

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 14th August, 2012

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Juliet Brunner (Chair), Councillor Simon Chalk (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, David Bush, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Pattie Hill, Gay Hopkins and Pat Witherspoon

Also Present:

Councillors Alan Mason and Yvonne Smith

Officers:

L Hadley, T Kristunas, D Poole, J Staniland, M Stanley and A de Warr

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and M Craggs

47. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 17th July be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

50. ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

On behalf of the review group, Councillors Andrew Fry and Alan Mason provided the Committee with a presentation which summarised the additional work that had been undertaken since

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Chair

initial report on the subject was considered by Members on 17th April 2012.

Members and Officers raised a number of points about the content of the review.

Parking in the Former Covered Market Area:

Concern was expressed that there was a potential for pedestrian and vehicle conflict if the former covered market area was used for disabled parking and as a collection and delivery point by Dial-a-Ride vehicles.

To minimise the risks to pedestrians the group had suggested that Fountain's Passage could be closed. However, the Committee was advised that Fountain's Passage was used by staff in the Kingfisher Centre as a fire exit route. Closure of Fountain's Passage could, therefore, potentially create a fire safety hazard.

Members noted that there was the potential to develop commercial operations in the former covered market area, which was designated in existing planning policies for retail development. As part of this process it was noted that a portion of the £100,000 allocated by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to the Redditch Town Centre Partnership could be used to support small business initiatives.

The group had considered the proposal and potential barriers in detail. However, Members were advised that additional consultation with representatives of the Fire Authority and local businesses would be useful prior to any decision being taken on the matter. Members therefore concluded that further review work should be undertaken on this subject by Officers.

Collection and Delivery Points – Dial a Ride

Members expressed concern that Dial-a-Ride vehicles were not permitted to stop in disabled parking bays unless a Blue Badge could be displayed at the front of the vehicle. The general purpose of Dial-a-Ride vehicles, it was suggested, in terms of providing a service for people with mobility problems should be sufficient for a short stay car parking permit. However, Officers explained that a consistent approach had to be applied to the application of the parking rules in areas subject to the civil parking enforcement scheme and unfortunately Dial a Ride vehicles were not considered to be eligible.

Taxis

Having heard that the Council's Taxi Licensing Committee had recently agreed that three inspection tests should be required for licensed taxi vehicles the group accepted that the relevant requirement within the recommendation should be increased from two tests to three.

Tactile Signage

Officers suggested that funding for the installation of tactile signage in the town centre should be limited to Section 106 funding. The suggestion had been made that funding could also be derived from a new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Levy. However, as the arrangements for this levy remained to be clarified Members agreed to remove references to this fund from the final report.

Changing Places Toilet

The Committee was advised that following publication of the group's draft report Members had learned that evidence provided by an expert witness on the subject of a changing places toilet, had subsequently proved to be incorrect. For this reason Members agreed to remove a recommendation that had referred to this facility.

RNIB React system

The group had also been proposing that the RNIB React system, a signage system that could provide guidance to people who were blind or visually impaired, be activated in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, as this system had been included in the original design of the centre. However, following publication of the report Members had been advised that appropriate maintenance process for the system and management arrangements remained to be clarified. For this reason it was agreed that further work was required to address the issue.

Task Group – Chairing Arrangements

Concerns were expressed about the Council's current constitutional requirement that only members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could be allowed to Chair scrutiny reviews. This requirement had necessitated changes to the chairing arrangements for the review from May 2012 which had implications for the continuity of the exercise. For this reason it was suggested

that the matter should be investigated further by the Constitutional Review Working Party.

Concluding Remarks

The Chair thanked Members of the group for their hard work. The group had welcomed the opportunity to complete the review and it was hoped that Members' recommendations would improve the experience for disabled people visiting Redditch town centre.

RECOMMENDED that

DISABLED PARKING

- 1) **a user friendly version of the map (detailed in Appendix E of the main report) demonstrating the location of disabled parking spaces and Shopmobility in Redditch town centre should be produced and promoted on the Council's website, on the Redditch Matters e-magazine and on the Palace Theatre's website and should be promoted to local businesses to use;**
 - a) **the contents of this map should be reviewed every twelve months to ensure that the information remains accurate;**
- 2) **Redditch Borough Council should work with the Redditch Town Centre Partnership, Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department and the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to introduce collection and delivery points in the town centre that could be used by vehicles transporting people with disabilities;**

TAXI SERVICES

- 3) **taxi companies should be offered licences to operate adapted vehicles for a longer period of time than standard vehicles to incentivise taxi firms to increase the number of adapted vehicles in their fleets. The vehicles should be permitted to operate for these lengthier periods of time subject to passing the three inspection tests and the MOT that the Council's licensing regime requires for each vehicle;**
- 4) **taxi drivers should be offered disability awareness training, which would include information about manually assisting people with disabilities, by Redditch Borough Council;**

BUSES

- 5) **Worcestershire County Council's Transport Department should work with local bus operators to apply for any future Better Buses Area Funding from the Department for Transport to finance the installation of audio-visual equipment on buses operating in Redditch Borough;**

