

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Blacklock (Chairman); Councillors Boad, Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Copping, Ms Dean, Edwards, Mrs Falp, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford, Gill, Guest, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth and Kinson.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors Cross (Portfolio Holder for Cultural Services), Mrs Grainger (Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Community Services), Mobbs (Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance) and Vincett (Portfolio Holder for Housing & Property Services).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Weed.

## 95. **SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor Gill substituted for Councillor Weed.

## 96. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minute Number 99 – Executive Agenda (Non Confidential Items and Reports) – Wednesday 12 February 2014 – Item 13 – Car Parking – National Bowls Championships

Councillor Mrs Falp declared a personal interest because a member of her family worked in Leisure.

Councillor Gifford declared an interest because Victoria Park was in his Ward. He also declared that he was pre-disposed, not pre-determined.

Minute Number 99 – Executive Agenda (Non Confidential Items and Reports) – Wednesday 12 February 2014 – Item 16 – Public Service Network (PSN) Compliance

Councillor Boad declared a personal interest because he used the software application "Good" on his mobile devices and was named in the report.

Councillors Mrs Gallagher and Gifford also declared personal interests as they both used "Good".

Minute Number 105 – Executive Agenda (Non Confidential Items and Reports) – Wednesday 12 February 2014 – Item 12 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Warwick Sea Scouts' Headquarters

Councillors who sat on the Planning Committee sought advice on whether they should declare an interest and were informed by the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) that the subject of discussion was on the principle of Warwick District Council giving consent as land owner and there would be no need to discuss any aspect of a planning application so there were no pre-determination issues.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

Councillor Mrs Bromley declared a personal interest as a member of Friends of St Nicholas Park. When asked by the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) to confirm whether she may be pre-determined, she stated that as Ward Councillor, she was allowed to campaign, but on this issue, she retained an open mind and was prepared to listen to the views of other Members.

Councillor Guest declared an interest because the Sea Scouts were based in his Ward.

Minute Number 107 – Executive Agenda (Confidential Items and Reports) – Wednesday 12 February 2014 – Item 23 – 10, 12 & 14 Chapel Street, Warwick

Councillor Mrs Higgins declared an interest because the properties were in her Ward.

### **97. HOUSING & PROPERTY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE**

The Committee received an update from the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Property Services, Councillor Vincett.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Vincett explained that:

- In respect of the under-occupancy charge, the Council was advising tenants who were having difficulties paying rent; about 25% of tenants fell into this category.
- The Council was still encouraging people to downsize to a smaller property where there were difficulties paying rent.
- The Council would be looking at the feasibility of buying back properties previous purchased under "Right to Buy".
- There had been delays in producing reports and issues arising out of the loss of two key members of staff from Housing & Property Services, but it was hoped to replace them soon.
- Family housing was the biggest demand for accommodation type. The Council needed to build up a supply of smaller family housing.
- 80 affordable units had been built in 2013 and a target of 250 affordable units had been set for 2014.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Vincett for answering questions.

### **98. CORPORATE & COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE**

The Committee received an update from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Community Services, Councillor Mrs Grainger.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Mrs Grainger explained that:

- Members were asked to report any anomalies they found on the Council's website. They were also asked to view the internet website and not the intranet so that they could see what the public saw. Councillor Mrs Grainger said that the website needed to be swept to remove any pages that were never viewed.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

- The Call Centre had been short of one manager but this vacancy had been filled. Training was in progress to address service issues and as a result, the abandoned call rate was decreasing. The issue of staff turnover amongst call centre staff was a national issue, and this caused problems with training staff which were being addressed. Knowledge gaps were recognised for calls dealing with housing and payments.
- Another part-time member of staff would start work in the Media Department in March. It was planned that articles concerning the Council would be passed to Councillors on a regular basis.
- Councillor Mrs Grainger asked Members to let her know if there were any projects that were critical that were lapsing as a result of staff shortages in the Service Area. She explained what was being done to cover the work of the Service Area Head and that this had meant that some non-critical projects had been put on hold.
- Councillor Mrs Grainger said she would find out what criteria had to be met for a website to be in the top 20.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Mrs Grainger for answering questions.

