

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 5th July, 2011

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), Councillor Mark Shurmer (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Peter Anderson, Andrew Brazier, Simon Chalk, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Gay Hopkins, Alan Mason, Luke Stephens and Brenda Quinney.

Also Present:

Councillor M Chalk and M Collins, (Vice Chair of the Standards Committee).

Officers:

J Staniland

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and M Craggs

28. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

30. MINUTES

Members requested that the minutes of the previous meeting should be amended to recognise that Councillor Shurmer, Vice-Chair of the Committee, had chaired the meeting prior to the Chair's arrival.

RESOLVED that

subject to the amendment as detailed above, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th June 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

31. ACTIONS LIST

Members considered the latest version of the Committee's Actions List.

Members were advised that further information had been received from Officers regarding a request from the Committee to incorporate details about the savings that were made by the Council through landfill charges into the Council's quarterly performance reports. There would be difficulties involved in providing the cost of landfill waste arising from Redditch. The waste from the grey bin collections in the Borough were mixed with waste from Bromsgrove at the Redditch Transfer Station and consequently only an estimate could be provided about the level of waste deriving from Redditch. In addition, a proportion of the town's waste was not dispatched to landfill and was instead processed at an energy from waste facility.

Officers had suggested that as an alternative it might be possible for the Council to obtain figures in relation to the total amount of waste collected in the Borough. This figure had been monitored in previous years.

The Committee concurred that further information was required to enable Members to identify an appropriate solution. Members therefore requested that a report on the subject be submitted for their consideration at the following meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Actions List be noted.

32. CONSIDERATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted that at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee, on 21st June 2011, the Work Experience Task and Finish Group's final report had been considered. Subject to a number of amendments, four of the Work Experience Task and Finish Group's recommendations had been approved.

The Chair of the Committee advised Members that a staff volunteering policy had been added to the draft Forward Plan for consideration by the Executive Committee on 23rd August. As this had formed the subject of members' discussions at a previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members agreed that the item would be suitable for pre-decision scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the proposed staff volunteering policy be considered at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16th August 2011; and**
- 2) **the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 21st June 2011 be noted.**

33. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Committee considered three draft scoping documents.

a) Phone Masts

Councillor Michael Chalk attended the meeting to present a proposal to review the process for installing phone masts within the Borough.

Councillor Chalk explained that as the Chair of the Planning Committee and as a ward councillor he was aware that the installation of phone masts within the Borough was a subject of interest to the public. He expressed the view that there was a lack of understanding amongst residents about national requirements and the procedures that the Council followed. The overarching aim of the proposed review would be to identify how this procedure could be more effectively communicated to the public.

Officers explained that in previous years a local policy in relation to the installation of phone masts had been included in the Local Plan 3. However, in response to national guidelines this policy had been removed. Consequently, the Council's procedure was informed by national policies and legislation.

Applications for phone masts were considered in a different manner to other planning applications by the local authority. The Council could only influence the siting and design of a phone mast. As part of the process for considering suitable sites for phone masts national guidelines in relation to the health implications of phone masts were adhered to. The Council did not determine the number of phone masts necessary in any given area. Instead, telecommunications companies provided estimates of the number of phone masts that would be required in future years, based on projections about demand for the use of the service.

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The Committee discussed the proposed review. Concerns were expressed about the review, as members suggested that it would be difficult for a Task and Finish Group to make any proposals that could change a process informed by national guidelines. However, the Committee noted that many Members were unfamiliar with the process and it was possible that more action could be taken to better communicate the procedure for the installation of phone masts to both Members and residents

Consequently, Members agreed that written guidance relating to the national policy should be circulated for the consideration of all Members. The topic could then be referred to the Planning Advisory Panel, which had the expertise to consider the subject in further detail effectively.

b) Promoting Sporting Participation

Councillor Luke Stephens presented a proposal to review appropriate ways to promote greater participation in sporting activities in the Borough.

Councillor Stephens informed members that the aim of the review was to encourage local residents, particularly though not exclusively young people, to participate in sporting activities in Redditch. There were numerous opportunities available within the Borough but unfortunately fewer than 21 per cent of adults participated in sporting activities on a regular basis.

Members agreed that this subject represented a suitable topic for scrutiny and that the review should be completed in two stages. The first stage would focus on the London Olympics and actions that could be taken in 2012 to encourage an increase in sporting participation through specifically Olympics themed events. The second stage would focus on actions that could be taken to promote sporting participation in the long-term.

c) Youth Service Provision

Councillor Simon Chalk presented a proposal to review the provision of youth services within the Borough.

