

Executive Committee

26th June 2012

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Greg Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Rebecca Blake, Michael Braley, Carole Gandy, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer, Luke Stephens and Debbie Taylor

Also Present:

Councillors Andrew Brazier, Juliet Brunner, David Bush and Yvonne Smith

Officers:

M Craggs, K Dicks, C Flanagan, J Godwin, J Pickering, D Poole and A de Warr

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

12. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the following items of business, scheduled on the Forward Plan to be dealt with at this meeting, had been rescheduled to later meetings of the Committee:

- Pay and Display Car Parks – Town Hall and Trescott Road;
- Co-location of the One Stop Shop at Woodrow Library; and
- Polling Stations – Mini-Review 2012.

.....
Chair

15. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 29th May 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to it being clarified, in respect of the preamble to Minute 6 (RBC Response to Stratford-on-Avon Draft Core Strategy) that the Council did not support development of the Green Belt between Redditch and Studley.

16. PROMOTING SPORTING PARTICIPATION REVIEW

Councillor Luke Stephens presented the final report of the Promoting Sporting Participation Task and Finish Group, a Group of which he had been the Chair.

The Committee was informed that the forthcoming London Olympics had been the original stimulus for this review but the focus had subsequently shifted as the time constraints were recognised and in the light of Members' growing understanding of the breadth of sporting facilities within the Borough. The recommendations were then outlined and the reasoning behind them explained.

With respect to the proposal for an independent website, it was suggested that a more casual customer experience without Council branding would prove more successful at attracting potential users of the sporting opportunities available. The installation of facilities to allow for informal games within parks and green spaces was designed to allow people to make use of them in a way and at times that suited them. With regard to the fourth recommendation, it was noted that the Council was already making efforts to promote sports and mention was made of a very successful event in recent weeks. The proposed link with NEW College through opportunities for its students was seen as providing benefits to both organisations.

Members were generally very positive about the report and the recommendations that had come forward as a result of the work that had been carried out.

There was some concern that the consultation with local residents had been inadequate, with most of the discussions which informed the recommendations being undertaken with local organisations. Councillor Stephens acknowledged that this had been a shortcoming and referred to the perennial difficulty in garnering responses to consultation from residents.

It was also suggested that, although the proposed web developments might help to attract more interest from younger people, there was also the need to deal with the demand for sporting and leisure opportunities from older people who were generally less likely to use social media or the Web. Furthermore, it was suggested that the challenge in maintaining a further independent website using existing resources was not to be underestimated.

Officers reported that the Leisure and Cultural Services Website was being restructured at present to make it leaner and more user friendly and that Twitter and Facebook were also being investigated as means of promoting the sporting opportunities available. It was also reported that the Local Strategic Partnership was looking at the national Change 4 Life initiative at present. Officers were able to confirm that money had been identified primarily through earmarked reserves that would allow for the installation of the equipment detailed in recommendation 3.

The Committee agreed that there was more work to be carried out in terms of further consultation with local residents and around the location and funding of sports / games equipment but it was

RESOLVED that

- 1) a new independent website be created to promote sport and leisure in Redditch, be maintained and updated on a constant basis, and possess its own domain name to give it its own distinct identity;**
- 2) Officers undertake a review into the possibility of creating new branding for Redditch Sports and Leisure to help compliment the new independent website; and that the Council create a competition for local students to design the new branding;**
- 3) the Council look to maximise the benefits of parks and green spaces in Redditch by introducing more informal games areas and additional equipment to help increase sporting participation and physical activity in the local area;**
- 4) the Council gives it full support to the introduction of new events to promote sport and physical recreation, individual sports clubs and increased sporting participation in Redditch; and**

- 5) **the Council work closely with NEW College to enable its students the opportunity to support these new sporting events on a voluntary basis.**

17. REVISION OF THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2012/13 - 2014/15

Members received a report which set out the proposed revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan following the change in administration in May.

