

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5 February 2019 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Mrs Falp (Chairman); Councillors Ashford, Boad, Mrs Cain, Davison, H Grainger, Naimo, Parkins, Mrs Redford and Weed.

**Also Present:** Councillors Butler, Mobbs, Phillips and Rhead.

## 74. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) An apology for absence was received from Councillor Shilton.
- (b) Councillor Weed substituted for Councillor Bromley.

## 75. **Declarations of Interest**

### Minute Number 76 – Warwick District Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

Councillors Mrs Falp and Gifford declared an interest because they were Warwickshire County Councillors.

## 76. **Warwick District Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)**

The Committee received a report from Development Services in a joint meeting with Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee updating them on the progress of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Both Committees voted for Councillor Quinney to chair this item on the agenda.

Members were asked to consider the information provided on s.106 contributions and feedback to officers if there was additional information that they would like to see provided in the future.

Councillor Rhead, Portfolio Holder – Development Services spoke about the work being done by the Members' Reference Group to:

- identify priorities and to recommend that officers ensured that these were kept under constant review because the flow of money from either s.106 or CIL was dependent on the house building programme working in a timely manner; and
- consider whether any further schemes should be added to the CIL 123 List, and that business cases formed an important part of this.

Councillor Rhead also spoke about various concerns and outstanding issues with the Europa Way scheme. Highlights included:

- timeline issues that he felt had not been considered enough if the developers needed to submit applications to Planning Department to change s.106 obligations;
- the infrastructure that would be provided for pedestrians to cross Europa Way to get to the country park; Warwickshire County Council had been asked to provide an appraisal of costs for the various means this could be provided;

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

- landscaping provisions for making Europa Way a gateway to Royal Leamington Spa. Plans for this would be available imminently; and
- provision of cycle ways, and liaison with the County Council for these and how that they would link with those provided on the District side.

In response to various questions from Members of both the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Rhead, the Business Manager, Policy & Delivery and Ms Janet Neale, Infrastructure Delivery Manager (Warwickshire County Council), explained that:

- It was difficult to respond to specific highway questions and how traffic bottlenecks at Victoria Park, the railway bridge and Emscote Road would be solved because a strategic overview was being undertaken; however, they would ensure that these issues were examined.
- The Members' Group were concentrating on the first five years of the plan and that was the reason for looking at what needed to be prioritised in case funds did start to dwindle. It would be a useful exercise for Members to examine the s.106 contributions and filter out those monies affecting their Wards and press for those projects to be delivered.
- Major funding streams were being investigated when there were funding gaps, e.g. money from LEP and Homes England.
- If the County Council wanted to change where s.106 money was allocated, then it would be necessary to seek authorisation from the Planning Committee.
- The electric bikes scheme suggested by BID was not in enough detail to be able to quantify the funding so a lot more detail was required and this had been requested.
- The County Council was pushing to get cycle ways wherever possible and it was required on all s.106 agreements.
- The Bath Street Gyratory was still one of the top three priorities at the County Council to go on the CIL 123 list. Something would need to happen in respect of this before the Commonwealth Games.

At 6.40pm, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members left the room to continue their own agenda in a different room. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reconvened at 6.45pm with Councillor Mrs Falp assuming the Chair.

### **77. Declarations of Interest**

There were no further declarations of interest.

### **78. Minutes**

- (a) The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2018 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.
- (b) An amendment to the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2018 to correct the date of the meeting from 30 October 2018 to 27 November 2018 was approved.

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

- (c) The minutes of the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 15 January 2019 were noted.
- (d) The minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 6 February 2018 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. This was introduced as an urgent item by the Chairman.

### **79. Work Programme, Forward Plan & Comments from Executive**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2019 and the Forward Plan and the responses the Executive gave to the comments the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made regarding the reports submitted to the Executive in January 2019.

Members were informed that the fuel poverty strategy would only be completed in the summer and officers had requested that the report be postponed because of this.

The Chairman had received an email requesting that the progress report on the Heart service be postponed until March. She had requested that an explanation be sent to all Members explaining the need for the delay. Members agreed to the request for the delay but scheduled the report to be delivered to the April meeting because the March meeting had enough business to be discussed already.

Members re-examined the Work Programme items for the March meeting which was looking very full and agreed to move the Vision & Strategy for Leamington Town Centre report to the 2 April meeting.

