

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13 December 2011 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.30p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Gifford (Chair); Councillors Mrs Blacklock, Boad, Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Weber, Weed and Wilkinson.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davies, Ms Dean, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Dhillon, Mrs Falp, Mrs Higgins, and Mrs Mellor.

Councillor Weed substituted for Councillor Gill.

62. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minute number 70, Item numbers 8 and 12 – Executive Agenda (Non-Confidential Items and Reports – Wednesday 14 December 2011- Retail Development in Leamington Town Centre, Part One and Part Two

Advice from Legal Services was explained in respect of declaring interests in Retail Development in Leamington Town Centre – Part One and Part Two. Councillors Boad and Gifford were advised to declare personal and prejudicial interests as members of the Executive who had taken decisions relating to this matter in 2004 and 2006.

Members of Planning Committee were advised to declare that role and state that they had not formed a view in relation to the planning merits and would approach the matter with an open mind when called to do so at the relevant Planning Committee. They were advised that pre-determination could be an issue if they made their views known at the meeting so non-participation might be the wiser course.

Councillors Boad and Gifford declared personal and prejudicial interests because they were members of the Executive and had taken decisions relating to this matter in 2004 and 2006. They both left the room whilst these items were discussed.

Councillors Mrs Blacklock, Brookes and Weed declared personal interests because they were members of Planning Committee.

Minute number 69, Item number 11 – Executive Agenda (Confidential Items and Reports – Wednesday 14 December 2011 – Allocation of budget to deliver Voluntary Sector Services in Warwick District 2012-2015

Councillor Boad declared personal and prejudicial interest because he was a Trustee of the chain "Crown Consortium" and left the room whilst this item was discussed.

Councillor Wilkinson declared personal and prejudicial interest because he was a Trustee of Brunswick Healthy Living Centre and left the room whilst this item was discussed.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

Minute number 70, Item number 14 – Executive Agenda (Confidential Items and Reports – Wednesday 14 December 2011 – Sale of Art Gallery

Councillor Gifford declared personal and prejudicial interest because one of the developers was a client of his wife and left the room whilst this item was discussed.

Minute number 69, Item number 15 – Executive Agenda (Confidential Items and Reports – Wednesday 14 December 2011 – Gypsy and Traveller Sites Update

Councillor Brookes declared a personal interest because the proposed site was in his ward.

63. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2011 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

64. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services which detailed the response the Executive had given to their comments regarding the reports submitted to the Executive in November.

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.

It was noted that these comments were very slightly different to those in the report because these had been produced before Councillor Coker's comments had been properly reported in the Executive minutes.

RESOLVED that the report be noted with Councillor Coker's comments included.

65. FORWARD PLAN

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

The Local Enterprise Partnership Planning Protocol shown in January had been postponed to February.

The date shown for "Publication Date of Agendas" in January should have shown 30 December 2012, not 2011.

The Play Area Review in February should have read "Councillor Shilton", not "Councillor Gallagher" in the "Contact Officer & Portfolio Holder" column.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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66. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a report from Civic and Committee Services on the Committee's work programme from December 2011 to April 2012.

It was noted that the draft policy for the Volunteering Task and Finish Group had been considered by Human Resources and was due to go to the Unions, but had been delayed by one week. Feedback was expected in early January.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

67. WORK THE COUNCIL IS UNDERTAKING TO DELIVER MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Committee considered the report and recommendations of Housing and Property Services. The report set out the work the Council was undertaking to increase the supply of affordable housing in the District. The report recommended that the Committee should note the progress the Council had made since 2010, in meeting affordable housing targets.

A Housing Needs Survey undertaken in 2011, identified an annual shortfall of 698 affordable homes. Part of the gap between need and potential future supply of affordable housing could be met by the Private Rented Sector (supported by Housing Benefit). Over the previous two years, this sector had housed 392 households per annum and it was likely to continue to play a role in doing so. However, even taking this into account, the supply of affordable housing was likely to fall short of identified needs. The report highlighted that much work had been done to address the shortfall in provision, and showed numbers of additional housing units in the pipeline.

Housing and Property Services was developing a five-point Partnership Plan which attempted to meet housing need through building more affordable housing, improving standards of accommodation in the private sector and reducing empty properties, reducing under-occupancy and assisting households who were unable to afford their mortgage repayments. The Service was achieving this through a number of initiatives including "W2" – Joint Venture Partnership between the Council and Waterloo Housing Group (WHG) and working in partnership with its Registered Providers (RP) Partners through the Joint Commissioning Partnership (JCP). In addition it was making the best use of existing council stock through the use of the Tenants Incentive Scheme and by bringing empty homes back into use and working in partnership with the recently established Private Sector Landlord Forum. With regards to a National Mortgage Rescue Scheme, officers were also working in partnership with Orbit Housing Group

"W2", the ten year joint venture between the Council and Waterloo Housing Group (WHG) had been formally agreed to deliver 300 affordable new homes over the next three years. The units delivered would be through a mixture of 100% affordable housing on Council owned land and through s106 agreements on new build developments.

The Joint Venture had been formally signed and site feasibility and development of sites was underway.

