

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 26th July, 2011

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

S Hanley, S Horrobin and S Morgan

Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and M Craggs

42. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Councillor Simon Chalk. There were no named substitutes.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or of party whip.

44. MINUTES

Members requested that minute 34 be amended to reflect that the Worcestershire Health Overview Scrutiny Committee had expressed doubt that the 'Make Ready' plan to introduce central ambulance hubs within the areas served by the Ambulance Trust had worked effectively in Staffordshire.

RESOLVED that

subject to the amendment as detailed above, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5th July 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

45. ACTIONS LIST

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

Upon receiving an update about current timescales for resolving issues around Members' ICT Facilities, Members expressed considerable frustration with the overall process and sought a swift resolution to the ongoing problems. Party Group Leaders would be provided with a further update as soon as this was possible. It was suggested that the issue warranted a scrutiny review.

Elsewhere, Members were informed that, as previously requested by the Committee, relevant Officers had recently included a question about how local residents would prefer to be informed about service performance at the Council to the Budget Jury.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Actions List be noted.

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

There were no call-ins and no items were identified on the Council's Forward Plan as suitable for further scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 12th July 2011 be noted.

47. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

The Committee considered two draft scoping documents.

a) Facilities for Disabled People

Councillor Alan Mason presented a proposal to review the current facilities for disabled people in the Borough. It was suggested that this was a particularly pertinent issue as it was thought that there would be a growing need for adequate disabled facilities in future years. It was commented that the existing facilities in Redditch for disabled people needed to be improved and was an issue often overlooked.

It was also suggested that the reviews on promoting sporting participation and on youth services provision should both assess current facilities for disabled people.

b) Improving Rates of Recycling

Councillor Gay Hopkins presented a proposal to investigate the recycling process in Redditch as a Short, Sharp Review. The proposal had been precipitated by a steady decline in the Council's recycling figures in recent years. The proposed review would therefore focus on arresting this slide and making the Council's recycling rates compare more favourably with that of neighbouring authorities.

Members expressed disappointment with the Council's recycling figures. It was suggested that an increasing focus on tackling climate change may come at the expense of local recycling. However, it was felt that more could still be done in the Borough to increase local rates of recycling. Members commented that people who began to recycle were very likely to continue doing so on a consistent basis. It was therefore suggested that the review needed to specifically target those residents who had not previously recycled.

It was thought that recycling might re-emerge as a national and local priority due to the escalating costs brought by sending waste to landfill. The Council therefore had an increasing financial as well as environmental incentive to improve local rates of recycling. However, concern was raised that any review undertaken by a district Council into improving its recycling rates could be frustrated as authority for the recycling process was held elsewhere.

It had been proposed that the review commence early in the New Year to avoid coinciding with the Environmental Services transformation programme. However, Members expressed concern that finalising an important review during an election period would not be practicable. It was therefore proposed that, should the review be approved, this should commence before the New Year to enable an earlier finish.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a Task and Finish review of facilities for disabled people in Redditch be launched;**

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- 2) Councillor Alan Mason be appointed to Chair the Facilities for Disabled People Task and Finish Group;
- 3) a Task and Finish review of increasing local rates of recycling be launched;
- 4) Councillor Gay Hopkins be appointed to Chair the Increasing Rates of Recycling Task and Finish Group;
- 5) relevant Members and Officers meet to identify a suitable launch date for the review and appropriate length of the scrutiny exercise.

48. TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE REPORTS

The Committee received the following reports in relation to current reviews:

- a) Promoting Sporting Participation – Chair, Councillor Luke Stephens

The Chair informed the Committee that the first meeting of the Promoting Sporting Participation Task and Finish Group had taken place on 20th July 2011. The meeting had largely taken the form of a brainstorming session. The Group had discussed widening the review beyond the initial scope of focusing solely on increasing sporting participation by helping more people to become physically active. The Group discussed the possibility of making existing sporting facilities in the Borough, including playing pitches, utilised more widely beyond mainstream sports such as football and cricket to give local people greater scope for using the facilities. The Group was also looking to make it easier for residents to locate information on local opportunities to participate in sport and physical activities.