Following a suggestion from the Deputy Chief Executive (BH), Members agreed that they would scrutinise the training programme for new councillors at the 2 April meeting.

#### **Resolved that:**

- (1) the Fuel Poverty report be postponed until June;
- (2) the Heart Service report will be moved back to the 2 April meeting because the March meeting is already busy;
- (3) the Vision & Strategy for Leamington town centre report be postponed until the 2 April meeting;
- (4) to consider a report on the induction training programme for new councillors at the 2 April meeting; and
- (5) the responses made by the Executive on the Comments from the Executive report at Appendix 2 to the report be noted.

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

### **80. Chief Executive's Office – Service Review**

The Committee considered a report which brought together details of performance relating to the Chief Executive's Office.

In response to questions, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mobbs and the Chief Executive, explained that:

- The Fit for the Future programme had allowed the Council to change in many areas, but it was the ICT area that needed more work with the acceleration of the digital agenda being fed through to all service areas.
- The elections in May would impact the service area a great deal and then after that, the need to train new councillors. This would affect many departments, but in particular, Democratic Services.
- The Housing Service Area had a significant amount of work on its books, for example, the repairs and maintenance agenda. Grenfell had added to this workload.
- Much work was being done to look at the training programme for new councillors. The suggestion from Councillor Mrs Redford to provide new councillors with mentors would be taken on board.
- The funding for the officer responsible for the Council's GDPR compliance had been extended.
- The numbers of FOI and subject access requests could be added to the figures to demonstrate why the 100% target was so difficult to meet.
- A lot of work had been done on recruitment of new staff and the "brand" of the Council. The apprenticeship programme had proven successful.
- The Head of Development Services was looking at the Planning Enforcement targets and it had been noted that cases where no action was required were still appearing in the figures and these needed to be filtered out.
- A Council newsletter would be published after the election in May but work was required on a database to build up a list of subscribers that complied with GDPR.
- Only essential maintenance works were being done on Riverside House.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Mobbs and the Chief Executive for answering questions.

### **81. Business Portfolio – Service Review**

The Committee considered a report which detailed the performance relating to the Business Portfolio.

In response to questions, the Portfolio Holder – Business, Councillor Butler and the Head of Development Services explained that:

- The Interactive Futures event held at the weekend had been very successful. A report would be going to the Executive in the future recommending that the event would be held again. The Council had staff at the event to showcase Leamington Spa as a place to invest. Leads would then be followed up.

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

- The Business Festival was organised by the Coventry & Warwickshire LEP.
- The strategy on which events would be supported was simply to take advantage of events as they arose and each one had to be justified individually. We were working with the County Council to put together an improved set of economic data looking at the contributions of specific sectors, how successful they were and how vulnerable. We would then use that data to develop a more strategic approach and on where to invest time based on that data.
- The Council had not yet developed a strategy to deal with the loss of jobs at JLR and how that would affect other businesses like the retail sector; it was high on the list of things that had to be done. (Councillor Boad drew everyone's attention to an initiative in Wolverhampton with EBay supporting small enterprises as a "shop front". This had proven very successful and he suggested that a similar opportunity could be explored for the District.)
- We had to re-examine the way shopping centres and high streets would function in the future and to bring in different uses to these places to encourage people into the town. Informal discussions had begun with the Executive on how to make the high street more attractive and proposals on that would be brought forward soon.
- Each individual project within the masterplan for the Creative Quarter had to be individually approved.
- In respect of reducing the amount of plastics used at events, the Council was examining how it could influence event organisers in a whole range of green policies and the Council was considering putting together a project team to look at this subject and how it could be incorporated into the events manual, mindful of the fact that there would be costs involved to do this.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Butler and the Head of Development Services for answering Members' questions.

### **82. Public Realm Contract Re-let Process**

The Committee considered a report from Neighbourhood Services which gave an update on the direction of travel of the renewal of waste and recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance contracts.

Members were pleased to note that a Members Working Group was now being set up to work on the contract re-let process.

The Contract Services Manager explained that to start, work would be done looking at the three current contracts to see what could be improved, reduced or changed to make things better. How success could be measured would be examined, for example, would recycling be looked at in terms of percentages. Warwickshire Waste Partnership was considering moving away from tonnages as a measure. The Working Group could discuss what measures would be used. Members would be involved with the specification stage, but the tender process would only be done by officers. At least 90% of the specification work had to be completed very quickly to publish notification of the tenders in the next few months; the Contract Services Manager reminded Members that the names of the Councillors who would sit on the Working Group were urgently required.

