

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9 February 2016 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Boad (Chairman); Councillors Mrs Cain, Davison, D'Arcy, Edgington, Miss Grainger, Margrave, Naimo, Parkins and Mrs Redford.

Also Present: Councillors Grainger and Shilton.

61. **Apologies and Substitutes**

- (a) an apology for absence was received from Councillor Bromley; and
- (b) there were no substitutes.

62. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

63. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 1 December 2015 and 12 January 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

64. **Comments from the Executive**

The Committee considered a report from Democratic Services which detailed the responses the Executive gave to the comments the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made regarding the reports submitted to the Executive in January 2016.

Resolved that the report be noted.

65. **Portfolio Holder Update – Neighbourhood Services**

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Shilton, gave an update on Neighbourhood Services. In response to questions, he informed the Committee that:

- To ensure that there was not a re-occurrence of missed refuse collections over the Christmas period as had happened in 2015, meetings had been held with the contractor and shortfalls in methods used to retrieve collection dates from the information system had been addressed.
- Staffing positions proved difficult to fill because wage levels were low. The pay structure would need examination. Councillor Shilton stated that this was an issue in several departments and a corporate review was required.
- The refurbishment at the crematorium was now complete and an order had been placed for a generator. Further landscaping work was required and ways to accommodate parking for coaches inside the grounds were being evaluated.

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- The Council was working closely with Warwickshire County Council to improve recycling figures. Warwick District Council was one of the top performers for recycling. It was hoped to increase the number of people recycling food waste, but paper recycling figures had plateaued. Increasing food waste recycling would have to be done by encouragement and education and there were plans to start this in schools by getting children on-board.
- The Head of Neighbourhood Services informed Members that he would advise them when the advertising and signage contract was to be renewed.
- A group would be formed to review car parking charges and strategy. A meeting would be called to give out the relevant information on the way forward.
- A report from Sita would be forthcoming on improving recycling of cans. Currently this was worth £430,000 to the Council.
- The Council was working with Sita to reduce the waste collection failure rate which currently stood at 400 to 500 bins per month out of 4,000,000 waste collections a year. This level of failure was deemed acceptable. Reasons for failure to collect were varied as it could be Sita's error or the customer's. Normally the reason was simply that a bin had been missed. In these instances, it was not categorised as a complaint, but simply reported to Sita, which then was required to collect the refuse.
- More resources were required to address shortfalls in service handling phone calls, but to do this, pay levels required examination. The telephone answering service had moved in-house from last week. £500,000 had been saved simply by moving the service in-house.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Shilton for answering the questions.

66. Executive Agenda (Non-confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 10 February 2016

The Committee considered the following non-confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 10 February 2016.

Item number 3 – Waste Container Charging

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendations in the report but requested that monitoring take place on information such as the number of bins/boxes bought, number supplied; and whether recycling had increased/decreased. The Committee would be requiring a review in 12 months' time on the service.

(Councillor Shilton left the meeting.)

67. Portfolio Holder Update – Health & Community Protection

The Portfolio Holder for Health & Community Protection, Councillor Grainger, gave an update on Health & Community Protection. In response to questions, she informed the Committee that:

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- Warwick District Council was performing well in terms of food safety ratings, and its figures were above the national average. Within the District, there were few premises that fell below the acceptable standards.
- The Nuffield Health agreement (detailed in the report in point 7), would mean that the Council would receive payment for providing advice on food safety, health and safety and environment protection matters. The Council would be providing advice that would be nationally recognised and all other local authorities would take this on board.
- There was a requirement to monitor nitrogen dioxide particles and this requirement formed part of the Air Quality Action Plan. This monitoring provided long-term trends of all particles.
- The increase in the levels of recorded attacks of a sexual nature was down in part due to the fact that the Police had changed its way of recording the figures. This year would provide a base level against which the Council would be able to compare itself with other areas.
- The "Dementia Friendly" initiative would require staff training with the intention to have at least one member of staff trained in each department. It was also intended to look at the ways Council buildings could be adapted, but the main thrust of this for the Council's headquarters would take place when the new head office was built.

(Councillor Grainger left the meeting.)