The review would not be focusing on a specific age range and would also review opportunities for disabled people to participate in sport and physical activity. It was not expected that the review would recommend proposals that involved significant cost. Instead, the Group was to focus on how existing provision could be more widely utilised.

The Group also briefly discussed giving greater recognition to local volunteers and sporting events and clubs.

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The second meeting was due to take place on Monday 1st August 2011.

b) Youth Service Provision – Chair, Councillor Simon Chalk

In Councillor Simon Chalk's absence, the Committee was informed that the first meeting of the Youth Services Provision Task and Finish Group was to take place on 27th July 2011.

RESOLVED that

the reports be noted.

49. 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.

Members were informed that at its latest meeting on 19th July 2011, the Committee had received a presentation from Harry Turner, Chairman of the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, regarding the local standard of care for the elderly. He expressed regret at the poor level of care that some elderly people had unfortunately received, including at the Alexandra Hospital. New care processes had consequently been introduced in the relevant wards to help instigate improvement. This included consulting with patients on a more regular basis.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had expressed concern that national proposals to place local health commissioning powers in the possession of GP clusters might result in financial considerations determining the priority of patient treatments.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted

50. CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE REPORT

Councillor Bill Hartnett, Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, provided a summary of his written report which detailed the Panel's most recent meeting held on 19th July 2011.

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Members were referred to the crime figures contained within the update. Councillor Hartnett reported that there were a number of underlying reasons to explain why reported incidents for five of the seven main types of crime in Redditch were higher than at the same point the previous year. This included the police's adoption of an increasingly proactive approach to tackling crime. It was therefore felt that Redditch remained a safe place to live and work.

The Committee requested further information on Operations Wizard and Magenta which had been launched to tackle drug crime in the Borough. Members were interested to learn whether the operations targeted drug dealers, drug users or both.

The Committee was advised that the police remained committed to the local Partners and Communities Together (PACT) process. Concerns were expressed about Police attendance at recent PACT meetings. However, the Committee was informed that this did not reflect decreasing enthusiasm amongst the police for the PACT process. Furthermore, it was noted that PACT was a partnership rather than a Police initiative and involved a variety of forms of engagement.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted

51. TOWN CENTRE LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS - PRE-SCRUTINY

Members were informed that the report on the subject of Town Centre Landscape Improvements had been postponed due to the requirement for further consultation. The report would therefore be received at a date to be confirmed during the 2011/12 municipal year.

52. WASTE COLLECTION RATES

Members received a report that provided further information on the Council's performance in relation to reducing the amount of waste disposed of through landfill. The information had been requested at the previous meeting of the Committee.

Members commented that the Council needed to remain focused on preventing waste from being sent to landfill due to the raising of the landfill tax. It was suggested that the newly launched Task and Finish review of local recycling could assess waste minimisation within the Borough. However, the Committee was informed that the

total amount of waste collected had declined in recent years. This coincided with the fall in rates of recycling.

RECOMMENDED that

the previous best value performance indicator BV 84, which measures the total amount of waste collected (kg per head) be incorporated into the quarterly performance monitoring reports; and

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

53. CONSOLIDATED REVENUE OUTTURN - FINANCIAL YEAR 2010/11

The Committee received the Council's overall financial outturn for the 2010/11 financial year for consideration.

Members discussed the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturn for 2010/11 and questioned what recent developments there had been in relation to the HRA. Members were informed that Officers were assessing different models of borrowing to finance the purchase of the HRA subsidies. Members requested further information on the current position at a future meeting.

The Committee discussed the financial position of Pitcheroak Golf Course. Members questioned why the income target had not been achieved and requested further information about current work being undertaken to review the situation.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Officers to produce a written update report concerning the current position of the HRA and guidance on future Committee reports on the subject; and**
- 2) the report be noted**

54. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

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55. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were informed that all of the Portfolio Holders Annual Reports had now been scheduled for the Committee's 2011/12 work programme.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.52 pm