

# FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 20 October 2009, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Knight (Chair); Councillors, Edwards, Guest, Illingworth, MacKay, Rhead and Mrs Tyrrell.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pittarello and Vincett.

## 62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

### Minute Number 70 – Expenditure on Tourism

Councillor Guest declared a personal interest because he was a board member of South Warwickshire Tourism/ Shakespeare Country.

## 63. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2009 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 64. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Tuesday 29 September 2009.

### Item Number 3. Fees and Charges 2010/2011

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee considered the report and wished to highlight the following areas to the Executive:

- Paragraph 8.1.6 should be clarified so that it is clear that this is not market traders; Car parking estimates seem to continually fail to match the actual; this is beginning to become a cause for concern even if the car parks have been hit by economic down turn;
- 9.1.1 should not include the detail about 'impracticable' when explaining to bowls England the reason for increases; it should only say it is to bring charges in line with other car parks;
- The Committee asked for an update report in February 2010 on the uptake on the units within the Creative Arches and Althorpe Street Business Centre;
- It was agreed with the Head of Finance that in future there should be the percentage increase or decrease detailed next to each fee; and
- The Committee were concerned why woodland burial was so expensive, and asked for clarification to be provided on what uptake there had been on these plots.

## **FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

### **65. BUDGET & IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive's Office updating the Committee on the progress made with the Budget and Improvement Programme (BIP).

The programme had been devised to respond to the continued budget challenge over the next three years and included a range of projects to support customer focused improvement work and to make significant savings.

There was a discussion on this matter and the Committee recognised that that BIP provided a good opportunity for joint working with other authorities and discussions should be held with other authorities and in these instances different approaches should be presented to members on this before a single approach was defined.

As part of this item the Committee also considered agenda item 5, Building on Excellence and established the comments that are recorded in minute number 65.

#### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) Councillor Rhead meets with the BIP programme manager to make sure future reports are in a revised format that records both as cashable and non cashable savings correctly and transparently.

(Councillor Mrs Tyrrell arrived during this item)

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

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Tuesday 29 September 2009.

#### **Item Number 5. Building on Excellence**

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported recommendations of the report. They also reminded the Executive of the importance in ensuring that efficiencies and benefits from BIP are recorded correctly, both as cashable and non cashable, to ensure they are not double counted and that these targets are actually being achieved through quarterly reports. Therefore they recommended that:

- the quarterly reports on BIP are revised to ensure that they can be reported in this manner;
- Councillor Rhead meets with the BIP programme manager to make sure this is possible.

The Committee looked forward to seeing the new targets and hoped they will be more quantifiable and requested that the Executive takes responsibility for these.

## **FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

### **66. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services which summarised the Executive's response to comments which the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee gave on reports submitted to the Executive on 29 September 2009.

The report was produced to create a dialogue between the Executive and the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, ensuring that the Scrutiny Committee was formally made aware of the Executive's responses. The same arrangement applied previously to the Executive and the Audit & Resources Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted

### **67. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services which informed the Members of the current Forward Plan which was attached at appendix 1 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 was the future work programme for the Executive. If a non-executive member highlighted a decision(s) to be taken by the Executive which they would like to be involved in, the member(s) could then provide useful background to the Committee when the report was submitted to the Executive and passed comment on it.

There was a discussion on budget setting was held and it was felt that it would be beneficial for some members of the Committee to meet with the relevant officers in finance to discuss the budget papers and their content ahead of their submission before members.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) Councillors Edwards, Mobbs and Mrs Tyrrell meet with the relevant officers in finance to look through the budget papers; and
- (2) Forward plan reference number 232 needs to be amended to include a reason why it had been delayed for so long.

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

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services that detailed their work programme for the year.

## **FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

**RESOLVED** that subject to following amendments the work programme be approved:

- (1) the removal of Building on Excellence as this would now form part of the Budget and Improvement Programme work; and
- (2) the addition of the Task & Finish Group report on Procurement be submitted to the December meeting.

### **69. 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 the paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

### **70. EXPENDITURE ON TOURISM**

The Committee considered a report from the Expenditure on Tourism Task & Finish Group on their findings and recommendations who had been asked by the Committee to consider the management of the Council's contribution to South Warwickshire Tourism/Shakespeare Country

**RESOLVED** that the report and recommendations, subject to the minor amendments made with regard to recommendations 2.5 and 2.7 be submitted to the Executive in November for consideration.

(Councillor Illingworth arrived during this item)

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

The Committee considered the following confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Tuesday 29 September 2009.

**Item Number 10(A). Victoria Park Tennis Courts Floodlights Project**

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

**Item Number 10(C). Tax free bikes for work – cycle scheme**

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

## **FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Continued)**

### **72. 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 the paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

### **71. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)**

The Committee considered the following confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Tuesday 29 September 2009.

#### **Item Number 12. Future of Newbold Comyn Golf Course**

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee found that the outline proposal is very good and recognised that investment was required. They particularly welcomed the inclusion of a requirement for assisting the Council with its target for sports participation with the District.

The Committee requested that the Council aim for a rental on the lease from year 3, progressing to the full rental from year 6. It was understood that this is only an aim as the competitive dialogue is designed to allow the suppliers to offer their solution to the project.

The Committee also asked for clarification on the impact of using inert landfill and whether this devalues the land if this project does not proceed after this has been used.

#### **Urgent Item - Racing Club Warwick**

The Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Executive applies appropriate pressure to the Racing Club Warwick to ensure they have appropriate governance and management arrangements in place to ensure that the club is effectively managed.

The Committee also recommended that the Council does not subscribe to Lawtel if the Council is moving to a shared legal services and that WCC continue to provide the legal advice on this matter.

(The meeting ended at 8.55pm)