### **99. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2014**

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

#### **Item 13 – Car Parking – National Bowls Championships**

Mr David Adams, a representative from Friends of Victoria Park, addressed the Committee with concerns about the parking plans for the National Bowls Championships. Councillor Gifford, as Ward Member, also expressed concerns and asked for the Council to consider using Covent Garden car park and a shuttle bus service. The Service Area Manager for Cultural Services explained how all the suggested alternatives had been considered and why it was felt that the best option was for parking to be provided at Victoria Park. She also said that the situation would be reviewed for future years.

A motion proposed by Councillor Gifford and seconded by Councillor Copping that Covent Garden car park was recommended for the Bowls Event instead of Victoria Park was defeated.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to the Executive that recommendation 2.7 in the report to the Executive was highlighted for importance. The Committee recognised that the 2014 event was in the nature of a trial and recommended that the review report was produced by the end of the year based on similar lines to the last Bowls event review. It also recommended that the Friends of Victoria Park were consulted, along with local residents and users of the park as part of the review process.

The Chairman thanked Mr Adams for presenting the views of the Friends of Victoria Park.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

Councillor Cross left the meeting at the end of discussions on this item and Councillor Guest left near the end of discussions.

### **Item 16 – Public Service Network (PSN) Compliance**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to the Executive that further review on the feasibility of separating the email system from the PSN was undertaken to allow access to emails in a more flexible manner.

Councillor Brookes left the meeting during the discussion of this item.

#### **100. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2014 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **101. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

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

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

#### **102. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DESIGNATIONS – CALL IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION**

On 8 January 2014, the Executive made decisions on a report: item 5 "Neighbourhood Plan Designations". In accordance with the Council's call in procedure, three or more Councillors called in these decisions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Since calling in the report, further clarification had been given assuring Members that the money would be available to the parish councils and therefore the Councillors who had called in the report were happy for it to proceed.

**RESOLVED** that in light of the information, the decision made by the Executive on 8 January 2014 be implemented without further delay.

#### **103. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan which had been published for February 2014 to May 2014.

Members were informed that the Fare Increase report (reference 578) had been postponed, and the Riverside House offices – relocation options report (reference 528) would be coming forward in March.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

### **104. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services on the Committee's work programme.

#### Health Scrutiny Working Party

Councillor Mrs Falp, Chairman of the Working Party reported that Councillor Copping had been asked to attend meetings of the Group. The Group was currently trying to sort out working relationships between it and officers before it would present its report to Overview and Scrutiny on the way forward for health scrutiny at Warwick District Council. The report due to go to the Executive from the Health and Wellbeing Lead Officer had been delayed. This report would form part of the considerations for the report that would come to Overview and Scrutiny from the Group. It was hoped that the Group's report would be ready for the April meeting of Overview and Scrutiny.

#### Children's Champion

With the departure of the main officer who had been running this, there had been delays. The Deputy Chief Executive (BH) had taken over responsibility in the interim and he would be speaking with both Councillors Mrs Falp and Mrs Gallagher.

#### Task & Finish Group – SEVs

The Chairman was asked to follow up progress with the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Rhead.

#### Review of the Volunteering Policy

This had been postponed to the March meeting.

#### HARP

It was hoped that a draft report would be ready for the meeting in March.

#### Task & Finish Group – Staff Volunteering

Councillor Illingworth reported that this had not progressed. He felt that a decision was required on whether it was worth continuing.

### **105. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2014**

#### Item 9 – Assets Review – Update Report

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had concerns on how the conclusions were reached as shown in Appendix 1 of the report and questioned the criteria for how the Council was prioritising the assets. It was felt that the use of Ward Boundaries gave a false impression.

#### Item 11 – Peer Challenge Improvement Plan Update

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt that the Leader of the Council should encourage people to participate. The Committee welcomed recommendation 2.4 and making available £8,000 for mentoring support providing it would be available for all councillors to take part. The Committee was pleased with the efforts to provide information to other councillors.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

### Item 12 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Warwick Sea Scouts’ Headquarters

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was broadly in favour of the recommendations but great care must be taken with the proposals at planning applications stage. The Committee suggested that the Sea Scouts might consider approaching Severn Trent to move the pipe and to pay for the hut.

#### 106. **PUBLIC & 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 paragraph 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
107	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

The full minutes of Minute 107 would be contained within a confidential minute which would be considered for publication following the implementation of the relevant decisions. However, a summary of the decision was as follows:

#### 107. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2014**

##### Item 23 – 10, 12 & 14 Chapel Street, Warwick

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report and addendum and agreed recommendation 2.2 in the addendum.

(The meeting finished at 9.07 pm)