Councillor Chalk explained that the focus of the review would be on options for delivering services to young people living in

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the Borough in future years. He advised Members that he was keen to investigate the potential for local third sector and private sector organisations to either deliver or provide assistance in the delivery of services suitable for young people. The review would also consider actions that could be taken to more effectively communicate activities that were already available to young people in Redditch. However, to avoid duplicating the work of the sports participation review the subject of sporting activities would not be considered.

The Committee was advised that Worcestershire County Council was currently undertaking consultation, as outlined in the report *Positive Activities for Young People*, in relation to potential changes to youth service provision. A number of options had been proposed by Worcestershire County Council for consideration as part of this consultation process, which was due to conclude in autumn 2011. The Task and Finish Group would consider and respond to this consultation process as part of the review.

The Committee agreed that the review represented a suitable topic for scrutiny and concurred that the Student Council should be engaged during the course of the exercise. Councillor Chalk advised Members that the Student Council had already been informed about the review and were keen to participate.

Members noted that a maximum of five members were generally appointed to Task and Finish Groups. However, the Chair commented that there were some areas where the reviews of youth service provision and sporting participation could potentially overlap. Therefore, subject to the approval of the political party group leaders, Members agreed that Councillors S Chalk and Stephens should be appointed as the sixth members of each review to ensure that the reviews would avoid duplication.

RESOLVED that

- 1) current procedures regarding the installation of phone masts be circulated for Members' consideration;;**
- 2) Members be asked to submit comments regarding the installation of phone masts to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport;**

- 3) the subject of the installation of phone masts be referred to the Planning Advisory Panel for further consideration;
- 4) a Task and Finish review of ways to promote sporting participation in the town be launched;
- 5) Councillor Luke Stephens be appointed to Chair the Promoting Sports Participation Task and Finish Group;
- 6) a Task and Finish review of the provision of youth services be launched; and
- 7) Councillor Simon Chalk be appointed to Chair the Youth Service Provision Task and Finish Group.

34. HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Councillor Brenda Quinney, Redditch Borough Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, provided an update on the work of the committee.

Councillor Quinney advised Members that she had attended a meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21st June. During this meeting a district Council representative, Councillor Janet Marriott from Malvern Hills District Council, had been appointed the Vice-Chair of the Committee.

The main topic considered during the meeting had been a report from the West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust, *Worcestershire Make Ready*. 'Make Ready' consisted of a plan to introduce central ambulance hubs within the areas served by the Ambulance Trust. This system had already been implemented effectively in Staffordshire and had resulted in reductions to the costs of service delivery and in improved efficiencies across ambulance operations.

The West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust was proposing that in the county the Hub should be established in Worcester. This would ensure that the Hub was positioned in a central location within the traditional county boundaries and with close links to other activity centres within Worcestershire. However, concerns had been expressed by members of the Committee about the suitability of the system for patients in Worcestershire. Furthermore, Members were advised that many patients from Redditch and Bromsgrove were more likely to visit the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch than the Worcester Royal Infirmary and might want to retain a hub in the north of the county.

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During the course of the meeting there had been a critique of hospitals based within the county, including the Alexandra Hospital. Kidderminster Hospital was the only hospital in the county which had not been criticised as part of this process. The Committee had also discussed obesity levels and the extent of drug and alcohol abuse within the county.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **copies of the *Worcestershire Make Ready* report be circulated for the consideration of members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and**
- 2) **the report be noted.**

35. ALCOHOL RELATED ADMISSIONS RATES - CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Bill Hartnett, presented a report on the subject of alcohol related admissions to hospital amongst young people for the consideration of the committee.

Reference was made to the presentation originally delivered for the consideration of the panel on the subject, *Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel: Alcohol Related Hospital Admissions*, by the Programme Lead for Alcohol from the Worcestershire Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT). Members praised the Worcestershire DAAT for their work. However, Members noted that more action needed to be taken by all relevant partners to work with young people, particularly persistent drinkers, after they had been released from hospital.

The Committee noted that the covering report provided a number of options for the further consideration of this subject. Following publication of the agenda members had been advised that Worcestershire County Council was due to consider the subject as part of the Council's annual review of crime and disorder scrutiny matters. To avoid duplication Members agreed that the information gathered to date should be forwarded to Worcestershire County Council for further consideration. The Committee also agreed that a request should be submitted to Worcestershire County Council for Councillor Hartnett, as Chair of the Redditch Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, to attend a meeting at the county council to submit evidence on the subject.

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Members discussed the possibility of proposing items for the consideration of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel. As this was not the subject of any item on the agenda the Committee agreed that after the meeting officers should liaise with interested Members and the Chair of the Panel to discuss the matter further.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the evidence gathered to date on the subject of alcohol related admissions to hospital among young people be referred to Worcestershire County Council for further consideration as part of the county council's crime and disorder scrutiny process; and**
- 2) **the report be noted.**

36. 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.

