

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 October 2011 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Gifford (Chair); Councillors Boad, Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Ms Dean, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Dhillon, Mrs Falp, Gill, Mrs Mellor, Weed and Wilkinson.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Blacklock, Davies and Mrs Higgins.

Councillor Weed substituted for Councillor Weber.

## 44. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minute number 45 – Executive Agenda (Non-Confidential Items and Reports – Wednesday 12 October 2011)

Councillors Dhillon and Mrs Mellor declared prejudicial interests in the Racing Club Warwick report as members of the Racing Club Warwick Board and left the room for this item.

Minute number 52 – Executive Agenda (Non-Confidential Items and Reports – Wednesday 12 October 2011)

Councillors Gifford and Wilkinson declared personal interests in the Fees and Charges report as members of Leamington Town Council.

Councillor Mrs Bromley declared a personal interest in the Charges for use of the Parks item because she was a Friend of St Nicholas Park.

## 45. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON- CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2011**

Item 8 – Racing Club Warwick

There was significant discussion on the report and the Committee were appreciative of the responses to questions from both the Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) and the Portfolio Holder.

The Committee recognised that the Council had accepted the surrender of the lease by Racing Club Warwick in good faith and that in this situation it had been correct to work with the Army Cadets and Air Training Corp to secure them a lease on Council land. The Committee also recognised the good working relationship that was in place between WDC, RCW and the Army Cadets and Air Training Corp prior to 2009 and that the planning application for the Army Cadets and Air Training Corp was submitted by RCW but the new trustees had now realised the limitations/restrictions this building placed on RCW and appeared to be trying to undo decisions of the previous trustees.

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

The Committee were mindful of the large amount of money the Council had contributed to the club in the last two years excluding the significant amount of specialist officer time to not only trying to resolve these issues but also in supporting the work of the club. The Committee were of the opinion that Racing Club Warwick had drawn a line in the sand and were unwilling to negotiate further. Although, they did welcome the fact that Racing Club Warwick had cleared all its outstanding rent and business rate payments with Warwick District Council as well as the outstanding invoice for remedial work following the dumping of grass cuttings in a scientifically sensitive area.

The Committee noted that the Council was trying to resolve these issues directly with the relevant parties and that there had been a significant number of meetings with other parties including the Town Council and specifically Warwick West Town Councillors.

The Committee were in agreement that the Council would want to see Racing Club Warwick return to the vibrant community organisation helping to improve the community of Warwick West and Warwick as a whole for the betterment of the district. The Committee were also mindful that Warwick West Ward was one of the most deprived Wards in the District and the Council had a duty to the whole community at large including the Army Cadets and Air Training Corp. In addition the Committee were of the opinion that Racing Club Warwick should have consideration not only for its own members but also to the wider community.

It is for these reasons the Committee were content with the report but felt a need to recommend to the Executive that the £120,000 be withdrawn from Racing Club Warwick. However this should be ring fenced for the use of or establishment of a community organisation in Warwick West because of the significant level of deprivation in this area.

### **46. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2011 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **47. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services which detailed the responses the Executive gave to the Committees' comments on the reports submitted to the Executive in September 2011.

The report was produced to create a dialogue between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and it ensured that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were formally made aware of the Executive's responses.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **48. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan which had been published for October 2011 to January 2012.

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

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

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

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services on the Committees' work programme for 2011.

Councillor Gifford informed the Committee that following the report from the Community Safety Team at the last meeting he had raised the matter with the Warwickshire County Council Overview & Scrutiny Board and the issue had been added to a new Task & Finish Group they had established looking at Mental Health. In addition the Community Safety Manager had been invited to participate in this review.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

(Councillor Dhillon left the meeting at the end of this item)

### **50. UPDATE ON JOINT MEMBER WORKING PARTY EXAMINATION OF TREE MAINTENANCE**

The Committee considered a report from Neighbourhood Services that updated the Committee on the implementation of recommendations of the Joint Task & Finish Group regarding the maintenance of trees and also outlined other issues relevant to these that were being considered.

Given the financial position that both Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council (WCC) were in there was little scope to increase investment in tree maintenance or planting. WCC had explained in detail that they could not increase the budget for further resources to deal with tree maintenance nor fund replacement highway trees.

Most of the recommendations of the Task & Finish Group had been implemented successfully and were detailed in the report. Those outstanding matters, the cyclical proactive maintenance regime and phased planting scheme, should only be considered once the major contract relet had taken place.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the WDC/WCC Joint Member Working Group, be suspended until the major contract relet cost is known in April 2012; and
- (2) the WDC member Group concludes its work with a final report before the end of 2011.

### **51. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The Committee considered a report from Development Services that updated the Committee on the progress to date on developing a Warwick District Economic Development Strategy, including the process and timeline to complete the project.

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

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **52. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON- CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2011**

#### **Item 4 – Fees and Charges**

The Committee felt that the main reasoning and decision making behind changes in car parking charges should not be to generate income but to stimulate economic benefit within the Town Centres in the District. The Committee had some concerns that not all responses to the consultation on the Car Parking charges had yet been received and encouraged the Executive not to make any recommendations on this area until these had all been received especially considering the decrease in footfall in Warwick which had led Warwick Town Council to reconsider their response.

The Committee also highlighted the Newbold Comyn charges for Senior Citizens and asked the Portfolio Holder, who was present, to investigate why a swimming ticket cost £2.40, a sauna £1.40 but for a combined Swim and Sauna ticket it cost £4.00.

#### **Item 5 – Charges for use of the Parks**

The Committee welcomed this report and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder who was present at the meeting made the following recommendations to the Executive :

Recommendation 2.3 should include the Head of Development Services and Development Services Portfolio Holder because of the need to consider the economic impact of any event as well as its cultural impact; and

Recommendation 2.4 should include a working party of four members, plus the portfolio holder to develop the hiring policy which should also include the Town Hall and Spa Centre. (If this recommendation was accepted Councillors Ms Dean, Ms De-Lara-Bond and Mrs Falp have agreed to be involved)

#### **Item 7 – Portfolio Holder Statements**

The Committee highlighted a number of areas where they felt they would appreciate further detail from the Portfolio Holder or Head of Service during the Shadow Portfolio Holder briefings. Following a discussion on this, they asked the Deputy Chief Executive (BH) to remind Heads of Service that any changes to these plans should be communicated to Shadow Portfolio Holders as soon as possible.

#### **Item 9 – Government Consultation on Draft Planning Policy Framework**

The Committee were appreciative of this detailed report and thanked the report author for all his work on this matter.

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

### **Item 10 – Coventry & Warwick Gateway Development Proposals**

The Committee were in agreement with the report. However, because of the potential wider impacts of this scheme not only across the district but also the sub region, the Committee felt the need to recommend to the Executive that the working party as set out in recommendation 2.7 of the report, should include a representative from all parties on the Council and accepted this may mean that the Conservatives wish to increase their membership on the Group.

### **Item 11E – Business Rates Retention**

The Committee welcomed the circulation of the responses to the consultation and appreciated that they had been circulated so late because of the detailed and technical nature of them it had originally been thought it would not be possible. However, for this reason they asked the Executive to allow members to submit their comments individually or by Group up to a deadline to be agreed with the Head of Service.

### **11F – Localisation of Council Tax Support**

The Committee welcomed the circulation of the responses to the consultation and appreciated that they had been circulated so late because of the detailed and technical nature of them it had originally been thought it would not be possible. However for this reason they asked the Executive to allow members to submit their comments individually or by Group up to a deadline to be agreed with the Head of Service.

In addition the Committee expressed an interest in assisting with the development of any policy which was required in the future, with regard to Council Tax support because of the potential impact this could have on the vulnerable members of the community.

(The meeting finished at 8.36pm)