

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 22 August
2007

MINUTES

Present:

, and Councillors K Banks, J Brunner, J Cookson, A Fry, D Taylor and D Thomas

Also Present:

P Hill

Officers:

Borough Director and G Revans

Committee Services Officer:

Jess Bayley and Helen Saunders

24. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor C. MacMillan.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or of any party whip.

26. MINUTES

The Chair directed Members' attention to page 307 of the Minutes. Members were informed that a request had been made for alterations to be made to the third line of minute 25. Members were asked to note that the final set of minutes would refer to "purpose-built district centres".

RESOLVED that

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Chair

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subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 22nd of August 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

27. THE FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the Forward Plan, with regard to identifying potential future matters for the Committee's consideration. Members discussed the following matters:

a) Anti-Social Behaviour:

Members discussed the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy included as an item on page 12 of the Forward Plan. A Member requested information about what action had been taken by the Council in response to the recommendations contained in the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Anti-Social Behaviour report produced in January 2006.

It was agreed that this would be added to the Committee's work plan.

b) Neighbourhood Group / PACT Meetings Update:

The future operation and inter-relation of the Council's Neighbourhood Groups and PACT meetings was also addressed by the Members. Members noted that there was a greater level of public attendance at combined Neighbourhood Group and PACT meetings. It was explained by Officers that attempts were being made to fully combine the dates of these meetings in the long term. However, Members were informed that it might take some time to achieve this as the Police currently worked to a different schedule, and sometimes used different venues from those used by the Council. There were also issues of reviewing the financing and administration of such combined meetings.

Members requested further information about progression on this issue from Officers, to be made available at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

c) Timescales:

Officers suggested to Members that, given the new frequency of the O&S Committee meetings, and certain

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Officer absences because of the summer holidays, Officer contributions to these items would require sufficient preparation time. Following this suggestion Members agreed that these items should be considered at the meeting of the Committee on the 26th September 2007.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above,

- 1) **consideration of the Council's response to the recommendations contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour Report be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 26th September 2007; and**
- 2) **Officers be requested to provide Members with further information about the combination of Neighbourhood Group and PACT meetings for consideration at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 26th September 2007.**

28. CALL-IN

Members received the Decision Notice of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday, the 15th of August 2007, with a view to considering the need for any Call ins.

a) Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement

The Chair directed Members' attention to Decision 50 on the Decision Notice concerning Civil Parking Enforcement. A discussion proceeded on the subject of the Executive Committee's request for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to reconsider the options available to the Council in respect of parking enforcement and to bring forward further recommendations.

Members considered their response to the Executive Committee's referral. The financial risks for the Council attached to the scheme were discussed and it was agreed that they would be minimal and possible for the Council to manage. It was also noted by the Members that the Police might respond to the introduction of Civil (Decriminalised)

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Parking Enforcement by establishing more Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) within the Borough. It was suggested by some Members that these measures would contribute to improvements in community safety. Members therefore agreed to refer their recommendation that the Council should adopt Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement direct to full Council for consideration on the 17th of September 2007.

c) Independent Remuneration Panel:

On the back of the above item, a Member raised the issue of Members' Allowances.

Officers informed Members that this was not currently an item on the agenda and therefore could not be addressed at this meeting, as the item was purely for consideration of possible call ins. It was agreed, however, that any Member recommendations on Members' Allowances might be made to the imminent meeting(s) of the Independent Remuneration Panel, recently requested by the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above,

- 1) **the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation that the Council should adopt Civil (Decriminalised) Parking Enforcement be now referred direct to full Council;**
- 2) **Members' comments on Allowances be further canvassed and fed into the forthcoming further review by the Independent Remuneration Panel; and**
- 3) **this matter be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.**

29. THIRD SECTOR TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chair explained that he had discussed this item with Officers and had been informed that relevant Officers would not be available at the meeting to answer Members' questions. Some concern had also been expressed by Officers that there was potential for an Overview and Scrutiny exercise to duplicate work on third sector

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funding that the Grants Advisory Panel has been addressing. It was therefore agreed that consideration of this item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee and that the Chair of the Grants Advisory Panel would be invited to attend the meeting to advise Members about any potential areas of duplication.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above, consideration of the proposed Third Sector Task and Finish Group be deferred.

30. THE ROLE OF THE MAYOR REVIEW

Members considered a draft proposal submitted by Councillor Chalk for possible scrutiny of the role of the Mayor and its development.

Members discussed the financial and other resource implications of the proposal and were concerned that these might be difficult for the Council to address at the current time.

