

Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 September 2010

Present:-

Members of the Committee	Councillor Sarah Boad “ Richard Chattaway “ Barry Lobbett “ Mike Gittus “ Phillip Morris-Jones “ Martin Shaw “ Ray Sweet “ John Whitehouse (Chair) “ Chris Williams
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Other County Councillors	Councillor Alan Cockburn (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economy) Councillor Richard Hobbs (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety) Councillor June Tandy
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Officers	Hugh Disley, Head of Service Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator Michelle McHugh, Overview and Scrutiny Manager Kate Nash, Head of Community Safety and Localities Jim Onions, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
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1. General

(1) Appointment of Vice-Chair

Councillor Mike Gittus, seconded by Councillor Martin Shaw, proposed that Councillor Chris Williams be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

A vote was taken and it was resolved that Councillor Chris Williams be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

(2) Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Jeff Clarke.

(3) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

(4) Remit of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The remit of the Committee was noted and the Chair stated that due to the broad remit, the Committee would have to be selective about topics for the work programme, with some flexibility built in through the task and finish groups.

(5) Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 June 2010

Noted.

(6) Chair's Announcements

The Chair informed the meeting that Item 5 (Youth Justice Service Report on Reduction of Re-offending) would be considered before Item 4 (CARP) as Hugh Disley had another meeting to attend.

The Chair reminded Members they had received an e-mail relating to the Warwickshire Hub on 2 September and as outlined in that e-mail, members of the Partnership and Performance Unit would be in the ante chamber after the meeting for drop in training.

4. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

5. Questions to the Portfolio Holder

The Chair requested a note to be sent to Cllr Hayfield, Portfolio Holder of Customers, Workforce and Partnerships setting out future dates for the Communities O&S meetings.

Councillor Richard Hobbs

1. Councillor Hobbs stated that he had been appointed as lead member from the LGA on the Project Board looking at Regional Fire Control Centres, which was attended on occasion by the relevant Ministers. He added that Bob Neil, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for Fire and Resilience was expected to make announcement on Regional Fire Control Centres in the near future to set out the way forward.
2. In response to a query regarding the cost to the County Council of the empty Fire Control Centre buildings that were standing empty, Councillor Hobbs noted that on legal advice Warwickshire had not signed a lease and the costs were being

picked up by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

3. In response to a question regarding the possibility of realising savings made from regional control and the new CARP vehicles, it was noted that the savings associated with the CARPs had been realised some years ago. Councillor Hobbs added that he was the lead member on the Project Board looking and efficiency and savings for Warwickshire, and a question for the Council in the future would be whether certain services could be run more efficiently by making greater use of partners.
4. Councillor Hobbs undertook to take advice before providing an update on the Atherstone-on-Stour situation.

Councillor Alan Cockburn

1. In response to a question regarding the final cost to the County Council of the Rugby Western Relief Road and the accountability for the overspend, Councillor Cockburn noted that the full costs were not yet clear. The Chair noted that a special meeting to consider this issue was being arranged for the end of November, and the Committee would be able to scrutinise the issues in greater depth at that meeting.
2. Councillor Cockburn stated that gritting remained a top priority for the County Council. The Chair reminded Members that this item would be considered at the 3 November meeting.
3. Councillor Cockburn undertook to e-mail to members of the Committee proposals to regenerate Bedworth Town Centre.
4. It was noted that the Advantage West Midlands would cease to operate from April 2012. Government has asked all Local Authorities to form Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to replace Regional Development Agencies, comprising 50% business leaders and 50% Local Authority representatives with an independent business chair. Details of powers and resourcing had not been received, but the LEPs would concentrate on economic development work.
5. In response to a question regarding the objectives of joint working group set up with Warwick District Council to look at tree maintenance, Councillor Cockburn noted that this was being done to find more effective, efficient ways of carrying out this work. Michelle McHugh confirmed that this was not a scrutiny review. The Chair recommended that a report back by the working group to the Warwick Area Committee would be appropriate.

The Chair thanked Councillors Cockburn and Hobbs for their responses.

4. Combined Aerial Rescue Platform (CARP)

The Committee received a presentation from Jim Onions, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer setting

out in detail the capabilities of the new CARP appliances and addressing the criticism that had appeared in the press recently.

