



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Development Services Scrutiny Committee
26 January 2010

<u>Item</u>
3B
Public

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2009

7.00 pm to 9.30 pm

Responsible Officer Martin Stevens

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Present: Mrs P A Dee, Mr E J Overall, Mr D Green, Mr C J Lea, Mr A N Mosley (Chairman) and Mr W Parr.

Mr D Roberts attended in his capacity as Portfolio Holder.

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Tudor Bebb, Mr Steve Davenport and Mr Geoff Davies. There were no substitutions.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to Mrs P A Dee's declaration of interest being amended to state that 'she declared a personal interest as a member of Shropshire Housing Alliance on item 8 – Budget Strategy 2010 -2011.'

4. Public Question Time

One public question had been received from Kate Anderson from the Campaign to Protect Rural England as follows:-

'Previous consultations on NWRR have included, in my opinion and that of green and local residents groups, biased and misleading questions. To avoid this could we be given the opportunity to comment on the consultation questions before they are finalised.'

In response the Director of Development Services stated that ultimately the questions would be agreed by the Council. If there was appropriate time to consult relevant stakeholders on the questions then this would potentially be undertaken.

5. Member Question Time

Mr Mansell Williams had served notice that he wanted to speak on item 11 – Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Strategy Progress Report and item 12 – Shrewsbury North West Relief Road – Outline plan for public consultation.

6. Portfolio Holder Report

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7. Work Programme

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8. Development Services Directorate – Performance Exception Report 2009 – 2010

- 8.1 The Assistant Director for Strategy and Development stated that the majority of service objectives were being met by the Directorate with the exception of national indicator 157 – planning applications. This had arisen because of IT and staffing issues which had resulted in delays affecting the process of validation of planning applications. The situation was however much improved and the team were progressing through the backlog of applications.
- 8.2 Members asked if there was any difference in performance between the north, central and south areas. In response the Assistant Director for Strategy and Development stated that when the Unitary Council's planning service had been designed, estimates had been made as to how much working capacity was required in each of the areas. Many of the difficulties had however been in the south area, where there had been some staff on sick leave and a large number of applications.
- 8.3 Members asked if all the problems with the computer systems had been resolved. The Assistant Director for Strategy and Development stated that not all of the problems had been resolved as many of them concerned updating data which was an ongoing process due to the sheer quantity of work required. Some of the staff that had been working in the Land Charges department could now work in the planning department to help with other work.
- 8.4 Members asked if the department had received many complaints because of the delays in processing planning applications. The Assistant Director for Strategy and Development stated that initially there had been many complaints but now there were relatively few with many compliments being received.
- 8.5 A Member stated that validation should take place as quickly as possible to enable the consultation period to be as long as possible.

RESOLVED: That the actions being taken to improve the underperformance for April – September 2009 be noted.

9. Shrewsbury Equalisation Plan for Street Cleansing Service

- 9.1 The Head of Environmental Maintenance introduced a report on the Shrewsbury Equalisation Plan for the Street Cleansing Service, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes. He stated that he was pleased to report a positive picture of street cleaning performance. Performance from 1 April 2009 until the end of September 2009 had been of a high standard and this was based upon a combination of both independent objective measures and management data.
- 9.2 The Head of Environmental Maintenance stated that Shropshire Council was planning to undertake a pilot in respect of the Keep Britain Tidy project. Additional resources had been allocated to litter picking and DEFRA had praised the Council's use of hand held PDA's. The staff were multi-skilled allowing service flexibility. New sweeping machines would be arriving in February and March of 2010 meaning there would be savings in maintenance costs and carbon emissions would be reduced. The investment of £550,000 to equalise service standards and performance had not all been utilised due to economies of scale.
- 9.3 Members asked if the Council had the capacity to deal with Ragwort. In response the Head of Environmental Maintenance stated that the Council did have the ability to deal with Ragwort and had in fact removed some in the Summer.
- 9.4 A Member referred to a problem of Detritus in cycle lanes in the Sutton area of Shrewsbury. The Head of Environmental Maintenance stated that the Council were responsible for their upkeep and targeted resources in the worst affected areas which were often in the town. They did have to be careful when taking vehicles on to cycle lanes that they did not make the problem worse by churning up the ground. He was happy to be notified of any areas of particular concern.
- 9.5 Members asked if the money which had been allocated for service equalisation, but had not yet been spent, would be redirected to another area. In response the Director of Development Services stated that the decision was still to be taken as to whether the money would be spent on the service. Money would not be used unnecessarily and it was a question of how much service improvement would result if further money was directed to the service.
- 9.6 A Member asked whether there was any machinery that could be utilised to remove chewing gum from pavements. In response the Head of Environmental Maintenance stated that there was machinery which was currently moving around the county. The machine did remove the greasy film off the pavements which could sometimes make the appearance look worse.
- 9.7 The Chairman referred to a GIS system that used to be operated by Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council which showed the areas that were being cleaned. He asked if a similar system could be introduced for the Council and be placed on the Council's Intranet system. In response the Head of Environmental Maintenance stated that one of the areas that worked well in the service was the ability to have operational flexibility. Schedules

