body on 25th November 2010, was considered by Members.

RESOLVED that

the protocol for referral of decisions from the Joint Committee be noted.

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

There were no minutes or referrals under this item.

26. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received an update on the work of the Advisory Panels and similar bodies. It was noted that the Church Hill District Centre Members' Panel would be meeting the following evening

and that a further meeting of the Procurement Steering Group was in the process of being arranged.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

27. ACTION MONITORING

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.28 pm