

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 February 2009 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Gifford (Chair); Councillors Barrott, Boad, Davies, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Gill, Guest, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth and Weed.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Grainger (Portfolio Holder for Housing)

(Councillor Guest substituted for Mrs Sawdon and Councillor Illingworth substituted for Councillor Mrs Gallagher)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Britland, Coker and Copping)

757. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Minutes Number 760 – Executive Agenda Item Number 4 – (Non Confidential Items and Reports) – Countering the Economic Downturn

Councillor Barrott declared a personal interest because he was a Trustee Director for the CAB.

758. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 2 & 22 December 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

759. HOUSING RENT ARREARS

The Committee considered a progress report from Housing Services and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Mrs Grainger on the work that had been carried out by the Rents and Finance Team during 2008/09 and the action to be taken to ensure performance was improved during 2009/10.

The report contained information on managing rent collection and arrears recovery, the monitoring of performance indicators, performance for 2008/2009 and the improvement plan for 2009/10.

Councillor Mrs Grainger attended the meeting and answered various questions from the Committee.

She reported on the work which was being undertaken to recover outstanding money from former tenants. Council house tenants were also being made aware of the number of evictions which had been carried out and the importance of paying their rent was being emphasised to them.

Mrs Grainger also reported that although the Council was introducing measures to maximise rent collections, she drew the Committees' attention to paragraph 9.7 of the report. This gave details on the significant work being undertaken to increase debt awareness and the Council's work with the CAB to provide advice to tenants.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

The Committee queried some of the performance indicators in appendix 1 to the report and Alison Simmons, Head of Housing and Property Services, agreed to update it and circulate to the members of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) future performance be monitored through the quarterly performance reporting framework.

760. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2009**

Agenda Item no. 4 – Budget 2009/2010 and Council Tax revenue and Capital

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report.

Agenda Item no. 5 – Housing Revenue Account Budget 2009/2010 and Housing Rents

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report and requested that the Executive writes to the Housing Minister, local MP's and the Local Government Association, requesting that the monies paid to the national rent pool be retained by the Council to enable building of more social housing in the District.

Agenda Item no. 7 – Countering the Economic Downturn

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Agenda Item no. 10 – Customer Access at Riverside House

The Committee noted the report, but there was concern that Riverside was not easily accessible by public transport and the Committee felt that the Council should press for a bus service to Riverside House. There was also support in principle, for the idea of post office provision at Riverside House.

Agenda Item no. 15 – Repairs and Maintenance of Play Areas in the District

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

761. **PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

762. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2009

Agenda Item no. 25 – Retirements and Redundancies

The Committee noted the recommendations in the report.

763. SCRUTINY OF CCTV

The Committee considered a report from the CCTV Task and Finish Group on a scrutiny review which had been carried out to establish if the CCTV service was delivering a value for money service to the community.

The report was presented to the Committee by the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Illingworth.

The review had been undertaken by Councillors Illingworth, Boad, Dean, Edwards, Mrs McFarland and Pittarello. The Group had met on several occasions and had two sessions interviewing various witnesses.

The full report from the Task and Finish Group had been circulated separately and it contained 14 recommendations to the Executive. The report detailed that CCTV was a very well managed and valuable service and suggested ways the Council could obtain funding from external sources in the future.

Councillor Illingworth also thanked the officers who had supported the Task and Finish Group. The Committee thanked the Group and officers for their work on this matter, and were very happy with the recommendations that had been made.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be supported and forwarded to the Executive in March 2009;
- (2) in appendix 3 to the Task and Finish Groups' report, the names of the appropriate Portfolios Holders be included; and
- (3) a copy of the report be sent to all Town and Parish Councils.

764. SCRUTINY OF FLOODING - OUTCOMES

The Committee considered a report from Councillor Boad, the Chair of the Flooding Scrutiny Task and finish Group.

The report updated the Committee on the progress made with regard to implementing the recommendations agreed by the Executive in September 2008, following the conclusion of the Scrutiny of Flooding undertaken by this authority jointly with WCC.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

When the Committee received the flooding report in July 2008, the members asked for a progress report in 6 months. However, some of the actions had not been implemented, therefore, it would be appropriate for an update to be submitted to the Committee in August 2009 to ensure the outcomes had been achieved.

The recommendations agreed to be completed by WDC had been achieved, however the Cabinet at WCC had not considered the flooding report until January 2009. Therefore, the final report had not been sent to all parties involved with the scrutiny review.