68. Executive Agenda (Non-confidential items and reports) – Wednesday 10 February 2016

The Committee considered the following non-confidential item which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 10 February 2016.

Item number 8 – Design Guidance for the Strategic Urban Extension, South of Leamington Spa and Warwick (February 2016)

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed with the design guidance and considered it to be a good document. However, the Committee would like to see in practice higher housing densities where appropriate.

(Councillor Mrs Cain left the meeting during this item.)

69. The Impact of Letting Boards in Leamington Spa

The Committee considered a report that provided an analysis of information collated to establish whether there was a need for a Regulation 7 Direction to control the display of Letting Boards within parts of Royal Leamington Spa under the Terms of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 (as amended).

Councillors were pleased with the progress made in reducing the proliferation of signs and the Enforcement Manager undertook to write to letting agents in advance of the main lettings period (September) each year to remind them of the regulations and ensure that the issues of too many

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boards did not re-occur. She would speak to agents who tried to work around the regulations on an ongoing basis as the need arose.

Members were informed that the email address that had been set up to report contraventions of the regulations would be closed down and instead, residents would need to report these occurrences using planning.enforcement@warwickdc.gov.uk. She would be setting up an internal coding system to monitor these email notifications and she was asked to provide a report in 12 months' time to compare the trends against current figures.

Tara & Co, the main letting agent in the District had adopted a system of using QR scanning whereby people interested in letting a property could scan the QR code in the property window on their smart phone and it would then take them to a webpage with the property details. The Council would encourage other agents to use this system as it considerably reduced the need to use letting boards. However, the system could not be imposed on agents due to its costs.

Resolved that:

- (1) there is no current justification for a Regulation 7 Direction to control the display of Letting Boards;
- (2) it is noted that the Planning Enforcement Team will continue to address issues relating to any unauthorised boards as is currently the case, without the need for the imposition of any further measures;
- (3) the Council will write to letting agents prior to September every year to remind them of the regulations; and
- (4) instances of reported contravention of the regulations will be coded and analysed to report trends in 12 months' time against current figures.

70. **Review of the Work Programme & Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2016 and the Forward Plan. The Forward Plan published with the agenda had been superseded by an updated version within days of the agenda being issued. The updated version March 2016 to June 2016 was handed to Members at the meeting, and it was from this version that they worked.

Resolved that the following items are added to the Work Programme or amended:

- (1) an update on the Leamington Spa Town Centre Vision be provided at the next meeting, a short briefing note to go out with the agenda,

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- followed by a verbal briefing at the meeting and questions and answer session;
- (2) for the March meeting, Councillor Boad will provide a Scoping Document for a Task & Finish Group on a Parking Charges Review for approval if the Executive decided not to proceed with a working party;
 - (3) for the March meeting, Councillors Naimo and Davison will provide a report on work being done in respect of "Appointment of Leisure Management Operator – Forward Plan reference 771" to give advice to Members on when it is the appropriate time to schedule in scrutiny on the tender document; how the tender will be evaluated; content of the tender document; Passport to Leisure and surety of the clubs;
 - (4) for 28 June, a written report from HR on recruitment and retention of staff will be provided and will include what analysis is being done and options looked at, what work is being done to "Grow your own" staff and examples of where difficulties in recruitment are encountered;
 - (5) the review of the pre-application charging regime for development proposals be moved back to 28 June;
 - (6) issues surrounding waste management – service and complaints and analysis of the type of complaints and what is being done to reduce them be added to the Work Programme, date to be determined;
 - (7) Housing Strategy 2014-2017 to be added to the Work Programme, date to be determined once the Act has been changed;
 - (8) Council Development Company – Forward Plan Reference 727- be added to the Work Programme, date to be determined;
 - (9) Asset Management Strategy – Forward Plan Reference 641 – be added to the Work Programme, date to be determined;
 - (10) the review of the work undertaken by the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee be postponed to the third quarter of 2016/2017;

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- (11) housing adaptations for people with disabilities
– to consider whether to set up a Task & Finish Group to streamline the assessment process be removed from the Work Programme; and
- (12) review of Taxi Token scheme be removed from the Work Programme.

(The meeting finished at 9.50 pm)