The Chair thanked Jim Onions and Gary Phillips for their detailed presentation on the equipment that had been purchased. He summed up the discussion with the following points:

- (i) Members were confident that the equipment that had been purchased was appeared to be fit for purpose and would enhance the Warwickshire Fire Service. This would need to be confirmed by actual operating experience following the CARPs' introduction into active service.
- (ii) The Committee requested a progress report at an appropriate time in the future on the performance of the CARP equipment.
- (iii) In terms of the procurement process, comments on the commissioning in terms of specifications nationally were taken on board. There were, however, common themes within the procurement process that had more general application such as project management and deadlines, and lessons needed to be learnt in these areas.
- (iv) Members welcomed the offer of regular briefings/training sessions to be provided by the Fire Service twice a year and requested that the first of these be held before the next meeting.
- (v) Members offered their full support to the Fire and Rescue Service in assisting in any way to counter the bad and inaccurate publicity.

5. Youth Justice Service Report on Reduction of Re-offending

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families outlining the excellent performance of the Warwickshire Youth Justice Service (WYJS) in achieving the stated objectives of prevent youth crime and reducing re-offending of those young people who have committed offences.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

1. Hugh Disley agreed to provide to Members;
 - a briefing note setting out the offending rates in detail, including numbers and percentages.
 - confirmation of the information given in the report on the reduction in the number of offenders and the status quo of offences, which appeared to be contradictory.
 - a briefing note on responses received by victims in relation to restorative justice and evidence of the actual effectiveness of restorative justice and whether any community benefit was actually achieved.
 - a briefing setting out detailed responses to the questions put forward by Michelle McHugh.
2. Youth Justice Boards were under review nationally and the biggest threat to Warwickshire was a potential loss of the grant

to the Youth Justice Board. Hugh Disley added that while funding was guaranteed for the rest of this financial year, no details were known for 2011/12.

3. There were increasing numbers of youth offenders with mental health issues (current figures showed 54 out of 128 offenders had mental health issues), and this showed that the decision to merge all children and young people services into one Directorate had been a good choice.
4. Early intervention in managing behaviour was crucial to all services.
5. The introduction of the Safer Schools Partnership, where Police Community Support Officers were working with schools, had seen a marked difference in behaviour both in school and around communities. Members agreed that there needed to be more research done to measure the impact of this initiative on a longer term basis.
6. For young people under the age of 16 remanded on bail or placed with specialist foster carers, the County Council was responsible for covering costs (approximately £1,500 a week each) until the youth was placed in a Youth Offending Institution.

The Chair thanked Hugh Disley and Councillor Richard Hobbs, congratulating the service on the results achieved. He added that the Committee would like to see a report in the future setting out the impact of current changes to services, taking into account the labour-intensiveness of the work and the number of families involved, and how these impacts could be minimised.

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to:

- i. note the report and the current YJB rated performance of “excellent” for Warwickshire Youth Justice Service with regard to reducing re-offending and the effectiveness of the interventions delivered by the Service.
- ii. take into account the potential risks resulting from the current economic climate and reduction in funding to the Youth Justice Service.

6. Committee Work Programme and suggested topics for Task and Finish Groups

The Committee noted the Forward Plan Items.

It was agreed that the starting time for the meeting on 3 November would be moved from 2.00 pm to 10.00 am with a working break for lunch.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

1. HS2 - A report had been requested for the November meeting on HS2 to look at the proposed project rather than the proposed route and to look at the start of the process for the Council.
2. Fire and Rescue Improvement Plan - This report was to outline the dependencies contained with the Improvement Plan, many of which were actions undertaken to carry out the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).
3. Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones stated that the state of the economy should feature more significantly within the work programme, as well as the support for medium and large companies and existing businesses. The Chair noted that there were a number of items scheduled dealing with Economic Development and that while the Committee had to ensure that they could add value, there would be plenty of opportunity to introduce new items to the work programme.
4. A balance needed to be maintained between Holding the Portfolio to Account, Overview items and Policy Review and Development.

Members agreed that the two Task and Finish Groups that should be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for consideration were:

- Support for New and Small Businesses, with a redefined scope to encompass the whole economic development scene.
- Alcohol Control – Review of Licensing across the County, working with District and Borough Councils, and delayed start until the regulatory changes to licensing powers were enacted.
- Skills Agenda.

Members agreed that the revised Support for New and Small Businesses and the Alcohol Control Task and Finish Groups should take priority over the Skills Agenda.

Members agreed that in light of the above a Task and Finish Group on the Public Realm was not a priority and should not be forwarded to the Board.

7. Any Other Items

None.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 4.15 p.m.