The report did not contain a clear definition of who should be responsible for each outcome of the review and what the desired impact of that outcome was. Therefore in future, all Task and Finish Group reports should include these details.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the progress made to date be noted;
- (2) a further report be submitted to the Committee in August 2009 detailing the progress made with regard to implementing the actions and what the impact of their implementation has been; and
- (3) the learning points from this joint scrutiny be noted and the suggested good practice be incorporated, where appropriate, into the Council's Scrutiny working practices.

765. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services on the Forward Plan. The current Forward Plan was attached as appendix 1 to the report.

The Forward Plan was published on a monthly basis and sets out the key decisions, and some non-key decisions, to be taken by the Executive.

The Committee considered the Forward Plan and looked at the up-coming Executive decisions. There was some discussion and suggestions made as to items which the members could have an input upon.

The Committee were mindful that any work undertaken would be done so without the need to change the timescales.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the following items from the Forward Plan be added into the Committees' work programme:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

- Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – March 2009
- Future catering arrangements in Cultural Services – September 2009
- Warwick Business Improvement District (BID) – June 2009

766. SCOPING DOCUMENT – ROYAL SPA CENTRE

The Committee considered an amended scoping document submitted by the Royal Spa Centre Task and Finish Group following their first meeting on 5 January 2009.

The Committee were happy with the scope of the scrutiny review although a slight amendment was made to the 'in scope' section, where an addition was made to include 'possible and future competition.' It was also noted that Councillor Mrs Knight was now a member of the Group too.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the amended scoping document, including the amendment above, be approved; and
- (2) it be noted that the Task and Finish Group consists of Councillors Coker, Ms Dean, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford and Mrs Knight.

769. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services on the response the Executive gave to the Committees' comments on the reports submitted to the Executive on 3 and 22 December 2008.

The report was produced to create a dialogue between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it ensured that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were formally made aware of the Executive's responses.

As part of the new scrutiny process, the Committee were no longer considering the whole of the Executive agenda.

On the publication day of the agendas for the previous meetings of the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny, all Councillors were emailed asking them to contact Committee Services, by 9.00am on the day of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Tuesday 2 December 2008, to advise which Executive items they would like the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to pass comment on.

As a result the Committee considered the items as detailed in appendix 1 to the report, and the response the Executive gave was also shown. The Committee also passed comment on the item which was considered at the special meetings on 22 December 2008. These comments and the response from the Executive were shown in appendix 2 to the report.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

The Committee also examined the decisions of the Executive, detailed in appendices 1 & 2, for possible scrutiny of those decisions. However, the Committee did not wish to scrutinise any Executive decisions at this time.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

770. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services on the Committees' work programme for 2008/2009.

At the Committees' meeting on 2 December, it was agreed that the Committee would receive the following reports in February 2009

- Executive decisions
- Forward Plan
- Scrutiny of Flooding, CCTV and Engaging Young People
- Royal Spa Centre Scope
- Housing Rent Arrears

The majority of these reports had been submitted to the Committee with the exceptions of the Executive decisions and Engaging Young People.

The report on Engaging Young People was not on the agenda because their last meeting was not held until 27th January 2009 and the delay had been due to officer and member availability. The final report would be submitted to the Committee in March 2009.

The report on the Executive decisions had not been produced because it had been incorporated into the report to the Committee on the comments from the Executive.

The CCTV Task and Finish Group had now had several meetings and the Groups' final report was a separate item on the Committees' agenda.

The Royal Spa Centre Task and Finish Group had met for the first time on 5 January 2009 and their second meeting was scheduled for 5 February 2009.

The Chair brought to the attention of members the Tree and Woodland Task and Finish Group. There had been problems trying to arrange the first meeting and he suggested that the scope was too wide and needed to be re-visited or the Group to be disbanded.

After a general discussion the Committee were of the opinion that the Group should be disbanded and Councillor Mrs Higgins agreed to complete a scope in relation to the maintenance of trees.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted;

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

- (2) the final report from the Engaging Young People Task and Finish Group be submitted in March 2009;
- (3) a scoping document with regard to the maintenance of trees be submitted to the Committee by Councillor Mrs Higgins in March 2009;
- (4) a report on LAA and LSP be submitted to the Committee in March 2009;
- (5) a report on the future catering arrangements in Cultural Services be submitted to the Committee in September 2009;
- (6) a report be submitted to the Committee on the Warwick BID in September 2009;
- (7) the Tree and Woodland Task and Finish Group not be progressed any further; and
- (8) an update report on the implementation of the outcomes from the Scrutiny of Flooding be submitted in August 2009.

(The meeting ended at 8.20pm)