

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 5 January 2011 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Malcolm Doody, Edwards, Pittarello, Mrs Sawdon, Mrs Tyrrell, Vincett and Weed (substituting for Councillor Mrs Knight).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Illingworth, Mrs Knight and Rhead.

81. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Edwards be appointed Chair of the Committee for this meeting.

82. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Edwards and Weed declared interests in the 'Internal Audit Quarter 2 2010/11 Progress Report' item because Sydenham Sports Hall was within their ward.

83. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2010 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

84. ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

The Committee received a report from the Head of Finance which presented and commented on the Council's Annual Audit and Inspection letter, which was attached as an appendix to the report. The letter was the Council's External Auditor assessment of the Council, drawing on audit, inspection and performance assessment work, prepared by the Council's District Auditor.

Dave Rigg, external auditor, attended the meeting in order to respond to Members' questions. He confirmed that, as a result of the coalition government's abolition of the Audit Commission, the Council would be receiving a refund of £6,000 for 2010/11 and that the fee for 2011/12 would also be dropping, as detailed on the Audit Commission's website.

Mr Rigg, the Head of Finance and his team were thanked for their work.

RESOLVED that the Annual Audit and Inspection letter and covering report be noted.

85. INTERNAL AUDIT QUARTER 2 2010/11 PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report from the Head of Internal Audit which advised on progress in achieving the Internal Audit Plan 2010/11,

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summarising the audit work completed in the second quarter and providing assurance that action had been taken by managers.

Members noted two reports issued during the second quarter with moderate or low levels of assurance, those being a review of Housing and Property Services contracts, and a report on Community Leisure Facilities. Responding to questions, the Head of Internal Audit expressed his belief that contracts problems were largely historical and developments within the organisation, particularly a great emphasis on procurement, should prevent a recurrence. The Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) agreed to consult the Head of Housing to establish whether the Service Improvement Plan for Housing made reference to procurement and to advise members accordingly, and to report on the progress of Audit's recommended actions to a future meeting of the Committee.

Following a discussion on County Council plans for Sydenham Sports Hall, the Committee were informed that a systems thinking intervention had commenced looking at sports facilities.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and its contents accepted.

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

The Committee considered the following non-confidential item which were due to be discussed at the meeting of the Executive scheduled to take place on Wednesday 22 December 2010 and postponed until 6 January 2011.

Item Number 16 – South West Warwick (Chase Meadow) Community Centre Development

The Committee wanted to see the Centre properly utilised by the community, was encouraged by responses given to Members' questions by Reverend David Brown, who was in attendance, and supported the recommendations in the report. Members discussed potential scenarios should the project fail to secure the funds required for the development to progress. Officers were asked to look into whether the sports facilities could be made available to the Council if possible.

87. 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 24 November 2010.

RESOLVED that the contents of this report be noted.

88. FORWARD PLAN

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

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

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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.

The Committee noted that refurbishment of the CCTV control room should be addressed at the next meeting. The Head of Finance agreed to email details to the Committee of recharges to other services in respect of CCTV.

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

89. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

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

It was agreed that at the next meeting Members would be given the opportunity to comment on any feedback received between meetings relating to the 'Internal Audit Quarter 2 2010/11 Progress Report' item.

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

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

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which were due to be discussed at the meeting of the Executive scheduled to take place on Wednesday 22 December 2010 and postponed until 6 January 2011.

Item Number 4 – General Fund Base Estimates revised 2010/11 and original 2011/12

The Committee considered the report and supplementary report issued on 17 December. Members were unhappy with the budget saving proposal to cease provision of free grey sacks to around 6,500 homes, which could result in residents purchasing sacks of lesser quality and ultimately cost the Council more in cleaning up spilt refuse, and suggested that this issue be referred back to the Contract Re-let Working Party.

Item Number 5 – Housing Revenue Account base estimates revised 2010/11 and original 2011/12

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Item Number 7 – Warwick Response Fees and Charges

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Item Number 9 – Discretionary Rate Relief Review

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

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Item Number 10 – Scoping of High Speed 2 Impacts on Warwick District

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report, subject to recommendation 2.4 being amended to read:

“That Executive agrees to allocate £50,000 towards preparing its response to any forthcoming HS2 consultation and that the amount is included in the 2010/11 Estimates, financed from the capital element of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. Authorisation for the use of the £50,000 is delegated to the Head of Development Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Development Services and the District Council Members on the Member Working Group.”

Item Number 12 – Proposal for a Joint Independent Members Remuneration Panel with Stratford upon Avon District Council

The Committee accepted there was a legal requirement to consider this proposal and supported the recommendations in the report.

Item Number 14 – Systems Thinking – Update and Lessons Learned

The Committee was keen to see that the programme was not driven by budgetary concerns alone, recognised efforts taken by managers to protect the workforce and supported the recommendations in the report.

Item Number 17 – Delivering Sustainable Development – Consultation Documents

The Committee expressed some concern over a lack of government funding for the services to support sustainable development, many of which were outside of the Council’s jurisdiction, but supported the recommendations in the report.

91. 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.

92. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following confidential item which was due to be discussed at the meeting of the Executive scheduled to take place on Wednesday 22 December 2010 and postponed until 6 January 2011.

Item Number 21 – Spencer Yard Update

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

(The meeting ended at 8.40 pm)