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6) **a disability awareness session should be delivered as part of the Member Development Programme at Redditch Borough Council;**
- 7) **ward Members should be made aware that they can use their knowledge of the local community to assess the condition of the pavements and dropped kerbs located in their wards and report their findings for the consideration of Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department and Redditch Borough Council's Environmental Services;**
- 8) **the Council's Planning Department should consider arranging for funding from Section 106 agreements to be allocated to the installation of tactile signage in the town centre for the use of people with sensory impairments;**
- 9) **Redditch Town Centre Partnership work with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to introduce additional seating in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, involving an investigation of the ergonomics of the seating provided;**
- 10) **Officers undertake further work into the following areas that should be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee at a later date:**
 - a) **a review of the potential to install a canopy over the ramp access to Shopmobility;**
 - b) **a joint review in partnership with Apollo 2000 of the potential for the Council to undertake landscaping work in the company's car park in return for using the car park as a collection and delivery point for Dial a Ride vehicles;**
 - c) **a joint review with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, concerning the potential activation of the RNIB React system in the centre; and**

- d) a review of the implications of introducing disabled parking spaces and a Dial a Ride collection and delivery point in the former covered market area, as detailed in Appendix E.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive the following update reports in six months time:
 - a) an update concerning the support provided by Officers to the Redditch Disabled Access Group in relation to disability issues; and
 - b) a report monitoring the implementation of the Group's recommendations; and
- 2) the report be noted.

51. YOUTH EMPLOYED BY REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Officers presented a report which updated Members on the number of staff aged under thirty years employed by Redditch Borough Council. The Committee was also advised about the current initiatives in place to increase and improve youth employment.

A Member suggested that the Council explore with local schools the possibility of covering a proportion of travelling costs for students undertaking a work experience placement at the Council. This could provide useful assistance as the Council did not currently possess a specific funding stream to cover these costs itself.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

52. CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2011/12

Members received a report which outlined the Council's actual expenditure and funding of the capital programme for 2011/12.

The report was considered in detail. In particular, Members noted that information about the costs for the new telephone system referred to completed installation arrangements. It was expected that additional funding would be required to resolve any remaining functionality issues.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

53. REVENUE OUTTURN REPORT 2011/12

Officers presented a report which outlined the Council's overall revenue outturn for the 2011/12 financial year.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

54. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORT - WRITTEN REPORT - CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

The Committee proposed the following list of questions for the consideration of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, Councillor Phil Mould, ahead of his appearance before the Committee in September 2012.

- 1) Please could you outline what you consider to be:
 - a) The successes within the remit of your Portfolio?
 - b) Areas of concern within the remit of your portfolio?
- 2) What are your long-term plans for:
 - a) The REDI Centre?
 - b) The Anchorage?
- 3) How will the implementation of new ICT systems at the Council impact on the service delivered to customers?
- 4) Following transformation of the services within your remit:
 - a) How will the Council deliver solutions for customers?
 - b) Where will the funding for these solutions be obtained from?
 - c) Will any cuts have to be made?
- 5) How is the Council mitigating the risks involved in reducing the budget available for maintenance of Council properties?
 - a) What are the current methods used for assessing these risks?
- 6) Does the Council undertake an annual inventory of telephone, ICT systems and PAT testing?

- a) If so how does this work?
- b) What are the current figures for use of Redditch Borough Council telephone and ICT equipment?

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the questions detailed in the preamble above be addressed by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management during his annual report to the Committee on Tuesday 11th September 2012; and**
- 2) **the report be noted.**

55. ACTIONS LIST

Members noted that a briefing note on the subject of taxi vehicles' road worthiness had very recently been circulated to Members as requested.

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Actions List be noted.

56. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee received the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 24th July 2012 and considered the latest edition of the Forward Plan.

Officers explained that the new edition of the Forward Plan was due to be published on 15th August and would subsequently be circulated for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 24th July 2012 and the Forward Plan be noted.

57. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS

There were no draft scoping documents.

58. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS

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

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a) Access for Disabled People – Chair, Councillor Andy Fry

There was no further update.

b) Concessionary Rents Short, Sharp Pre-Scrutiny Review –
Councillors Andrew Brazier and Juliet Brunner

Members were informed that good progress had been made with the review and the Councillors were on target to present their findings on 11th September 2012.

c) Redditch Market – Chair, Councillor Andrew Brazier

Councillor Brazier explained that the Group would soon be meeting with representatives from the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit to discuss what Officers had undertaken to improve the market place in Redditch since assuming responsibility the year before. Members of the group were also due to visit another market within the region to witness how it had been revitalised.

d) Sickness Policy Short, Sharp Pre-Scrutiny Review –
Councillors John Fisher and Pat Witherspoon

Councillor Witherspoon informed Members that the review had been progressing and a number of meetings had taken place. The Councillors were due to meet with the relevant Portfolio Holder, Councillor Phil Mould, before the report would be prepared for the next Committee meeting on 11th September 2012.

The participating Councillors on the short, sharp reviews thanked the relevant Democratic Services Officers for their hard work and support during a busy period.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

59. REFERRALS

There were no referrals.

60. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that

the Committee's Work Programme be noted.

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The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.05 pm