

Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10 February 2015 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

Present: Councillor Barrott (Chair): Councillors Mrs Bunker, Dagg, Dhillon, Mrs Knight, Mrs Mellor, Pittarello, Pratt, Rhead, Mrs Syson and Williams.

Also Present: Councillors Cross, Mrs Gallagher and Vincett (Portfolio Holders).

At the beginning of the meeting, the Chairman notified Members of the sad news that their friend and colleague, Councillor MacKay had passed away recently and asked for a moment's silence as a mark of respect.

106. **Substitutes**

Councillor Dagg substituted for the Independent Group vacancy.

107. **Declarations of Interest**

Executive Item 6 – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2015/16 and Housing Rents

Councillor Barrott declared an interest because he rented a garage.

108. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2015 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

109. **Contract Register – Cultural Services**

The Committee received a report from Cultural Services detailing the current status of the Contract Register, appended to the report.

This provided Members the opportunity to consider the robustness of the register, make appropriate suggestions on how the register could be improved, and consider the document within the context of promoting sound procurement practice across the Council.

Under the Council's Code of Procurement Practice, details of all contracts for the supply of goods, services and supplies should be held on the Council's central Contract Register. The Code also stated the tender process to be used by officers when procuring goods and services.

The Head of Cultural Services introduced the report and advised Members that the department handled a wide range of types of contract and procurement. These ranged from the golf contract, managed by Senior Managers, to one off purchases of equipment. In addition, she explained

that some contracts were in the process of being procured, some were long standing contracts and others were at the early planning stages.

The Head of Cultural Services answered a number of queries from Members including clarification on the catering arrangements at the Royal Pump Rooms, digital screening equipment and Spa Centre monitoring meetings. In response to a query regarding the contract for pool chemicals, the Committee was advised that the Council had been using the same supplier of these specific chemicals for ten years because it was the sole supplier in the country.

Although it would be possible to change the dosing set up at the Council's swimming pools and potentially drive the price of the contract down, it was not felt that it was the right time to commence this project whilst the future upgrade of the Leisure Centres was in progress. Members were advised that individual orders would continue to be raised against the allocated budget, as per the advice from the Procurement Team.

Councillor Pratt queried the car park contract for the Bowls Championships. The Head of Cultural Services replied that the Procurement Team had advised her not to negotiate a contract for longer than the event term last year, as the successful management of the Championships would be scrutinised and potentially amended at their conclusion. She advised that there would be a report to Executive in due course detailing the tender process for the next four to five years.

Although Members were disappointed that more detail had not been included on future contracts they were satisfied that most of their questions had been clarified.

The Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee therefore

Resolved that the report be noted.

110. **Executive Agenda (Non Confidential Items & Reports) – Wednesday 11 February 2015**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 11 February 2015.

Agenda Item 4 – Treasury Management Strategy Plan

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Agenda Item 6 – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2015/16 and Housing Rents

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

(Councillor Vincett left the meeting at the end of this item.)

Agenda Item 7 – Heating, Lighting and Water Charges 2015/16 – Council Tenants

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

111. **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 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

112. **Executive Agenda (Confidential Items & Reports) – Wednesday 11 February 2015**

The Committee considered the following item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 11 February 2015.

Item 10 – Exemption to the Code of Procurement Practice – Extension of Aids & Adaptations Building Works Contract

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Item 11 – Disposal of WDC owned land at Station Approach in Royal Leamington Spa

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

113. **Executive Agenda (Non Confidential Items & Reports) – Wednesday 11 February 2015**

The Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 11 February 2015.

Agenda Item 5 – Budget 2015/16 and Council Tax – General Fund Revenue and Capital

The Committee noted the additional recommendation 2.25 and the supporting letter from the LEP. The Committee were of the view that members should not support the request for £20k at the moment because the request had been provided at the last minute. It felt that it was unable to make a decision due to the late receipt of this recommendation and there was not enough information provided. It felt that the Leader could have updated the Committee on the work of the LEP and perhaps clarify this recommendation because he had given the Overview & Scrutiny Committee an update earlier in the evening.

The Committee therefore recommended that the Executive did not recommend recommendation 2.25 to Council until members received further information in order to make an informed decision.

(Councillor Cross left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

114. **Scrutiny of Infrastructure Planning**

The Chairman introduced this item and referred Members to a recent email circulated by Councillor Weber requesting that the issue of Infrastructure Planning be added to the agenda.

The email highlighted concerns raised about evolving infrastructure planning and the need for this to be scrutinised effectively. It was noted that this was, in part, a role for County Councillors, however, it was frustrating for District Councillors to influence the work that the County and NHS were carrying out on the District Council's behalf.

Councillor Weber made particular reference to his experiences on Planning Committee where sustainable transport was a concern.

The Leader, Councillor Mobbs, reminded the Committee that the Local Plan was included on the Significant Business Risk Register and that Members were aware that the deficit needed to be carefully monitored.

Some Members felt that the issue should be easily managed by joint working with the County Council and suggested that a District Councillor should be appointed as a representative.

Members felt strongly that Infrastructure Planning was a high priority issue that should be reported to the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. The Chairman therefore agreed to mention it to the Executive and it would be added to the Work Programme.

115. **Comments from the Executive**

A report from Civic and Committee Services summarised the Executive's responses to comments which the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee gave on reports submitted to the Executive on 14 January 2015.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

116. **Review of the Work Programme & Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2014/15 and the latest published version of the Forward Plan.

Resolved that

- (1) the work programme for 2014/2015 be noted;
and
- (2) scrutiny of Infrastructure Planning will be added to the Work Programme for June 2015.

(The meeting ended at 8.20 pm)