The Committee was advised that of the 43 indicators reported in the quarter, 48.8 per cent had improved when compared to the same quarter in the previous year. Seven of these indicators had been listed in the report as examples of good performance for Members' consideration. Three further performance indicators had been listed in the report as examples of concern. Officers had proposed actions that could be taken to resolve the problems in future years.

RESOLVED that

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

37. ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL MEETING - FEEDBACK

Councillor Hartnett delivered a report to the Committee on the outcome of a recent visit to the Alexandra Hospital that he had attended alongside the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Local Environment and Health, and the Chief Executive of the Council.

The meeting had been organised following a cross party Motion on Notice to Council in June on the subject of the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) assessment of the Alexandra Hospital. This

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assessment had identified a number of key areas of concern in relation to the quality of care received by patients at the hospital.

During the course of the visit Members met with senior hospital staff. Members had been advised that there had been a series of further hospital inspections since the publication of the report and these had confirmed that progress was being made to address the concerns raised by inspectors. Staff were using visual and written management aids to improve patient care, including the use of red trays to identify patients who required assistance with eating or drinking. Visiting hours had also been amended to enable family members to assist patients during meal times.

The Head of Nursing at the Alexandra Hospital had agreed to deliver a presentation prior to the next meeting of Council. This would provide an opportunity for Members to learn about the progress that had been made since the publication of the report.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

38. MEETING OF THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - FEEDBACK

The Chair explained that he had attended the first quarterly meeting with the Leader of the Council on 30th June 2011. The quarterly meetings had been introduced to provide the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to discuss scrutiny matters with the Leader of the Council. However, the Chair advised Members that where an issue required urgent discussion with the Leader he would contact her directly rather than wait for the next quarterly meeting.

During the meeting the Chair had discussed the subject of proposed scrutiny reviews with the Leader of the Council. The Leader had suggested that the Promoting Sporting Participation Task and Finish Group should invite County Councillor Jane Potter to submit evidence early in their review. Councillor Potter had been involved in a similar review and could provide useful information about actions that were already being taken or were due to take place at the time of the London Olympics.

Additional topics for scrutiny had also been discussed. The Leader of the Council had suggested that a review of the market, particularly actions that could be taken to promote the town's market more effectively, could be suitable for review. In addition,

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the Leader had suggested that a review of Members' IT provision could be undertaken later in the year to assess the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

The Portfolio Holder Annual Reports process had similarly been discussed. The Chair of the Committee had explained that the two stage approach to the report, involving the presentation of a written performance report and a question and answer session with the Portfolio Holder, would be retained in 2011/12. However, the Chair requested that there be a maximum of six questions proposed for the consideration of each Portfolio Holder.

Arrangements for budget scrutiny had also been addressed during the meeting. The Chair of the Committee and Leader of the Council had agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needed to be engaged as part of the budget preparation process and at a much earlier date prior to a decision by Council. Concerns were expressed, though, about the difficulty involved in contributing to the budget setting process at an early date unless draft budget proposals were made available for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

39. REGIONAL SCRUTINY TRAINING - FEEDBACK

The Chair explained that he had attended a regional scrutiny event at the University of Birmingham on 16th June 2011.

During the event presentations had been delivered by experts in scrutiny from the University of Birmingham and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). The Chair had felt that the event had been useful and informative. The benefits of a regional network included having an opportunity to share examples of good practice with peers and the potential to attract informed speakers to a central location. The network would not, however, assume responsibility for scrutinising regional initiatives such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

Members were advised that the West Midlands was the only region in the country that was not represented by a regional scrutiny network. Attendees had been advised that a regional network could be established at a relatively small financial cost of £50-75 per Council for approximately three meetings per year.

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RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

40. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

41. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee was advised that five of the six Portfolio Holders had confirmed the date when they would deliver their Annual Reports for the consideration of the Committee. This included the annual report for Councillor Derek Taylor, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism, who had recently arranged to deliver his report on 24th January 2012. Officers confirmed that, as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous year, the final meeting of Committee had not been offered as a potential date for the delivery of a Portfolio Holder Annual Report.

A number of other reports had been rescheduled or added to the Committee's Work Programme for consideration. Firstly, two further scoping documents were in the process of being prepared on the subject of improving recycling rates and facilities for disabled people. These scoping documents would be presented for the Committee's consideration on 26th July 2011. Secondly, the Chair had agreed that a report on the subject of the private sector home support service would be considered at a meeting of the Committee on 16th August 2011. Finally, Members were advised that the first tracking report, monitoring the implementation of actions requested by the Committee in response to petitions, was also due to be considered at the meeting in August.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.28 pm