The Medium Term Financial Plan had been agreed in February and Members had requested that Officers assess the funding implications of a number of changes to the budget as currently approved. The services to be considered for funding included the provision of free swimming for under 16s and over 60s, pre-9.30 concessionary bus travel and the creation of an additional apprentice position.

There were a number of savings that were proposed to provide the funding required for the additional expenditure, including a reduction in the Council's consultancy budget, the switch of Redditch Matters from a printed to an online publication, removal of the budget for a leisure options appraisal, a reduction of the Council's advertising budget and the reduction of budgets for a number of capital schemes.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the revision of the Medium Term Financial Plan at two meetings on 19th and 25th June 2012 and its comments and recommendations were reported to the Executive for Members' consideration. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had concerns in particular over the reduction in the funding for capital repairs to public buildings and proposed that further time be allocated to developing a comprehensive financial statement on the revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan. In response to a query as to why the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might not address the Committee, the Chair explained that, although it was common practice for Overview and Scrutiny members to present Task and Finish reports, they had not ordinarily been invited to present recommendations arising from pre-scrutiny of Executive reports.

Clarification was sought on the exact terms of the apprenticeship being proposed, the nature of work and training to be undertaken and the level of remuneration offered. It was explained that the apprenticeship would be similar in nature and in terms of remuneration to those currently offered and the work, although including PAT testing, would encompass a wider range of functions.

The benefits of re-introducing free swimming for under 16s and over 60s were also discussed. The concern was expressed that the measure may simply lead to those who already swam swimming more frequently. However, against this, it was noted that attendances at the Council's pools had increased significantly following the previous introduction of free swimming.

The reasons for the introduction of pre-9.30 concessionary travel were the subject of some debate, with the need for the Council to make use of its General Power of Competence in this regard being noted, the Council not being a statutory provider of discretionary travel. It was also noted that the introduction of this scheme was subject to the conclusion of negotiations with the County Council and the bus companies. It was hoped that the increase in subsidy for buses locally might improve the likelihood of greater service provision to the Alexandra Hospital.

The Committee did not support the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it was consequently

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan be approved together with the required virements as detailed at 3.7.2;**
- 2) **the scheme identified at 3.7.1 be reduced to £200k and this be amended within the Council's Capital Programme 2012/13;**
- 3) **£67k be returned to balances in 2012/13;**
- 4) **approval to use the General Power of Competence be granted to enable the service to be provided; and**

RESOLVED that

- 5) **Officers continue to work with colleagues and external partners to ensure the proposed service changes can be implemented as soon as practicable.**

18. INCOME MANAGEMENT AND PAYMENT CARD INDUSTRY COMPLIANCE

Members received a report which set out proposals to upgrade or replace the current income management system in order to ensure that the system used by the Council was PCI PA-DSS compliant. It was noted that a failure to demonstrate compliance could result in a

fine for the Council or the withdrawal of the facility to accept card payments.

Given that local authorities across the country were having to comply within the same timescales, Members were keen to ensure that the opportunities available for joint procurement be fully explored.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **prudential borrowing of up to £35k (revenue impact £3.6k p.a.) and additional maintenance costs of £5k to be met from revenue balances, be approved for the upgrade/replacement for the Northgate PARIS system in order to achieve compliance with the PCI PA-DSS standards; and**
- 2) **a joint procurement exercise be undertaken with Bromsgrove District Council and the invitation to participate be extended to other authorities in the County.**

19. FINANCIAL RESERVES STATEMENT - 2011/12

Members were advised of the earmarked reserves for the year ending 2011/12 and their approval sought for various movements in reserves.

It was noted at the outset that the reserves had increased significantly in recent years but that a number of items included on the statement were present through requirements of the accounting system.

