

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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8th November 2011

## MINUTES

### Present:

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

### Also Present:

Councillors B Clayton and R Hill  
M Collins (Independent Vice Chair, Standards Committee)  
A Scarce

### Officers:

H Broughton, K Dicks, C Felton, S Horrobin, D Kesterton and L Tompkin

### Committee Services Officer:

J Bayley and M Craggs

*Relevant extracts from the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that took place on 8th November 2011.*

### MINUTE 117

#### CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL - CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair of the Redditch Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Bill Hartnett, delivered a presentation on the subject of the most recent meeting of the Panel that took place on Wednesday 26th October 2011.

Members were advised that during the meeting a presentation had been delivered on the subject of the performance management framework that had been adopted by Redditch Community Safety Partnership in 2011. This report confirmed that crime rates for most categories of crime were falling in Redditch and the town was a safe place in which to live. The panel had been impressed by the positive work of the partnership and would be issuing a press release to promote this work to the public.

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Chair

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The panel had been advised during the presentation that levels of racially aggravated offences and harassment offences had increased when compared to the same period the previous year. The new mosque in Redditch had been vandalised during this period. However, it was difficult to confirm whether this had occurred as a result of a racially aggravated offence or due to the fact that until the building works were completed the mosque was a vacant property which was more likely to be targeted by vandals.

The panel had expressed concerns, however, about the proposed introduction of a joint North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership, which would replace the separate partnerships that currently operated in Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest districts. In particular, Members were concerned that a joint partnership would not be able to address the particular needs and priorities of Redditch residents to the same extent as the Redditch Community Safety Partnership.

Members also expressed concerns about the implications of a joint partnership for crime and disorder scrutiny. During a recent meeting of the Worcestershire Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Scrutiny Network representatives present at the meeting had advised that Members in the south of the county had struggled to scrutinise the performance of the joint South Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership effectively. Members concurred that there was a risk that similar problems could occur in the north of the county if the community safety partnerships in north Worcestershire were merged.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

**Redditch Borough Council does not approve the merger of Redditch Community Safety Partnership (RCSP) with Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) and Wyre Forest Community safety Partnership (WFCSP) resulting in the creation of a North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP).**

### MINUTE 122

#### **GRITTING AND SNOW CLEARANCE - REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL APPROACH - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Committee received the *Gritting and Snow Clearance – Redditch Borough Council's Approach* report for pre-scrutiny.

Members were advised that the report outlined existing practices at Redditch Borough Council which were implemented during periods of inclement weather. The report had been produced to provide the Council with an opportunity to formalise this approach. As part of this process the Council would continue to concentrate on providing snow clearance and gritting services at Council venues, such as the crematorium and cemeteries.

Worcestershire County Council, rather than Redditch Borough Council, had responsibility for gritting and snow clearance on the town's highways and for installing and replenishing grit bins situated on adopted highways. The two local authorities in recent years had started to work closely together during periods of inclement weather to ensure that effective use was made of available resources and particularly problematic areas could be prioritised.

Redditch Borough Council was in the process of procuring specialist equipment to assist with snow clearance and gritting in the town. This would include purchasing snow blades which could be fitted to existing vehicles used by the Council to assist with snow clearance. The Council was anticipating that the equipment could be purchased at a cost of approximately £20,500.

Members praised the work of relevant Redditch Borough Council Officers during the inclement weather in the winter 2010/11. This positive assessment of the work of Borough Officers had been endorsed by the Gritting Short, Sharp Review Group. However, Members expressed disappointment with the gritting and snow clearance services that had been provided by Worcestershire County Council. Members expressed concern that similar issues, that had been identified by the Gritting review group, did not appear to have been addressed in either the report or in a separate written submission to the Committee and it was questioned whether the problems that had been identified by the group would be acknowledged and addressed by Worcestershire County Council in future periods of inclement weather.

Officers explained that Worcestershire County Council and Redditch Borough Council both acknowledged that mistakes had been made the previous year and lessons had been learned. As

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part of this process modifications had been made to Worcestershire County Council's website to ensure that maps locating grit bins and demonstrating primary and secondary gritting routes could easily be accessed by the public. Furthermore, the two Councils had determined that whilst Redditch Borough Council could only maintain a stock of 90 tonnes of salt, additional salt stocks could be obtained from Lydiate Ash or Alvechurch in emergency circumstances in future years.

Following consideration of the Gritting review group's final report by the Executive Committee in May 2011 the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive had met with relevant representatives of Worcestershire County Council to discuss concerns raised in the report. The need for collaborative working between the two Councils had been agreed. Furthermore, constructive actions, such as the potential for County Officers to train Redditch Borough Council staff to drive snow clearance vehicles, had been discussed. It had also been agreed that Redditch Borough Council's communications team would co-ordinate communications in Redditch during periods of inclement weather to ensure that Councillors and residents were updated on action as well as ongoing risks.

In order to address the Committee's remaining concerns it was suggested that a further meeting between relevant Officers from Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council should be organised. Members suggested that this meeting should be regarded as an urgent priority and should take place as soon as possible prior to the beginning of winter.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) the following policy be adopted with regards to gritting and snow clearance:**

**Redditch Borough Council will strive to keep the following areas clear of snow and ice and safe to use:**

- a) crematorium and cemeteries to allow funerals to continue;**
- b) Redditch Borough Council staff car parks to ensure that there are suitable parking areas for Council staff who are getting into work to provide essential services;**
- c) key Council sites like the Town Hall and district centres to assist local shops and businesses and enable residents to access services;**

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- d) **gritting/snow clearance at other areas including Council sheltered accommodation will only be carried out subject to available resources; gritting/snow clearance at Council owned sheltered accommodation will be to allow the home Support Service Access to residents;**
- 2) **the Council will not provide grit bins on any highway land but may provide grit bins on its own land to enable gritting to take place – e.g. at leisure sites;**
- 3) **further publicity is undertaken to ensure that residents are aware of how the Council will deal with gritting/snow clearance and what to do when bad weather affects their waste collection service;**
- 4) **Officers purchase appropriate snow clearance and gritting equipment from within existing budgets; and**
- 5) **relevant Officers from Redditch Borough Council arrange a meeting with relevant Officers from Worcestershire County Council in advance of winter 2011/12 to discuss additional issues raised in the Gritting Short, Sharp Review Group's final report and arrangements for gritting and snow clearance in Redditch for the winter.**