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

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Redford about whether the new contracts would include the grass verges maintenance in the rural areas, the Contract Services Manager explained that this would require liaison with the County Council to try secure continued funding for the District Council to do this work.

One of the main focusses would be to increase recycling, and the Council had engaged a consultant to look at the best scheme to collect recycling and then the results from this would mean examining what was the current method against what would be required to move to another method and the costs associated with this and what would be the benefit of changing.

The Contract Services Manager explained the issues that would impede working with other local authorities for a Warwickshire Collection and Disposal Service. Issues such as collection methods, economies of scales, collection rotas and timetables were listed as issues that would have to be settled before the adoption of one system could be considered. Individual district and borough councils were the collection authorities and the County Council was the disposal authority. Discussions had taken place with other authorities but there were differences in the services. For example, Warwick District Council was the only kerbside sorting collection for recycling whereas the others all had co-mingle collections. The District Council felt that kerbside sorting was the best method for recycling collection but the other authorities maintained that their method was best.

The Government had recently strongly advocated food waste collection, and the Contract Services Manager explained the implications this could have on collection frequencies and costs. He cautioned that the cost increases could be very significant, especially since the National Living Wage had been introduced since the last time contract for waste and recycling collection had been tendered. It was therefore important to be mindful of costs against needs.

The Chairman thanked the Contract Services Manager for answering Members' questions.

### **83. Student Housing Strategy Community Engagement**

The Committee considered a report from Housing which set out the findings of community engagement work, undertaken by WSA Community Consultants on behalf of the Council pursuant to the Student Housing Strategy. The report outlined the action plan for taking forward the recommendations of the project. The consultants ensured that the work was done impartially.

A main aim of the project had been to find out what support services the community needed to help the whole community to deal with large number of students. A lack of community between students and other residents had led to ill feeling and so the Council hoped to break down these barriers to bring about community cohesion.

Members were reminded that students living in the District were not just one group of people. Within this group you had people who attended the university, attended the college and people who had graduated but still lived in the District.

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

Members questioned what pressure the Council could apply to ensure the action plan was implemented by other bodies. The Housing Strategy & Development Manager explained that the Council could not force anyone else to act on the findings and recommendations. However, Coventry City Council had done something similar with the universities and it was working well.

Recommendation 1 in the Strategy report was questioned as to how this could be implemented. The Housing Strategy & Development Manager suggested that an accreditation system or Kitemark award for landlords could run on a similar system to the Food Standards system. This would mean that it would be easy to obtain information on good landlords and market forces would help sift out the bad. It might mean standards would rise.

Councillor Boad suggested that officers examine a previous system the Council had for rating good and bad landlords that had stopped and see if anything of value might be learned from the previous scheme. He was unsure as to why the previous system had stopped. He also suggested that officers should look at how tenants on low incomes could legally challenge landlords for sub-standard accommodation and if there was any support the Council could give.

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services, Councillor Phillips and the Housing Strategy & Development Manager for answering the Committee's questions.

### **84. Briefing Note: Follow-up to "Annual feedback on Outside Appointments" report – National Association of Councillors**

At Overview & Scrutiny Committee 27 November 2018, the Committee considered the annual reports of Councillors who represented this Council on Outside Bodies. Councillor Naimo, who was the representative on the National Association of Councillors was asked to seek further information on this Outside Body to justify her recommendation that there was no longer a need to subscribe to the National Association of Councillors.

Councillor Naimo, in liaison with the Principal Committee Services Officer, undertook further examination of the activities carried out by the organisation, and discovered that the events were held mainly in the north of England or London and that none of the District Council's own councillors had ever attended any of these or made any use of the services. The Local Government Association was their preferred organisation for these sort of services.

It was pointed out the figure quoted in 3.3 of the report, £883, was the gross subscription paid by the Council for annual membership of the National Association of Councillors. The Council reclaimed VAT.

Councillor Naimo advised that she had been informed that one years' notice was required to terminate membership.

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

**Resolved** that

- (a) it is recommended to the Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer that the Council no longer subscribes to the National Association of Councillors and that he takes appropriate action to end the membership; and
- (b) a representative is not appointed to the National Association of Councillors for the 12 months' notice period.

(The meeting ended at 8.40pm)

CHAIRMAN  
2 April 2019