

The Corporate Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee met at the Shire Hall, Warwick on the 1 June 2010.

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Martyn Ashford
 Richard Chattaway
 Chris Davis
 Jim Foster
 Peter Fowler
 Mike Gittus
 Brian Moss
 Chris Saint (in the Chair following election)
 Dave Shilton
 David Wright
 Clive Rickard

Other Councillors

Councillor Colin Hayfield, Lead Portfolio Holder for Customers, Workforce and Governance
Councillor Martin Heatley, Lead Portfolio Holder for Resources
Councillor Richard Hobbs, Lead Portfolio Holder for Community Safety
Councillor Peter Butlin, Support Portfolio Holder for Workforce and Partnership.
Councillor June Tandy, Group Leader (Labour)

Officers: Warwickshire Police

DCC Andy Parker
ACC Neil Bunton

Customers, Workforce and Governance

David Carter, Strategic Director
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator
Kate Nash, Head of Community Safety and Localities
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer

Fire and Rescue Service

Graeme Smith, Chief Fire Officer

Resources Directorate

Tonino Ciuffini, Head of ICT

Environment and Economy Directorate

Roger Newham, County Transport Planner

1. General

(1) Election of Chair

Councillor Peter Fowler, seconded by Councillor David Wright, proposed that Councillor Chris Saint be appointed Chair of the Committee.

Resolved that Councillor Chris Saint be appointed Chair of the Committee.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed ACC Neil Bunton to his first meeting of the Committee following his appointment to Warwickshire Police and DCC Andy Parker and CFO Graeme Smith.

(2) Election of Vice Chair

Councillor Dave Shilton, seconded by Councillor Jim Foster, proposed that Councillor Mike Gittus be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee.

Resolved that Councillor Mike Gittus be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee.

(3) Apologies.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Martin Shaw, Jim Graham, Chief Executive and DCFO Glen Ranger.

(4) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

(5) Remit of Corporate Services and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee's remit, as agreed by Council on 23 June 2009, was noted.

A Member commented that the remit for this Committee was too wide and, coupled with the reduction in the number of meetings, meant that there was insufficient time to carry out its work. Other Members agreed with this view and also commented that the change in Portfolio Holders' remits and the establishment of Support Portfolio Holders was confusing. Reference was made to the review of the Overview and Scrutiny function that was shortly to be carried out and Members agreed that they would raise their concerns when this was debated at Council. Members acknowledged the need for a review but suggested that whatever system was introduced, provided it was properly resourced, it would work.

(6) Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2010 be approved and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

(7) Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Board

None

(8) Chair's Announcement

None

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

None

3. Portfolio Holders' Question time

Councillor Martin Heatley, Portfolio Holder for Resources, in reply to questions in respect of the following issues, said that –

(a) Rugby Western Relief Road

This issue was the responsibility of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Economy (Councillor Alan Cockburn) but he would ensure that Members were provided with an update of the position as soon possible. Councillor David Wright said that he was a member of the Western Relief Road Board and that the issue was near to a conclusion.

(b) Future use of the Courts and Judges House

An email would be circulated to all Members updating them on the proposals for future use of the Courts, Judges House, Northgate Street and The Butts properties inviting comment prior to a report to Cabinet and Council.

(c) Property Portfolio

Councillor David Wright expressed concern that, despite an expectation that scrutiny of the Council's property portfolio would take place 12 months previously, this had not been done. Notwithstanding the Vanguard management training that senior officers had undertaken 3 years previously decision making within the Council was too slow. Councillor Heatley acknowledged that progress on scrutinising the Council's portfolio had been slow and said he would ensure that the Chief Executive and senior officers were made aware of the need to move at a greater speed on this issue.

With regard to Smallholding properties, which again were Councillor Cockburn's portfolio, a review of rents was ongoing and a review of land and buildings to identify properties that were redundant and premises sold rather than retained was being undertaken.

Councillor Colin Hayfield, Portfolio Holder for Customers, Workforce and Governance and Councillor Peter Butlin, Support Portfolio Holder for Workforce and Governance, in reply to questions said that –

- (1) Customer access to council services was working well but there was scope for improvement;
- (2) With regard to partnership working and Locality Forums – Councillor Hayfield said he would be in a better position to report to the next meeting on this issue;
- (3) With regard to mystery shopping exercises David Carter explained that extensive mystery shopping exercises had been carried out in the past and the results reported to committee but these had been reduced and increasingly feedback from customers had been relied on.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, in reply to questions, said with regard to -

- (1) Sale of alcohol to young people – that a Government Directive was awaited on this issue but acknowledged that the main difficulty was young people obtaining alcohol from home or being supplied by other people.
- (2) Fitting and checking of smoke detectors - work was on going with this initiative but expanded to include other appliances and was being progressed by the Fire and Rescue Service working in partnership with other agencies;
- (3) Preventing the distress caused by fireworks - Trading Standards had undertaken work to prevent underage sales, had identified “hotspot” areas and working with PCSOs had raised awareness of the hazards of fireworks through the schools safety programme;

The Committee thanked the Portfolio Holders for their updates.