were constantly being updated and changed. It would however be possible to explore the idea of placing something on the Intranet.

- 9.8 Members congratulated the street cleansing team on their excellent work in improving the service and their responsiveness to any issues that had been brought to their attention throughout the year.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the progress made to date in equalising the street cleansing service across Shropshire.

10. Shropshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Progress Report

- 10.1 The Policy Manager introduced a report on progress of the Shropshire Local Development Framework (LDF), a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes. The LDF occupied a key position among corporate documents linking the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Regeneration Prospectus and the Housing Strategy. The Council was legally required to prepare and maintain a Local Development Framework. They were still working to a timetable of March 2011 for the submission of the final plan. Since April 2009 an informal Joint Member and Officer Group had been meeting to discuss the LDF.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Committee note the progress to date on the LDF set against the background of re-organisation for the Unitary Council.

11. Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Strategy Progress Report

- 11.1 The Chairman asked Mr Mansell Williams, a Member of Shropshire Council, to speak on the item. Mr Williams referred to the problem of drain covers not being suitable for cyclists. He spoke about the West End Enhancements referred to in the report and asked for these to include pedestrian improvements particularly in the area of the riverside shopping centre. He stated that he hoped the Committee would support the establishment of a Shropshire Rail Group. One of the problems the County was currently facing was the overcrowding of the service from Shrewsbury to Birmingham.
- 11.2 The Chairman referred to on street car parking in Shrewsbury Town Centre. He stated that since parking enforcement had been relaxed there had been some parts in the Town Centre which had started to become a problem. He had seen cars parked in the bus lane between 8.30 am and 9.30 am which had caused disruption to the flow of traffic.
- 11.3 A Member stated that a pedestrian facility was crucial by the Sorting Office in Shrewsbury.
- 11.4 The Chairman stated that progress was required on the Dana footbridge link. He suggested that the Council could expedite the process by submitting a planning permission application on behalf of Shropshire Horticultural Society.
- 11.5 A Member stated that the development of the pedestrian link from Abbey Foregate to Rail Station Link was important and he hoped that this could be established in the not too distant future. In response the Director of

Development Services stated that he supported the plan and had recently been speaking to the County's Rail Officer about the proposal.

12. Shrewsbury North West Relief Road Consultation

- 12.1 The Head of Major Projects introduced a report on the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road - outline plan for consultation, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes. He stated that the consultation was seeking opinions from all interested parties but would be focussed on areas most directly affected by the scheme in Shrewsbury and surrounding areas. This did not mean people outside of these areas would be excluded but exhibitions etc would be concentrated in and around Shrewsbury.
- 12.2 Mr John Tandy speaking from the public gallery expressed concern that the North West Relief Road consultation might take place during the General period. The Director in response stated that it was possible that the consultation exercise would have to wait until after the election depending on when the election was called.
- 12.3 A Member asked if interested groups could hand out their own literature at North West Relief Road consultation exhibitions. The Director of Development Services in response, stated that he would seek advice on the issue.
- 12.4 The Chairman asked Members if they thought a special scrutiny meeting as part of the consultation process would be appropriate.

RESOLVED:

- A) That a Special Scrutiny meeting be held as part of the consultation process and for interested parties to be invited.
- B) That the report be noted.

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....