A number of Members were present who had also been Mayors of the Borough in previous years and they discussed their experiences of working in the role.

Members agreed that a formal scrutiny exercise would not be required.

However, Members asked the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with former Mayors, to provide a written response to the concerns raised in the proposal form.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above, the proposed scrutiny of the role of the Mayor be not pursued as Task & Finish Review.

31. GYPSY AND TRAVELLERS REVIEW

The Chair introduced Councillor Hill as the Member who had proposed this item for scrutiny and explained that, in consultation with relevant Officers, an amended version of the scoping document had been provided for Member consideration at the meeting. This was then tabled.

Councillor Hill informed Members she had encountered unauthorised encampments in her Ward and had been unfamiliar

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with the contents of the Council's policy for responding to such situations. Councillor Hill suggested that a scrutiny exercise could investigate the current suitability of the policy for Redditch Borough Council and whether alternative arrangements might be more appropriate.

Officers informed Members that Redditch Borough Council's existing policy for dealing with unauthorised encampments had been developed jointly with Worcestershire County Council and other district local authorities in the County. It was noted that a review of the policy would be timely and that any recommendations produced as part of a scrutiny exercise could be referred to a meeting of all the Councils who had endorsed the Joint Policy towards Travellers.

The exercise was approved as the subject of a Task and Finish Review. Members requested that Councillor Hill, because of her considerable knowledge about the subject, should Chair of the Group. Councillor Fry also expressed an interest in participating in the exercise. Members further agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in consultation with Party Group Leaders, would determine the membership of the Task and Finish Group.

Members were concerned that it might be necessary to postpone the start of this exercise until the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) have been completed and contributed to the Regional Spatial Strategy. Officers were therefore asked to identify the appropriate timing for this exercise and to report that information back to Members at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above,

- 1) the establishment of a Gypsy and Travellers Task and Finish Group be approved, in accordance with the revised scoping document; and**
- 2) Officers to identify the appropriate date for this exercise to be implemented for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.**

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Officers reminded Members that they had been asked to identify examples of documents used by other local authorities to market the Overview and Scrutiny process to potential expert witnesses. It was explained that no examples of this type of document had been located but Officers had managed to identify examples of press releases which other Councils use to inform key stakeholders about their Overview and Scrutiny activities.

The Chair requested that Officers review the contents of the examples of press releases from other local authorities and identify areas that would be appropriate for an equivalent Redditch Borough Council document. Officers were further asked to provide a draft written example of this document in time for the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments as detailed in the preamble above, Members discuss this matter further at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

33. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Officers noted that Councillors Banks, Brunner, Fry and Thomas had been asked at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 20th June 2007 to investigate training needs, to discuss these needs and potential training options with a consultant and to report those options and the financial costs back to the Committee for further consideration.

Councillor Thomas explained that the list of training needs identified by Members had concentrated on desirable areas for training and development.

There was general consensus that the training package proposed by the consultant was too expensive and should not be accepted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Instead, Members agreed to prioritise training that would develop their scrutiny chairing skills and suggested that this could be provided by the same consultant as a one-day training session for Members and Officers.

Members specified, for the purposes of Standing Order 46 (Contracts) that they wished to work with this particular trainer. It was noted that this consultant had provided training courses at the Council in the past and that the consultant's training methods had

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been effective and particularly appreciated by the Members.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments, as detailed in the preamble above, Officers pursue Member training in chairing scrutiny.

34. REFERRALS

Members were informed that Party Group Leaders had, as requested by the full Council, now discussed the appropriate forum for the further consideration of the Corporate and Performance Plan and the Statement of Accounts and, following deliberation, had decided to refer the items to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There was some concern that these documents, due to their extensive size and content, would require a measured approach to analysis from the Committee. It was agreed therefore that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would meet with relevant Officers to discuss how the Committee should approach consideration of these items.

RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments, as detailed in the preamble above, the referral be noted.

35. WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered their current Work Programme and, amongst other matters, discussed the possible inclusion of the taxi-bus service.

Officers advised that Councillors Hartnett and Chance had recently met with representatives of Worcestershire County Council and Redditch Borough Council to discuss the taxi-bus service and were largely satisfied the service was secure for the moment. Worcestershire County Council had agreed to provide Redditch Borough Council with regular updates on the situation of the taxi-bus service. Consequently, it was not considered necessary to include this as an item on the present Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

Members noted the other matters they had agreed for addition to the Programme in the course of the meeting.

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RESOLVED that

subject to Members' comments, as detailed in the preamble above, the Work Programme be noted and approved.

36. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.25 pm