

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 31 October 2017 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Falp (Chairman); Councillors Ashford, Bromley, Mrs Cain, Davison, Miss Grainger, Mrs Knight, Naimo and Parkins.

Also Present: Councillor Whiting.

46. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Shilton; and
- (b) Councillor Ashford substituted for Councillor Mrs Redford.

47. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

48. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2017 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

48. **Comments from the Executive**

The Committee considered a report from Democratic Services which detailed the responses the Executive gave to the comments the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made regarding the reports submitted to the Executive in September 2017.

Resolved that the report be noted.

49. **Finance Portfolio Holder Update**

The Committee considered a briefing note from Councillor Whiting, Portfolio Holder, Finance, giving an update on his portfolio.

In response to questions from Members, Councillor Whiting explained that:

- the main risk was that while the Council had a balanced revenue budget this excluded depreciation and capital works required , therefore this created the significant issue of funding of rebuilding multi story car parks;
- the transition of call handling back to the Council, from the shared service with Warwickshire County Council had generally gone well. However there was a frustration that there was a larger than expected number of calls being made to 450000 despite this number not being published. Therefore to make use of the telephony software the Council had within the next two weeks, some of switchboard calls would be shared across other call handling teams i.e. contract services and housing repairs;
- it was recognised that Universal Credit would have a major impact but the Council would be left with around 50% of its current

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workload due to other support it offered as well as the responsibility to direct people to DWP and provide advice on budget management. The advice on budget management would be considered as part of the voluntary commissioning work and for other services the team work looking at making as much use as possible of electronic communication;

- the finance team were encouraging all applicants for benefit support to apply electronically because it provided a quicker response time for the customer through automatic checking of paperwork to ensure it was all submitted;
- it would be a challenge to ensure the Council established and maintained reserves to respond to the needs of the Council, when taking into account depreciation of assets;
- the ability of officers to ensure that each year the Council was underspent, was very good, but this was potentially hiding the problem because the Council was then anticipating this would occur each year;
- new homes bonus was reducing at present and should not be considered as part of the revenue budget because to rely on this would create a problem later on;
- there was a long term challenge on meeting the demands within the Equipment Renewal Reserve, but money was being set aside each year and the demand could be met over the next two years;
- there was a continued challenge of improving procurement practice across the Council, where some departments were very good others were not. Work was ongoing to improve this and to ensure the procurement team were used as a specialist advice service;
- social value was recognised with procurement policy and the Council had won an award for making our procurement process accessible to small businesses;
- however social value could not be seen as favouritism to local companies and while it provided advantages such as local apprentices but this only accounted for a small proportion on tender evaluation;
- the Executive was due to consider a report regarding entering a Business Rate Pilot Pool. The Government were keen to try this in a two tier authority area to see what happened. The Council needed to be mindful that 100% business rate retention would be opaque because distribution of collected rates would need to be undertaken. This was because if London authorities retained their business rates they would have significant budgetary income;
- at present there was no specific time frame to introduce 100% business rate retention but with a pilot of a further year it could be 2020/21 but then would take at least a further three to five years to be established;
- it was recognised that 100% of business rates would be retained by local authorities, however it would include additional responsibility, the majority would be for County authorities and therefore they would potentially keep an increased share of the rates collected;
- it was recognised that the procurement manager was due to retire shortly and like for like recruitment had been considered, the work on HS2 was significantly impacting on this market, therefore work was being undertaken to evaluate working with another authority on procurement to increase resilience in the service;

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- the Council should not under value the work of officers in continuing to deliver services with less funds available to do this; and
- pleased with the decision to invest a small amount in equity funds because this would provide better value for money.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Whiting for answering the questions.

(Councillor Whiting left the meeting.)

50. Executive Agenda (Non-confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 1 November 2017

The Committee considered the following item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 1 November 2017.

Item 4 – Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

The Committee welcomed that this report had come forward so soon after the motion to Council and that there would be a further report to Executive in January 2018.

The Committee welcomed that, as a result of the debate, officers agreed to undertake discussions/consultation with our partners both statutory and non statutory to ensure a co-ordinated approach within the District ahead of the report in January 2018.

The Committee also accepted the offer of having a presentation to their meeting on 3 January 2018 on the detail of the paper to the Executive the following evening.

51. Leamington Car Park User Survey

The Committee received a briefing paper regarding the outcome of the Leamington Car Park User Survey. The survey had been undertaken to inform how the temporary impact of the Covent Garden car parks could affect car park user habits.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr Garrison (Project Manager - Car Parks) explained that:

- the survey was not about user satisfaction of the car park but where users would park when the car park was closed;
- the evidence from the survey would be used to feed into the displacement plan for when Covent Garden car park was closed;
- it was disappointing to see how undesirable sustainable transport options were;
- talks were ongoing with Warwickshire County Council, which was taking a positive approach, to potential amendments to Traffic Regulation Orders for on street parking, but it was accepted that any amendments needed to be beneficial for the whole town; and
- talks were ongoing with the Leamington BID and Chamber of Trade because they were key stakeholders and the Council needed to demonstrate it had considered their customers and the displacement plan would be viable to support the town centre.

The Committee thanked Mr Garrison for his report.

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52. Review of the Work Programme & Forward Plan

The Committee considered its work programme for 2017 and the Forward Plan for November 2017 to January 2018.

Councillor Knight proposed that there should be a Task & Finish group regarding the role of the Chairman of the Council and what work they should be undertaking.

Resolved that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) Councillors Ashford and Mrs Knight, with the assistance of the Senior Committee Services Officer produce a scope for the review of the role of the Chairman of the District Council and bring this back to the next meeting of the committee for it to consider.

(The meeting finished at 7.37 pm)