



Place Overview
Committee

19 February 2020

10.00 am

Item

3

Public

**MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16
JANUARY 2020
10.00 - 11.50 AM**

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend
Email: sarah.townsend@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257721

Present

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)
Councillors Andy Boddington, Rob Gittins, Simon Harris, Paul Milner (Vice Chairman),
Pamela Moseley, Paul Wynn and Nicholas Bardsley (Substitute) (substitute for Dan
Morris)

43 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dan Morris. Councillor
Nicholas Bardsley was in attendance as his substitute.

44 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on
any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the
room prior to the commencement of the debate.

45 Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th November 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2019 were confirmed as a correct
record, subject to the inclusion of WSP being unable to attend the meeting in minute
39.

46 Public Question Time

One question was received from a member of the public.

From: Ms Susan Coleman. Ms Coleman was in attendance to ask her question in
relation to enforcement arrangements for pavement permits, A boards and pavement
advertising. A full copy of the question and response provided is attached to the web
page for the meeting and also attached to the signed minutes.

47 **Member Question Time**

There were no questions from members.

48 **Budget Scrutiny**

The Director of Place was in attendance to present this item, which provided members with information concerning the Place Directorate budget and proposed savings to be delivered in 2020/21. He explained that the proposed savings to be delivered totalled £7,471,490 and of this, £3,900,000 were new savings. A copy of these new savings was circulated to the committee (copy attached to the signed minutes) and members were taken through each of them in turn.

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance was also in attendance to provide an update on the financial position for the Council, as detailed in the 16th December 2019 Cabinet report.

Councillor Simon Harris declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the New Model for Temporary Housing, as he was the Chairman of Shropshire Towns and Rural (STAR) Housing and had been involved in working on the new model.

Councillor Simon Harris also declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the Shrewsbury Park & Ride as he had previously been the Deputy Portfolio Holder for Transport.

Responding to questions from the committee, the Director of Place explained:

- He would be happy to provide the committee with quarterly budget scrutiny updates, in order that they could be informed of the progress regarding meeting agreed budget savings. The Chairman requested that this be added to the committee's work programme.
- The new model for temporary housing would involve the Council working more closely with STAR Housing.
- A councillor expressed disappointment that, whilst it was proposed that the Shrewsbury Park & Ride strategy be reworked, other parts of the county had not been considered. The Director of Place commented that the reworking of Shrewsbury Park & Ride was much needed. However, everything was under review.
- There are 18,000 street lamps within Shropshire and energy efficiencies would be made from the installation of LED street lighting. The work would take three years to complete and all Town and Parish Councils had received information regarding this via SALC.
- In June 2019, Kier had a backlog of 3,500 jobs. In November 2019, this had decreased to 700 jobs. However, the backlog had since risen and currently stood at 2,700 jobs, with periods of heavy rain and flooding being cited as the main problem. The Director of Place commented that conversations had taken place with Kier at the highest levels and it had been demanded that a plan of action be put in place to improve performance.
- There was a two year guarantee on pothole repairs.

- The members' portal would be activated by the end of the financial year, which would allow issues to be reported and progress to be tracked.

A question was asked regarding the Council's reserves and the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance replied that he would look into the position and reply to the councillor direct.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Place for his update.

49 **Signs, Banners and Bunting Task and Finish Group**

The Committee received the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, which concluded the work of the Signs, Boards and Banners Policy Task and Finish Group. The report outlined the issues that Shropshire Council faced regarding a number of street scene issues and made several recommendations.

The Transactional and Licensing Team Manager and the Network Co-ordination and Compliance Manager were also in attendance for this item.

In relation to the table detailing the pavement or café permit charges in selected local authorities (page 15 of the report), a question was asked as to why only eleven local authorities were detailed and none of these were in close proximity to Shropshire. It was felt that it would be interesting to know what neighbouring authorities such as Telford & Wrekin and Hereford charged. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that the local authorities that had been included within the report were the ones that published their charges online.

Members felt that further discussion was needed concerning A Boards and a potential new policy for the local authority. Concerns were raised regarding associated costs, enforcement and insurance issues. The importance of supporting the high street was also emphasised.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that there were a few amendments that had been received from the Trading Standards and Licensing Operations Manager and the Network Co-ordination and Compliance Manager, which needed to be incorporated into the report.

RESOLVED:

That another meeting of the Signs, Boards and Banners Policy Task and Finish Group be arranged to take place in mid-February 2020, in order to address the concerns raised by the committee in relation to A Boards and to incorporate the further amendments that had been received into the report.

50 **Shrewsbury Shopping Centres**

The Assistant Director Economic Growth was in attendance to provide a verbal update on the development of the council-owned shopping centres in Shrewsbury. It was noted that two member briefing sessions had been held prior to the 19 December 2019 Council meeting.

Refurbishment to the Darwin Shopping Centre would commence in March 2020 and was due to be completed by the summer. The mid-level mall would be brought up to modern standards with the customer toilets being refurbished and the lighting and flooring being addressed. Skechers shoe shop would shortly be opening and the Disney Store, which had a short term let, was due to close on 25 January 2020.

Nationally, high street footfall for December 2019 was 6.7% lower than the previous year. Within the Shrewsbury area, it was 5.1% down. Footfall in the Darwin Shopping Centre was 5% down and in the Pride Hill Shopping Centre, it was 12.6% down. The Pride Hill Shopping Centres footfall was attributed to the vacant units and particularly, the closure of Next.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director Economic Growth explained that the Council had bid for government funding for Oswestry and Shrewsbury town centres, but were unsuccessful. It was thought that this was likely down to other town centres across the country having a greater need.

A question was asked regarding whether any element of the Riverside redevelopment would be residential and the Assistant Director Economic Growth responded that a meeting had been held to look at the optimum uses of the Riverside Shopping Centre. A range of uses would be considered, with residential use being one of them and how to best make use of the river frontage would also need to be thought through.

The Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance was in attendance to provide information regarding the financial position of the shopping centres. He explained that the centres were bought for an economic regeneration purpose and using cash in the Council's account that would have otherwise been invested in bank and building societies and would have made a lower return. Members were informed that if the value of the shopping centres continued to fall, this would be a cause for concern. However, with the proposed investment that had been outlined, it was expected that the value would increase.

It was noted that an announcement was still awaited concerning Business Rates retention.

The Chairman thanked officers for their update.

51 Work Programme 2020

The committee's work programme for 2020 was noted and members were informed that a meeting of the Signs, Boards and Banners Policy Task and Finish Group had been arranged for Thursday, 13th February 2020 commencing at 2.00 pm.

52 Date/Time of Next Meeting of the Committee

Members noted that the next meeting of the Place Overview Committee meeting was scheduled for 10.00 am on Wednesday, 19th February 2020.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: