

# **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 28 September 2009 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Gifford (Chair); Councillors Barrott, Boad, Coker, Copping, Gill, Mrs Higgins, Mrs Scarrott, Weed, White and Wilkinson.

(Councillor Barrott substituted for Councillor Mrs McFarland)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Blacklock, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Mrs Mellor and Mrs Sawdon.

## **35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **36. MINUTES**

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

## **37. HOMECHOICE ALLOCATIONS 2008**

The Committee considered a report from Housing Strategy which advised members on the implementation and effect of the HomeChoice Allocations Scheme 2008. The report also provided an overview of the draft statutory guidance on social housing allocations which had been published in July 2009 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

The Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme "HomeChoice" became operational in November 2005. The scheme had been reviewed following consultation with Members, housing applicants and a range of partner agencies within the District. A revised scheme had been approved by the Executive in March 2008 and was implemented in September 2008.

The main changes to the scheme were summarised in the report. The report also detailed the operation of the scheme, statistical information, responses to HomeChoice queries and the draft statutory guidance.

The Committee were satisfied with the content of the report and debated at length the various issues with regard to the allocation scheme. The members thanked Satnam Kaur, Head of Housing Strategy for her excellent report, and because the report was so detailed, it had avoided the need for further reports or a Task and Finish Group to be established.

### **RESOLVED that**

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) Satnam Kaur, Head of Housing Strategy be thanked for an excellent report.

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

### **38. PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that 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.

### **39. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON- CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2009**

#### **Additional Item - Housing Opportunities – Purchase of Midland Heart Limited Residential Accommodation**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendation in the report, but felt the Executive and officers should be cautious about entering into negotiations with Midland Heart Limited and should very carefully consider going any higher per unit, in any such negotiations, than the original amount set out in the report, due to the type and age of some of the properties.

### **40. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee considered a report from the Community Partnership Team on the progress which had been made with the implementation of the recommendations following the Engaging Young People Task and Finish Group.

Following the Executive's receipt of a petition in April 2008 calling on the Council to "conduct a review on how it engaged with young people on its day to day proceedings", a Task and Finish Group of non-Executive Members was appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2008, to scrutinise "engaging young people in our decision making processes".

The report detailed the background to the Task and Finish Group and how the 'Hear by Right' Standard contributed to the key objectives of the Council. In addition, appendix 1 to the report, also provided information on how the Task and Finish Group recommendations aligned with the 'Hear by Right' Standards and the way forward for achieving it. .

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) a report be submitted to the Committee in June 2010 detailing the outcome of the Peer Review on the progress of achieving the 'Hear by Rights' Standard; and
- 3) the Members who formed the original Task and

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

Finish Group, research and report back to the Committee, in June 2010, on the Youth Council's which exist around the country and how they operate.

### **41. FORWARD PLAN – OCTOBER 2009 TO JANUARY 2010**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan which had been published for October 2009 to January 2010.

The Committee discussed some of the items listed in the Forward Plan, but felt particularly strongly that a report should be submitted on whether or not the business case with regard to Oakley Wood had been met.

#### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the Forward Plan be noted; and
- (2) a report be submitted to the Committee in October 2009 with regard to Oakley Wood and whether or not the Business Case had been met

(Councillor Gill left the meeting during this item)

### **42. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services on the response the Executive gave to the Committees' comments on the reports submitted to the Executive on 29 August 2009.

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.

As part of the new scrutiny process, the Committee were no longer considering the whole of the Executive agenda.

On the publication day of the agendas for the previous meetings of the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee, all Councillors were emailed asking them to contact Committee Services, by 10.00am on the day of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Tuesday 28 August 2009, to advise which Executive items they would like the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to pass comment on.

As a result the Committee considered the items as detailed in appendix 1 to the report, and the response the Executive gave was also shown.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted and the Executive be encouraged to give more detailed responses to the Committees' comments.

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

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

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services on the Committees' work programme for 2009/2010.

At the Committees' meeting on 28 August 2009, it was agreed that the reports as listed in appendix 1 to the report, would be submitted to the meeting in September 2009.

Progress with Task and Finish Groups was as follows:

- (i) Royal Spa Centre Task and Finish Group – The Groups' final report was to be submitted to the Committee in September but had been put back to October 2009. The report would now be submitted to the Executive in November 2009.
- (ii) Maintenance of WDC Trees Task and Finish Group – The Group had met on four occasions. There had been two witness sessions, one with WDC officers and another with officers from Glendale. A further witness session with Warwickshire County Council was being held on 1 October 2009. Their final report would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2009 and the Executive in December 2009.
- (iii) Expenditure on Tourism Task and Finish Group – The Group was aiming to submit its report to the October meeting of the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee.

It was suggested by the Chairman that it may be useful to investigate a volunteering policy to assist those who were carrying out volunteer work and how they could engage with the Council. Members agreed that a report should be submitted to the Committee in March 2010.

It was also suggested that a report on the performance of Registered Social Landlord's which operated within the District would be useful to members. It was agreed that a report should be submitted to the Committee in February 2010.

**RESOLVED** that the following items be added into the Committees' work programme:

- 1) a report on Oakley Wood and whether or not the Business Case had been met – October 2009;
- 2) a report on the creation of a Volunteering Policy – March 2010;
- 3) a report on the performance of Registered Social Landlord's which operate within the District – February 2010;
- 4) a report be submitted to the Committee in June 2010 detailing the outcome of the Peer Review and the progress of achieving the 'Hear by Rights' Standard; and

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

- 5) the Members who formed the original Engaging Young People Task and Finish Group, research and report back to the Committee, in June 2010, on the Youth Council's which exist around the country and how they operate.

(The meeting ended at 7.50pm)