

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 11 March 2014 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Barrott (Chair): Councillors Mrs Bunker, Mrs Knight, MacKay, Mrs Mellor, Pittarello, Pratt, Mrs Sawdon, Mrs Syson and Williams.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mobbs (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rhead. Councillor Pittarello had forwarded an apology that he would be late due to being caught in traffic.

154. **SUBSTITUTES**

There were no substitutes.

155. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minute 162 – Executive Agenda (Confidential Items & Reports) – Executive item 12 – Proposed Development, Warwick

Councillor Mrs Mellor declared that she was a Warwick Town Councillor.

156. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

157. **INFORMING THE AUDIT RISK ASSESSMENT – REPORT FROM EXTERNAL AUDITORS**

Ahead of the audit of the 2013/14 accounts, the Committee considered a report from the Head of Finance which presented a report by the external auditors, Grant Thornton.

The external auditors' report covered some important areas of the auditor risk assessment where the auditors were required to make inquiries of the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee under auditing standards.

The Committee was required to consider the report and whether the responses were consistent with the Committee's understanding and whether there were any further comments it wished to make. The report summarised the external auditor's understanding of the respective responsibilities of the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, officers and external audit, as set out by International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

Mr Gregory attended the meeting on behalf of the external auditors to present the report. He was accompanied by Helen Lillington, who had taken on the role vacated by Neil Preece.

It was pointed out that under 'Management response' on page 15 of the report, the paragraph should begin "Councillors", not "Councillors and Councillors".

The Committee confirmed that the report was consistent with Members' own understanding of how the Council operated.

RESOLVED that the Committee confirms its satisfaction with external audit arrangements as described in the report presented by Grant Thornton.

158. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2014**

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 12 March 2014.

Item 4 – Treasury Management Strategy Plan for 2014/2015

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Item 7 – Corporate Property Repairs & Improvements Programme 2014/15

The Committee recognised that the Council was moving to a more strategic approach to how it managed its portfolio and supported the recommendations in the report.

159. **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 items, by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 1, 3 and 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

The full text of Minutes 160, 161 and 162 were recorded in a confidential minute which was to be considered for publication following implementation of the relevant decisions. A summary is as follows:

160. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2014**

The Committee considered the following confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 12 March 2014.

Item 11 – Lillington Area Action Plan

The Committee fully supported the recommendations in the report.

(Councillor Pittarello joined the meeting during the course of this item)

161. **NEWBOLD COMYN GOLF COURSE**

The Committee received a report from its Chairman and from the Head of Cultural Services which asked Members for their comments on proposals received from the golf course operator.

Members supported the recommendations, along with an additional recommendation which was proposed by this Committee.

Members also noted developments in relation to the Council's catering contract.

(Councillor Mobbs joined the meeting during the course of this item)

(Councillor Pratt left the meeting during the course of this item)

162. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2014**

The Committee considered the following confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 12 March 2014.

Item 13 – Housing and Property Services Contracts Update Report

The Committee passed comment on the report, requested information and made 2 recommendations, including an amendment to the recommendations in the report.

(Councillor Mobbs left the meeting at the conclusion of this item)

Item 12 – Proposed Development, Warwick

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

163. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 12 MARCH 2014**

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 12 March 2014.

Item 8 – Rural / Urban Capital Improvement Scheme Criteria

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Item 9(B) – Discretionary Rate Relief

The Committee discussed this item in some depth and was concerned that the Government had yet to confirm whether it would meet the costs of this relief. In addition there was no legislation covering this to date. Members discussed the possibility of recommending to the Executive that it did not implement these temporary measures. However, in order to try to give business some incentive to locate to the District, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Executive that if it were minded to adopt the reliefs, the Executive only pursue Option B as detailed under paragraph 8.4. of the report.

Item 9(C) – Historic Buildings Grant Application Funding 2014/15

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

164. **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 12 February 2014.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

165. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the latest published version of the Forward Plan.

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

166. **REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME**

A report from Civic and Committee Services detailed the Committee's work programme for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2013/14 and 2014/15 be noted.

167. **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 items, by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 1, 3 and 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

The full text of Minutes 168 and 169 were recorded in a confidential minute which was to be considered for publication following implementation of the relevant decisions. A summary is as follows:

168. **MINUTES (CONFIDENTIAL)**

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

169. **COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE – APPENDIX 2 (CONFIDENTIAL)**

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 12 February 2014.

(The meeting ended at 8.42 pm)

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 25 March 2014 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 7.15pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Barrott (Chair): Councillors Mrs Bunker, Mrs Knight, MacKay, Mrs Mellor, Pratt, Rhead, Mrs Syson and Williams.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pittarello and Mrs Sawdon.

170. **SUBSTITUTES**

There were no substitutes.

171. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minutes 172 & 174 – Executive Agenda – Relocation of the Council’s HQ offices

The Committee as a whole declared an interest because the land under discussion was owned by Warwick District Council.

172. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 2014**

Subsequent to a presentation to Councillors which took place immediately prior to this meeting, the Committee considered the following items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 26 March 2014.

Item 3 – Petition against the High Speed Rail (London West Midlands) Bill

The Committee considered the financial implications of the report and noted that funding for the petition would be made from the monies set aside to oppose HS2. One Member expressed the view that the petition should be funded separately. Members highlighted the point that if further funding were required in respect of HS2 in future, another request would have to be made to the Executive. Nevertheless, the Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

Item 4 – Relocation of the Council’s HQ offices – Part A report

The Committee made a number of comments (detailed under minute 174 - the Part B element of the report) and supported the recommendations in the report subject to the following changes, which it recommended to the Executive:

Recommendation 2.4 - that authority needs to be delegated in accordance with procurement procedures.

Recommendation 2.6 – that this recommendation should include an assurance that there would be no contractor appointed until the report to the Executive in February 2015 had been approved.

173. **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, 3 and 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

The full text of Minute 174 was recorded in a confidential minute which was to be considered for publication following implementation of the relevant decisions. A summary is as follows:

174. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 2014**

The Committee considered the following confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 26 March 2014.

Item 6 – Relocation of the Council’s HQ offices – Part B report

The Committee passed comment and supported the recommendations in the report.

Prior to closing the meeting, the Chairman proposed and the Committee agreed that all Heads of Department be approached for copies of their Contracts Registers, for the attention of the “Procurement Champions”, prior to a suitable programme of reviews being added to the Committee’s work programme. The Committee also noted that further to its suggestion at the last meeting that the Housing and Property Services Contracts report should be treated as a case study, the Corporate Management Team would be focussing on this report at its away day on 8 April.

(The meeting ended at 8.15 pm)