It was noted that donations to Forge Mill Museum were recorded amongst the reserves and assurances were sought that this money would not be diverted to other purposes. Officers undertook to check that the money was earmarked for specific purposes at the Museum and that there was no intention to return the funds to balances.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the movement in reserves as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved;**
- 2) **additional General Fund Reserves of £490K be approved;**
- 3) **the use of General Fund Reserves of £498K be approved;**

4) additional HRA Reserves of £10K be approved; and

RESOLVED that;

5) **Heads of Service be requested to undertake a review of the earmarked reserves within their service areas and provide a report, including a justification for the maintenance of these reserves, for submission to the Committee alongside the budget monitoring report for the second quarter of the 2012/13 financial year.**

20. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 4, PERIOD ENDING 31ST MARCH 2012

The Committee considered a report which provided it with an opportunity to review the Council's performance for quarter 4 of the 2011/12 financial year.

It was noted that the majority of the 18 indicators which were now monitored had improved in comparison to the same period the previous year. Set against this generally positive picture, it was noted that there were two areas of relative concern, including the number of invoices paid by the Council within 30 days of receipt.

Officers conceded that this was an area that was proving stubbornly difficult to improve, although it was also noted that over 90% of invoices continued to be paid within the 30 day window. Officers suggested that they might commence weekly updates to management team meetings in order to establish whether there were any particular services that were struggling to achieve this target.

With respect to the processing of planning applications, it was noted that there was at present transformation work being undertaken to achieve a greater focus on quality rather than quantity and to avoid the creation of bottlenecks in the process.

RESOLVED that

the update on key performance indicators for the period ending 31st March 2012 be noted.

21. MAKING EXPERIENCES COUNT - QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SERVICES REPORT

A report was received which set out the key information in respect of customer service for the fourth quarter of 2011/12.

It was noted that the numbers of complaints received by the Council was remaining relatively static, but that staff were being encouraged to record complaints in order to drive forward service delivery. The trends that were emerging from the data was that many of the problems that occurred were ones of communication rather than service failure. It was also noted that, whilst there were targets for dealing with complaints, the focus was very much on getting matters resolved the first time. Failure demand seemed to be reducing across the authority and new measures were being employed to gauge customer satisfaction such as a customer call-back scheme.

With respect to the timescales within which complaints were to be responded to it was suggested that more information might be provided as to the actual time it was taking to respond rather than simply recording how many responses met the target time.

RESOLVED that

the update for the period 1st January 2012 – 31st March 2012 be noted.

22. SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE AND HEALTH FOR PERIOD ENDING 31ST MARCH 2012

Members received a report which set out the Council's performance for the last quarter of 2011/12 in relation to sickness absence. It was noted that the data had been presented in a different manner to previous reports.

There was a significant increase in the number of days lost to sickness absence in the last quarter of 2011/12. The numbers of days lost to long-term sickness absence was noted as was the significant increase in rates of sickness absence in certain service areas.

Officers reported that the Council had recently been able to take advantage of a countywide Employee Assistance Scheme at minimal cost which, it was hoped, would help to support the other proactive measures that the authority was taking to manage sickness absence.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the new report format be agreed as an improved way of presenting the data; and
- 2) the data relating to the last quarter / full year end be noted.

23. QUARTERLY MONITORING - WRITE OFF OF DEBTS - QUARTER 4 - JANUARY TO MARCH 2012

Members considered a report which detailed the action taken by Officers with respect to the write-off of debts during 2011/12 and the profile and level of the outstanding debt.

RESOLVED that

the contents of the report be noted.

24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members received the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 31st May 2012.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 31st May 2012 be received and noted.

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

There were no minutes or referrals to consider under this item.

26. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The most recent report on the activity of the Council's Advisory Panels and similar bodies was received by the Committee. It was noted that a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group had been arranged for 16th July and that the most recent meeting of the Economic Advisory Panel on 18th June had been cancelled.

27. ACTION MONITORING

The latest Action Monitoring Report for the Committee was received and noted.

Executive Committee

26th June 2012

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.01 pm

.....
Chair