

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 June 2013 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mobbs (Portfolio Holder for Finance).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Edwards and Mrs Higgins.

9. **SUBSTITUTES**

There were no substitutes.

10. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minute Number 12 – Executive Agenda item 9 – St Mary’s Lands Business Strategy

Councillor Guest declared an interest because he was one of the nominees from Warwick Town Council.

Councillor Kinson informed the Committee that he was a Ward Councillor.

11. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2013 were unavailable for approval.

Councillors Mrs Falp and Mrs Gallagher requested to know the progress on their appointment as Champions for Safeguarding Children.

Councillor Mrs Knight gave a short update on progress made by the Task and Finish Group handling Sexual Entertainment Venues. The Group had re-thought its strategy and would now be considering the existing policy and recommending any modifications necessary.

Councillor Mrs Blacklock advised Members that the draft report from the Task and Finish Group dealing with Dog Control Orders had been sent to officers for their comments and it was expected that it would be coming to the Committee in July.

Councillor Mrs Blacklock also advised Members that in respect of parking enforcement, officers would be meeting with County Council officers to discuss issues on 1 July. Councillor Mrs Falp volunteered to be part of any delegation who might meet with Warwickshire County Council’s Task and Finish Group if it agreed to meet with this Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

12. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2013

Item 9 – St Mary’s Lands Business Strategy

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) which provided details of the recommendations from GVA Leisure’s appraisal of potential leisure uses of St Mary’s Lands, Warwick. The report sought approval from the Executive to agree the next steps.

The Chairman introduced Councillor Holland from Warwickshire County Council, who had requested to speak to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the business strategy.

He summarised his comments as:

1. the location of the hotel, not the principle of having a hotel was the concern. There were a number of schemes such as the Warwickshire County Council Traffic Scheme, which would be affected by the location of the hotel;
2. the air quality in the surrounding area was outside safe limits. He quoted Hampton Street as an example. Air quality control was an issue for Warwick District Council’s Environmental Health Department, but to control this, it needed support from Warwickshire County Council to control the volume of traffic;
3. the Safe Cycle Route would be affected. It was expected to be mostly completed by the end of the year;
4. there were concerns that if the project went through as it stood with the hotel, the opportunity for people to cycle between Chase Meadow and the Cricket Club might be lost;
5. the 70 objections from Aylesford Street School had not been withdrawn; and
6. he asked for Warwick District Council to open up debate and invite views from the public.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Holland.

Following discussion of the report to the Executive, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations to the Executive:

1. there should be full and widespread consultation with the people of Warwick and Warwick Town Council;
2. Recommendation 2.6 in the report should be removed because there was a potential conflict of interest and the position was not required;
3. the scheme must come back to the Council / Executive before any agreement with the Racecourse was concluded;
4. procurement guidelines must be followed closely and the possibility for open bidding for the leases must be ensured; and
5. the independence of the Planning Committee must be safeguarded and made clear to the public.

Several Members of the Committee expressed strong reservations about the location of the hotel.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

Item 5 - Rural / Urban Capital Improvement Scheme – Amendment to Criteria

The Committee considered a report from the Finance Administration Manager which sought Executive approval of the revised criteria for the Rural / Urban Capital Improvement Scheme. The Council was receiving an increased number of enquiries that were likely to lead to a higher number of applications than in previous years; so the criteria had been revised to better support the fair and equitable allocation of awards across the District and to further improve the financial management of the scheme.

Following discussion of the report, the Committee made the following recommendations to the Executive:

1. applications should be considered quarterly, not as and when they arrived; and
2. the whole section on Town and Parish Councils should be deleted and it should be replaced with a statement saying it was preferable for applicants to have the support of their Town or Parish Council or their District Ward Councillor.

Item 6 – Potential recreation of the Mere at Kenilworth Castle

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive that sought approval for the Council to fund a feasibility study into the re-creation of the Mere at Kenilworth Castle.

Following consideration of the report, the Committee unanimously recommended to the Executive that money was not allocated for a feasibility study. Members felt that in times of austerity, this would give completely the wrong message to the public and the Service Transformation Reserve fund was not the right fund to use.

Item 7 – Communication Strategy

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Corporate and Community Services which set out how the Council communicated with its target audiences, internal and external, consistent with the principles of the Channel Strategy.

The Committee commented that the report was generally accepted, but the role of councillors as described on page 6 was not accurate. Councillors would welcome training and advice on Social Media. Members welcomed the single point of contact that some departments were operating.

Item 14 – Planning Policy for HMOs and Student Accommodation in Warwick District

The Committee considered a report from Planning Services in respect of a policy for all new planning applications for new Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). An Article 4 Direction was authorised in respect of small HMOs in Royal Leamington Spa at the Executive meeting of 26 January 2011. A subsequent Executive meeting on 13 July 2011 confirmed the Direction in Leamington Spa and it became effective on 1 April 2012.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

The report recommended that Executive approved a planning policy for HMOs and Student Accommodation for consultation purposes.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee accepted the report and policy as far as it went. It was regretted that Leamington Spa Town Council had not been consulted. It considered that a clearer definition of a "thoroughfare" (page 8) was required, and Members questioned whether the bus stop mentioned on page 9 was a university bus stop or a normal one. The Committee had major concerns about the standards of the living conditions for many residents in HMOs.

13. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON THE EXECUTIVE AGENDA 4 JUNE 2013

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services which detailed the responses to comments that both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee had made in respect of the Revised Development Strategy. These responses had been provided by the Development Policy Manager.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

14. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan which had been published for 19 June 2013 to September 2013.

The Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) was asked to request an update from the Economic Development and Regeneration Manager in respect of the Tourist Strategy for Warwick District.

In respect of the Forward Plan for 19 June 2013 to September 2013 it was:

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

15. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services on the Committee's work programme for June to August 2013.

The Committee asked for a talk about the powers Housing and Environmental Health had in respect of private sector housing, and in particular that HMOs be added to the Work Programme for July.

The Committee agreed that it should set a date for an update on the position in respect of Fit for the Future as well as a timetable to request Portfolio Holders to attend meetings.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

16. 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, as set out below.

Minute No.	Para Nos.	Reason
17	1	Information relating to an individual
17	2	Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

17. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2013

Urgent Item - Item 21 – Redundancy and Pension Payments – Housing and Property Services’ Staffing Review

The Committee did not make any comments on this report. Councillor Dhillon was informed that questions he had raised were within the remit of the Employment Committee and he could raise them with that Committee.

(The meeting finished at 8.54 pm)