

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12 November 2013 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Blacklock (Chairman); Councillors Boad, Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Copping, Ms Dean, Edwards, Mrs Falp, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford, Guest, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth, Kinson and Mrs Knight.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Hammon (Portfolio Holder for Development Services) and Mobbs (Portfolio Holder for Finance).

57. **SUBSTITUTES**

There were no substitutes.

58. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

59. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

60. **SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services which detailed the responses the Executive gave to the comments the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made regarding the reports submitted to the Executive in October.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

61. **UPDATE FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE**

In response to questions about his Portfolio Area, Councillor Mobbs provided the following responses:

- Councillor Mobbs would provide details by email about the ways that benefit caps and the under occupancy tax were being managed and by what means people were coping with it;
- he would provide details by email about appeals. (Councillor Gifford had asked whether appeals were mainly specific to two large developments or across the board);
- Councillor Mobbs stated that trees were causing the worst issue in respect of unexpected expenditure and insurance claims. The issue of new house builds was now being examined to mitigate future claims. However, the outlook was still positive and he cited a possible £1 million surplus next year but it had to be borne in mind

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that further shocks could be possible with the Government Support Grant reducing to zero;

- he assured Members that in respect of tenants facing financial difficulties, the officers referred to a network of organisations to help and he had personally intervened when hardship cases were referred to him. He asked Councillors to refer cases of hardship to him and his team that they might be aware of;
- he referred to the report that would go to the Executive in December 2013 about the asset review. He pointed out that the move of council accommodation from Riverside House and the Fit for the Future Programme were ways to achieve savings although there might be some unexpected costs along the way;
- the newly appointed Procurement Manager would be charged with ensuring Social Value Legislation was implemented within the Council's Code of Procurement. A report was expected in January 2014;
- Councillor Mrs Blacklock informed the meeting that she had attended a Grant Review Panel meeting and had felt that there could be strong implications when considering Social Value Legislation. She suggested that a joint Task and Finish Group should be set up with the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to look at this. Councillor Mobbs agreed that the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee should consider the procurement aspects and that the social value slant was something the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could examine, but he questioned whether a Task and Finish Group was the vehicle to use for this. Councillor Mrs Blacklock agreed to approach the officer concerned to produce a short report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and then to come to a meeting to discuss how this Council will take it forward.

The Committee thanked Councillor Mobbs for a clear and comprehensive report.

Councillor Mobbs left the meeting once he had answered all questions.

62. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan which had been published for November 2013 to February 2014.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

63. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services on the Committee's work programme.

The Chairman reported that the Task and Finish Group's report on Dog Control Orders had been discussed at the last meeting of the Executive and it had agreed all recommendations where there were no cost implications.

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Recommendations that did involve expenditure would be considered at a future date.

The Council had received a request from Warwickshire County Council for the representative to sit on the South Warwickshire Foundation Trust Quality Account Group. To facilitate such an appointment, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been requested to determine which category of appointment this particular outside body would fall within. Once this had been decided, the actual appointment would be referred to Group Leaders by the Democratic Services Manager. Councillor Mrs Knight indicated her willingness to serve as the Council's representative on the outside body.

RESOLVED that the decision on the category of the outside appointment be made by the Health Scrutiny Working Group.

Councillors Mrs Falp and Mrs Gallagher expressed concern that there was not the expected progress in respect of Children's Champions following a very constructive previous meeting. The Deputy Chief Executive (BH) stated that he would speak to the officer concerned and request that he attend the December Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(Councillor Hammon arrived at the end of this item.)

64. UPDATE FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

In response to questions about his Portfolio Area, Councillor Hammon provided the following responses:

- paragraph 3 of the report should be deleted because it added little value;
- advice on the consultation process over the Local Plan had been received and additional staff would be brought in to go through the consultation;
- Councillor Hammon explained that the Council had difficulty letting older office property and was addressing this by modernisation works or increasing the floor space. He could ask for an update on this within the asset review;
- planning applications for small extensions were burdensome and were not profitable because they only gave rise to a small fee. The Head of Development Services was asked to provide details on expenditure;
- he would address providing an update report on Development Services more regularly;
- in respect of regeneration, a lot of work was being planned but delays occurred because it involved obtaining the consent of building owners to move;