4. Fire and Rescue Service Update on Service Improvement Plan Consultation

Councillor Richard Hobbs said that the outcome of the consultation and Improvement Plan would be reported to July Council when Members would have the opportunity to debate the recommendation proposed. A draft report setting out the proposals would be circulated to party leaders by the beginning of July.

Appointment of Deputy CFO

Councillor Hobbs reported that Gary Phillips currently with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service had been appointed to replace Glen Ranger as Deputy CFO with effect from the first week in August.

5. Report On Progress within Warwickshire Direct

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Customers, Workforce and Governance which set out to appraise members on progress

within Warwickshire Direct – incorporating telephone, face to face and electronic service delivery.

The key messages included:

- A summary of activity to date to implement the alignment of all customer facing channels in line with the One Front Door initiative
- Details of partnership activity and initiatives in support of the Customer Service and Access strategy
- Description of service activity and performance

In reply to questions Kushal Birla said that –

- (1) Discussions had taken place with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) about relocating the One Stop Shop to the Council House but this had not proved possible because of lack of space. NBBS would, however, be relocating their Customer Service Centre to Kings House, Bedworth;
- (2) The Police enquiries service provided from Warwick One Stop Shop should not be seen as a substitute for uniformed police. One Stop Shop staff only provided answers for the “most frequently asked questions”;
- (3) Poor performance in connection with Warwick District Council switchboard enquiries was being addressed by speeding up the integration of both the County Council and Warwick District Councils’ switchboards and by addressing the high staff turnover which had also contributed to poor performance.

Members commended and congratulated Warwickshire Direct on its service and initiatives and supported its improvement plan proposals.

6. Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan: End of Year Progress Report.

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director, Customers, Workforce and Governance which provided Members with an update on progress made in relation to the 2009-10 anti-social behaviour action plan.

During discussion the following comments were noted:

- (1) That the progress made in tackling anti social behaviour was welcomed and the further work outlined in the report supported;
- (2) That promoting public confidence was still an issue that needed to be addressed;
- (3) That there was need for improvement in response to telephone calls requesting Police assistance;
- (4) That, whilst incident numbers had reduced, it was considered that 400 incidents per week was still too high;
- (5) Members questioned whether the reduction in the number of incidents could be sustained and whether there was still an under reporting of crimes;
- (6) That the public had a mixed understanding of Police Community Support Officers’ (PCSOs) powers and responsibilities.

In reply to the above Councillor Hobbs said that –

- (1) The Police Confidence Board had agreed a range of initiatives to build public confidence. These initiatives included engagement with the community by recruiting volunteers to work with the Police to ensure that the community aware of what was happening in their areas. The public was also being encouraged to report all crime;
- (2) The action taken by some communities involving and engaging young people had helped to reduce anti social behaviour in those areas;
- (3) Information was available about Safer Neighbourhood Teams' performance and Members had previously been circulated with the details of PCSO's powers. He was confident that the powers were right and that they were doing a good job
- (4) He welcomed Members comments and said he was confident that with the engagement of the local community and identification of "hot spots" that anti-social behaviour could be reduced.

Kate Nash added that Community Forums were actively promoting the need to report all crime and pushing up crime figures rather than there being an increase in under-reporting of crime.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments and the debate which he considered had been very helpful. .

7. Provisional Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items Relevant to the work of this Committee

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee noted the table setting out provisional items for future meetings.

(b) Forward Plan Items Relevant to the work of this Committee (Cabinet only)

The Committee noted the County Council and Cabinet Forward Plan items relevant to the work of this Committee.

The Chair commented that this was likely to be the last meeting of the Committee in the light of the proposal to change the Council's Overview and Scrutiny structure. Discussion followed during which the following comments were noted:

- (1) That any proposal should driven by non-executive members or the Overview and Scrutiny Board;
- (2) That the current structure had not worked because it was under-resourced and lacked member engagement;
- (3) That any change should have cross-party support and engage back-bench members.
- (4) That the Rugby Borough Council scrutiny function should be seen as working well and a good model.

8. Any Other Items

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Glen Ranger

Councillor Richard Hobbs reported that Deputy Chief Fire Officer Glen Ranger had recently been appointed to the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service. He said that DCFO Ranger was well respected for the work he had undertaken for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service which had been excellent and said that the promotion was well deserved.

The Committee endorsed the above comments and thanked DCFO Ranger for his good work with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and wished him well in the future.

The Committee rose at 4.20 p.m.

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Chair of Committee