

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 April 2012 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Edwards (Chair): Councillors Copping, Cross, Dagg, Dean, MacKay, Pratt, Rhead, Mrs Sawdon, Mrs Syson and Williams.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Knight and Pittarello.

141. **APPOINTMENT OF ACTING CHAIR**

RESOLVED that in Councillor Mrs Knight's absence, Councillor Edwards be appointed Acting Chair for the meeting.

142. **SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor Dean substituted for Councillor Mrs Knight and Councillor Copping substituted for Councillor Pittarello.

143. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

144. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2012 were taken as read and agreed by the Chair as a correct record.

145. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)**

The Committee considered the following non-confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 18 April 2012.

Item Number 4 – Leamington Town Centre Initiatives

Ian Coker, Head of Neighbourhood Services, presented the report and answered a number of questions regarding the pricing structure changing to a linea version which it was hoped would help to alleviate the issue of the ticket machine's not issuing change.

Members felt that this would be a positive move and were pleased with the liaison with the Chamber of Trade to help encourage more people to spend longer lengths of time in the town.

Councillor Edwards asked if there was a possibility that the variable message signs in the car parks could be linked to the Council's website, in a similar way to Stratford District Councils. Ian Coker advised that this had

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been proposed before and that discussions were ongoing with the County Council, as the owner's of the signs.

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report and were encouraged that this option would increase dwelling time within the town centre.

146. REVIEW OF FINANCE RISK REGISTER

The Committee received a report from Finance which set out the process for review by Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee of the Finance Risk Register. The Head of Finance, Mike Snow, introduced himself and his colleagues, Richard Barr, Philip Morgan and David Leach. He also offered apologies from Jenny Clayton and Andrea Wyatt.

Richard Barr presented the report and explained that the register reflected the Council's corporate priorities and key strategic projects that were reflected in Fit for the Future. He stated that this was the first of eight reviews for the Committee and advised them to give as much feedback as possible because this was a new process to take on board and would be a learning exercise for all involved.

The report asked the Scrutiny Committee to review the register and make any necessary observations on it as appropriate. This process enabled members to fulfil their role in managing risk, which was detailed more in section 7 of the report.

Councillor Rhead asked for reassurance from the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mobbs, that he had been involved with the production of this document as, theoretically, they were his risks. Councillor Mobbs stated that he had worked closely with the team in developing this register and would continue to be involved in monitoring it through quarterly meetings. He also reminded members that he could be approached with questions, and invited to meetings, at any time.

Comparisons were made between the old style registers and this one, with some councillors preferring a more detailed breakdown whilst some felt this was too prescriptive.

Members raised a few issues regarding consistency between the Service Area Plans that appeared in the Executive agenda compared to the register contained in the Finance and Audit agenda.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and its contents accepted or, where appropriate, acted upon.

147. END OF TERM REPORT

The Committee received a report from Civic and Committee Services which updated members on the work that the Committee had undertaken during the year. The list of matters considered was attached as an appendix to the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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148. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

A report from Civic and Committee Services summarised the Executive's response to comments which the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee gave on reports submitted to the Executive on 6 and 14 March 2012. Members were pleased that the level of detail contained in the comments had increased and hoped that this would continue.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

149. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee 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 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.

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

150. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

A report from Members' Services detailed the Committee's work programme for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Members raised a number of issues that they would like further information on including the contingency plans for the traveller and gypsy site in Beausale, the Spa Centre Monitoring Group and the National Fraud Initiative.

It was agreed that either Tracy Darke or Bill Hunt would deliver a verbal update on the Beausale site including any financial implications. This would be added to the work programme for May 2012.

In addition, members asked that a report from the Spa Centre Business Plan Monitoring Group be submitted to May 2012 and information on the National Fraud Initiative to be reported on in July 2012.

RESOLVED that the work plan for 2011/12 and 2012/13 be noted with the additions detailed above.

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

The Committee considered the following non-confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 18 April 2012.

Item 6 – Service Transformation Bid – Operational Property Lifetime & Condition Surveys

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee were mindful that the Council should have some of this information already and were not totally satisfied that monies should be spent on collating data that we already hold.

However, the Committee supported the recommendations providing that the survey was tendered through the Code of Procurement Practice and raised the concern that costs should not exceed the maximum of £70,000.

Item 13C – Significant Business Risk Register

The Committee felt that some of use of negative wording was confusing and the risk should be described as 'failing to.....'. Members also raised concerns regarding the lack of detail in the description of risk relating to the Local Plan.

The Committee supported the recommendations but noted that there was a disconnection between some of the items on the risk register and the Service Area Plans, for example different risk ratings.

Item 9 – Warwick Heritage Improvement Programme (Saltisford)

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report but felt unable to comment further until they had received the Fully Costed Management Plan. They were mindful that this was the very beginning of the project and looked forward to reviewing the business cases in due course.

Item Number 5 – Fit for the Future Change Programme Update

The Committee felt it would be useful to receive a schedule of reports due for submission in the future, for example when Cultural Services were planning to submit reports to Employment Committee regarding staffing levels.

The Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) agreed to update members when the Feasibility Study would be submitted and if it was necessary to receive it before consideration of the Local Plan.

Members also requested that a paper be provided updating them on monies spent from the Spend to Save Reserve in the past, with a view to monitoring the ability of the Chief Exec to spend up to £20k without a business case.

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Item 8 – Millbank Open Space Improvements

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report and were mindful that this was not a wealthy area and had a large volume of young families.

Members were pleased that this project could encourage resident involvement across a wide spectrum.

(The meeting ended at 8.06 pm)