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- a report on job skills and economy was scheduled to come to the December Executive;
- there should be more meetings with parish and town councils to communicate how the Council was performing. The Committee had welcomed the news that the Council was now in third in the performance table of all local planning authorities for the quarter ending 30 June 2013. It was recognised that in trying to improve the planning application process, parish councils sometimes did not appreciate changes to the process;
- Councillor Hammon discussed the various fees arising out of lawful development certificates and full searches. The number of requests for full searches had decreased but it was hoped to increase this income when the system went on-line. A fee of £95 would be charged which would make it more competitive and hence it was hoped this would augment the number of searches;
- Development Services did advise agents and applicants on applications at pre-application stage and there were regular forums held with these agents where various submissions were discussed with the aim to increase the standard of the submission. However, the quality of many submissions were poor and therefore had to be returned until correct;

The Committee thanked Councillor Hammon for a clear and comprehensive report.

Councillor Hammon left the meeting once he had answered all questions.

65. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2013

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 13 November 2013.

Item 10 – Local Plan: Village Housing Options and Settlement Boundaries

The Committee considered a report from Development Services that set out the preferred options for housing development sites in rural settlements along with associated changes to Green Belt where these were applicable.

The Committee congratulated the officer on an excellent report and commented to the Executive that it would like prompt action to implement the consultation on the villages report.

66. ANNUAL FEEDBACK ON OUTSIDE APPOINTMENTS

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services that gave an annual statement of work undertaken by Outside Bodies. A late report from Councillor Mrs Grainger on the Local Government Association – Urban Commission was received at the meeting.

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Members felt that the report provided a good starting point for a review which should look at which bodies required a Council representative and the criteria required for this. It was felt that Group Leaders should examine the list with a view to cutting any superfluous appointments.

The Committee thanked all Councillors who had submitted a report.

RESOLVED that the Chairman write to all Group Leaders expressing the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

67. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2013 (CONTINUED)

Item 7 – City Deal Governance and the establishment of a Sub-Regional Joint Committee and Item 8 – Coventry and Warwickshire City Deal

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered together two reports that would be discussed at the Executive on the following evening. These reports had been written by the Deputy Chief Executive (BH).

The first report on City Deal governance and the establishment of a sub-regional joint committee set out the proposal to establish a joint committee of all the local authorities across the Coventry and Warwickshire City Deal area to drive, and provide sub-regional governance, to the economic development and prosperity agendas. The second report updated members on the proposed Coventry and Warwickshire City Deal, including proposals for local authority funding contributions to the financing of specific proposals.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the reports and strongly supported the initiative/thrust to develop the advanced manufacturing and engineering sector. In respect of Recommendation 2.7 of the City Deal Governance Report (Item 7 on the Executive Agenda), the Committee felt that in light of the significance of what was being proposed, the representative on the Joint Committee should provide feedback to Overview and Scrutiny on a six monthly basis or in respect of any significant issues or decisions between times, to ensure proper scrutiny of the new arrangements.

The Committee was concerned that the wording of the planning proposals within Appendix One was disappointing and that this was remedied within the final City Deal document. While fully supportive of the principle of removing barriers to AME sector applications, the reference to a 21 day determination might feed a public perception that any such applications would be driven through without proper consultation, in contravention of statutory timescales and/or full consideration of any public concerns raised.

Finally, the Committee felt that it was extremely important that the Joint Sub-Regional Committee should operate transparently and that agendas and minutes should be publically available with minutes published within one month.

(Councillors Brookes, Copping, Mrs Gallagher and Guest left the meeting at the end of discussion of this item.)

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Item 11 – Alternative use of part of West Rock car park

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) which asked the Executive to approve the disposal of part of West Rock car park for housing (13 affordable dwellings, subject to planning) and thereby grant a sale for that part of the land to Waterloo Housing Group.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the plan and it was noted that most Warwick Councillors agreed that there was a need for affordable housing.

Item 12 – Access to Kingfisher Pools, Warwick

The Committee considered a report from the Green Space Development Officer that highlighted issues relating to access to Kingfisher Pools, Myton Fields highlighted by the Junior Angling Committee and how these issues could be resolved.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to the Executive that this decision should be deferred until local Ward Councillors and the Town Council had been consulted to facilitate looking at alternative options and all issues.

68. **PUBLIC & PRESS**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items, by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below.

Minute No.	Para Nos.	Reason
69-70	1	Information relating to an individual.
69-70	2	Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
69-70	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

69. **MINUTES**

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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70. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services which detailed the responses the Executive gave to the comments the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made regarding the confidential reports submitted to the Executive in October.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(The meeting finished at 9.05 pm)