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Alongside "W2" the Council continued to work with its existing Joint Commissioning partners to deliver affordable housing.

The Council's partners were Jepson Housing, Orbit Housing Group, Waterloo Housing Group and Bromford Housing.

The Mortgage Rescue Scheme was a nationwide scheme which assisted households unable to afford their mortgage re-payments through no fault of their own, to sell their property to Orbit Housing Group and to remain in the property as an Orbit Housing tenant. Referrals to the scheme were made through the Council.

In 2010/11 the Council assisted five households to remain in their homes through the Mortgage Rescue Team. In addition, from 1 April 2011 to 13 December 2011, two households had been assisted through the scheme.

Members of the Committee discussed the report and received clarification from the Head of Housing and Property Services, Jameel Malik. One member felt that the rules of healthy competition had not been adhered to strictly enough. He felt that this might have hampered the bidding process but was assured that the information was available to all partners so there had been no exclusivity.

It was suggested that the policy could be revisited or re-examined in respect of under-occupied housing.

RESOLVED that progress the Council has made since 2010 in meeting affordable housing within the District be noted.

68. 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 paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below:

Minute No.	Para Nos.	Reason
69	3	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

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69. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2011

Item 15 – Gypsy and Traveller Sites Update

The Committee considered the report and made the following comments to the Executive:

The Committee was very concerned at the suggestion that money from the budget detailed in the report was going to be used. For this reason, the Committee recommended to the Executive that this money should not be used as a source of funding for providing the transit facility detailed in the report and alternative funding should be found.

The Committee also stated that they felt the transit site detailed in the report was a good location and encouraged the Executive to approve it.

Item 11 – Allocation of budget to deliver Voluntary Sector Services in Warwick District 2012-2015

Councillors Boad and Wilkinson left the room for this item because they had declared personal and prejudicial interests. Councillor Boad was a Trustee of the chain “Crown Consortium” and Councillor Wilkinson was a Trustee of Brunswick Healthy Living Centre.

The Committee considered the report and made comments to be considered by the Executive on the following day.

The Committee recognised how difficult the process had been and congratulated the team involved.

The Committee recommended to the Executive that all Councillors receive training for handling bids and potentially this could be provided by WCAVA.

In addition, the Committee added a review of the contracts to their Work Plan for December 2012 so they could assess the process and monitor how the contracts were operating.

70. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS) – WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2011

Item 4 – Technical Reform of Council Tax

The Committee considered the report and welcomed the flexibility that this provided to Local Government.

Item 8 – Retail Development in Leamington Town Centre – Part One

Councillor Boad and the Chairman, Councillor Gifford declared personal and prejudicial interests for this item because they were members of the Executive and took decisions relating to this matter in 2004 and 2006. They both left the room for these items.

RESOLVED that Councillor Wilkinson chair this item

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Mr Stephen Tebby, a local resident, speaking on behalf of Clarendon Residents, was invited to speak. He asked that the basis for the development be re-examined because the business plan put forward originally was out of date as the economic climate had changed considerably over recent years. Leamington Spa was faced with many empty shopping units and internet shopping was becoming more prevalent. Mr Tebby said that the Clarendon Residents intended to spend the first half of 2012 gathering the local residents' thoughts, hopes and plans.

The Committee recommended to the Executive that if there was a viable and suitable scheme going forward, that the Executive consider public engagement to enable mature debate on the retail benefits or otherwise for retail development.

Two members had concerns about public engagement, stating that this might be viewed as the Council spending money to convince the population to come around to its point of view.

The Committee agreed the nine recommendations in the report. However, on recommendation 2.8, two members did not agree with spending £60,000 for this purpose.

Councillors Boad and Gifford returned to the meeting.

Item 13 – Approval of Compensation Payment

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Item 14 – Sale of Art Gallery

Councillor Gifford declared personal and prejudicial interest for this item because one of the developers was a client of his wife.

RESOLVED that Councillor Boad chair this item

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

71. THE OPERATION OF THE COVENTRY, SOLIHULL & WARWICKSHIRE SPORTS PARTNERSHIP

Councillor Brookes gave a report on his meeting with council officers to learn more about the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sports Partnership (CSW Sport) to which Warwick District Council contributed.

The CSW Sports Partnership was made up of a range of partners, including local authorities from across Warwickshire. Warwick District Council contributed an annual sum of £4,100 to the partnership. In return, it received access to a range of services and funding stream which allowed development of sport in the District. The partnership provided good value for money to Warwick District, for example in the last year, the District had secured approximately £21,000 through working with CSW Sport on a range of different initiatives. These included Sport Unlimited funding for schools and clubs, subsidised coach workshops for volunteers, coach bursaries for local coaches and physical activity grants for local projects.

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It was estimated that approximately 10-15% of officer time was taken in working with the CSW Sport partnership on an annual basis on a range of projects and initiatives.

By contributing and working in partnership with CSW Sport, Warwick District Council had access to a body of sporting expertise and was kept informed of the latest initiatives and developments in the industry.

Councillor Boad commented that the initiative had proven good value for money with high returns for money invested.

(The meeting finished at 9.00 pm)