

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 1 March 2011 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.45pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Knight (Chair); Councillors Guest, Illingworth, Pittarello, Mrs Sawdon, Mrs Tyrrell and Vincett.

ALSO PRESENT:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Edwards and Rhead.

110. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Minute number 118 - Executive Agenda (Non-confidential items and reports)

Councillor Guest declared a prejudicial interest in the 'Improvements to the Court House, Jury Street, Warwick' item on the Executive agenda because he was a member of Warwick Town Council. He did not take part in the debate or decision on the item.

Minute number 120 - Executive Agenda (Confidential items and reports)

Councillors Illingworth and Vincett declared prejudicial interests in the 'Kenilworth Public Service Centre' item on the Executive agenda because they were members of Kenilworth Town Council. They left the meeting prior to discussion of the item and were not involved in the debate or decision.

111. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2011 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

112. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT – CERTIFICATION OF CLAIMS AND RETURNS – ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received a report from Finance presenting the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report.

The Council's external auditors were required to audit several grants and returns that were prepared by council officers each year. This year a separate report had been issued on these claims and returns.

Mr Neil Preece, external auditor, attended the meeting to present the report and to respond to Members' questions. The auditors were happy with the Council's performance, having identified only one problem, a software error which had since been dealt with.

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)

The Committee thanked officers for their excellent work and Mr Preece for his report and presentation.

RESOLVED that the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report be noted.

113. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 OCTOBER TO 31 DECEMBER 2010

The Committee received a report from Finance which detailed the Council's Treasury Management Performance for the period 1st October 2010 to 31st December 2010.

Members were pleased to see that the Council's performance had been consistently impressive considering the current financial climate, and thanked the Principal Accountant and his team for their excellent work.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the Council's 2010/11 Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (TMP's) require the performance of the Treasury Management Function to be reported to Members on a quarterly basis; and
- (2) this report informs members of past performance, hence Members are just asked to note the information contained within it.

114. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 2 March 2011.

Item Number 4 – Treasury Management Strategy Plan for 2011/12

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

115. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

A report from Committee Services summarised the Executive's response to comments which the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee gave on reports submitted to the Executive on 9 February 2011.

The Chair was pleased to report that a mechanism was now in place for community programs to appeal for assistance from the Council, where they were under threat of closure.

RESOLVED that the contents of this report be noted.

116. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services informing them of the current Forward Plan, attached as an appendix to the report.

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)

One of the five main roles of overview and scrutiny in local government was to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions. If the Committee had an interest in a future decision to be made by the Executive it was within the Committee's remit to feed into the process.

The Forward Plan detailed the future work programme for the Executive. If a non-executive member highlighted a decision which was to be taken by the Executive which they would like to be involved in, members could then provide useful background to the Committee when the report was submitted to the Executive and they were passing comment on it.

It was pointed out that no mention of Tourism was made in the Forward Plan. The Deputy Chief Executive replied that a report was due to be presented to Executive, and he agreed to check the timescale for this.

RESOLVED that there were no forthcoming Executive decisions which they wished to have an input into before the Executive make their decision, at present.

117. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

A report from Members' Services detailed the Committee's work programme for 2010/11.

RECOMMENDED that the work plan for 2010/11 be noted.

118. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 2 March 2011.

Item Number 15 – Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
The Committee appreciated that such a Partnership could be beneficial to Warwick District residents. However, they wanted assurance that the Partnership would provide value for money. There were questions about what it would achieve in Warwick District's interest, whether it was a workable enterprise and concerns that it would not frustrate the aspirations of the District Council. Some concern was raised over the lack of direct representation for Warwick District and how vague the details of the proposal were.

The Committee RECOMMENDED to Executive that

- (1) all Members be briefed on the arrangements for the Partnership as the situation develops; and**
- (2) a report giving more details of proposed arrangements be produced as soon as practicably possible, including confirmation of how the aspirations of Warwick District would be met by the Partnership.**

Item Number 19 – Improvements to the Court House, Jury Street, Warwick
The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)

(Councillor Guest, having declared a prejudicial interest, did not take part in the debate or decision on this item.)

119. PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item, by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

120. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following confidential items which were due to be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 2 March 2011.

Item Number 8 – Proposals to deliver additional affordable housing in Warwick District

The Committee were delighted with the prospect of new housing and supported the recommendations in the report.

Item Number 23 – Kenilworth Public Service Centre

The Committee had concerns about the provision for car parking, but recognised that it was a complex proposal. Members wondered if apartments facing the proposed development site would be a problem in the land acquisition and development process. However, they cautiously supported the recommendations in the report.

(Councillors Illingworth and Vincett, having declared prejudicial interests, left the meeting prior to consideration of this item.)

(The meeting ended at 8.00 pm)