

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Shire Hall, Warwick on 31 August 2011

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Richard Chattaway
Councillor Michael Doody
Councillor Mike Gittus
Councillor Barry Lobbett
Councillor Tilly May
Councillor Chris Saint (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ray Sweet
Councillor Helen Walton
Councillor John Whitehouse (Chair)

Other County Councillors

Councillor Alan Cockburn (Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Communities)
Councillor Peter Butlin (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways)
Councillor Richard Hobbs (Portfolio Holder for Community Safety)
Councillor Martin Shaw
Councillor June Tandy

Officers

David Abbott, Democratic Services Officer
Graeme Fitton, Head of Service – Transport & Highways
Glenn Fleet, Manager – Waste Management
Monica Fogarty, Strategic Director – Communities Group
Dave Hill, Economic Strategy Adviser
Andy McDarmaid, Improvement and Development Manager
Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Janet Purcell, Manager – Democratic Services
Phil Sawbridge, Head of Service – Safeguarding
Louise Wall, Head of Service – Sustainable Communities

There were no members of the public in attendance.

1. General

(1) Apologies

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Colin Hayfield. Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillor Chris Saint and Councillor Helen Walton.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

(3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair reminded the Committee that the next meeting had been moved to the morning of 10 October to give the opportunity to scrutinise the Libraries report before it goes to Cabinet on the 13 October.

(4) Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2011

The minutes agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chair.

(5) Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2011

The following changes to the minutes were agreed (amended text is underlined):

Page 2 – Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

“Councillor Michael Doody declared a personal interest as an executive board member of 51M and as lead member on Warwick District Council”

With the addition of these changes, the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Pages 6 and 7 – Alcohol Implementation Plan: Progress Report

Councillor Richard Hobbs informed the Committee that he would be presenting the Alcohol Implementation Plan to the next meeting of the Community Safety Partnership. The meeting will take place on the 14 September and will involve representatives from Health, Probation, Youth Justice and other agencies looking at prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

The Portfolio Holder agreed to update the Committee on any outcomes following the meeting.

The Chair proposed that the Committee referred the Alcohol Implementation Plan to the Adult Social Care & Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their information.

2. Public Question Time (Standing Order 34)

None

3. Questions to the Portfolio Holders

3.1 Decriminalised Parking Enforcement in Nuneaton

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked if it is correct that there will be a delay in implementing decriminalised parking enforcement in Nuneaton.

Graeme Fitton explained that there was a delay from the Department of Transport of two to three weeks; consequently the lead-in time for implementing Decrim will be pushed back a few weeks.

3.2 Road Safety Figures

Councillor Barry Lobbett, referring to page 5 of the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2011, asked what had accounted for the 'significant increase in fatalities in Nuneaton and Bedworth'.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the discussion in the minutes was in reference to a well known problem. A number of actions have already been taken, the local member has been consulted, and traffic calming measures have been put in place but driver behaviour remained a problem.

3.3 The Rowan Centre, Atherstone

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked again what will happen to the Rowan Centre in Atherstone. This information was first requested in the meeting held on the 30 June 2011 but there had been no reply.

Councillor Colin Hayfield was asked to bring an answer back to the Committee.

3.4 Sprinkler Systems in WCC Buildings

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked how many WCC buildings don't currently have sprinkler systems installed and what would be required to install them.

Councillor Hobbs agreed to bring the requested information back the Committee but added that the aim is to install sprinkler systems in buildings where the risk is the greatest, in homes for vulnerable residents for example.

3.5 Fire Station Closures and Response Times

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked how the recent closure of Brinklow and Warwick retained fire stations have affected response times.

Councillor Richard Hobbs agreed to bring the requested information back to Committee.

3.6 One Stop Shops and Neighbourhood Watch

The Chair asked the Portfolio Holder to update the Committee on how One Stop Shops are promoting Neighbourhood Watch.

The Portfolio Holder explained One Stop Shops will now signpost people enquiring about crime and disorder to their local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

3.7 Failure of the Enterprise Zone Bid

The Chair asked for an update on the failure of the Enterprise Zone bid.

Louise Wall advised the Committee that a representative from the Department for Communities and Local Government will be attending the next meeting of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board to give detailed feedback on why the bid failed.

Monica Fogarty added that the Enterprise Zone was only one aspect of the LEP and the failure of the bid only escalates the need for WCC to work closely and effectively both sub-regionally and with the private sector.

4. Quarter 1 (April – June 2011) Performance Report

- 4.1 Phil Evans, Head of Service Improvement and Change Management, presented the report, detailing performance measures and targets at both Corporate Business Plan and Business Unit level for functions within the remit of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

During discussion the following points were noted:

Appendix A

- 4.2 Page 1 of 2 – Ambition 2 – Fire related injuries and deaths (Refs. M17000, M17001, M17002)

Councillor Richard Hobbs advised the Committee that the fire figures vary throughout the year according to the weather. The first quarter is always expected to be high but during winter the figure reduces considerably.

- 4.3 Page 1 of 2 – Ambition 2 – Anti-social behaviour (Ref. M13003)

The figures show an increase but instances of anti-social behaviour are more common in the summer due to lighter evenings and better weather. The Police are aware of the trend and the Police Authority's budget monitoring is now done in concert with performance monitoring to ensure appropriate resources are available.

Figures released since June have shown that the instances of anti-social behaviour figures have been improving significantly.

- 4.4 Page 2 of 2 – Ambition 5 – Corporate projects which deliver CO2 reductions (Ref. M06001)

There is no performance measure information available for 'projects which deliver CO2 reductions' because of a recent, fundamental change in the way that the Council records this data. Targets are currently being transferred to comply with the new measures.

Appendix B

- 4.5 Page 3 of 6 – Sustainable Communities – Waste Management Service

The 2011/12 target is lower than the 2010/11 actual because the targets were set on a three year rolling basis and haven't been revised. This year's target had already been reached last year.

Councillor Alan Cockburn added that the Waste Partnership will be reviewing these targets at their meeting in October.

- 4.6 Page 2 of 6 – Sustainable Communities – LEP

The 'number of individuals undertaking Apprenticeships' 2010/11 actual figure is much higher than the 2011/12 target because it includes a national, all-ages target whereas the 2010/11 figure focuses on 16-24 year olds.

- 4.7 Page 3 of 6 – Sustainable Communities – Planning Applications

Councillors asked why the 'total of all planning applications processed within target' Q1 actual stood at 47 percent when the target was set at 70 percent.

Louise Wall explained that a number of factors contributed to the low figure. WCC does not process many applications so statistically each application has a big impact. Two applications received late objections and had to go to the Regulatory Committee which has fixed meeting dates that don't always correspond to the deadline targets. Another application was subject to a

holding objection from the Highways Authority. The applicant can dictate the pace of an application.

The planning group also had a large budget pressure and a number of redundancies this year that have had an impact on the service and business processes are being re-engineered to accommodate the loss.

WCC is trying to improve the planning application process by looking at a possible change to the powers of delegations.

The Localism Bill will have a significant impact on this area, particularly the increased pressure to approve applications.

4.8 Page 5 of 6 – Fire & Rescue – Keeping the public safe

There were concerns that the number of 'Home Fire Safety Checks completed' looked very low in Quarter 1. Councillor Richard Hobbs responded by saying that the focus is on better targeting those areas where there is the greatest risk.

In response to a question about public consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan, Councillor Richard Hobbs explained that the Council is not obliged to consult when changing targets.

The Chair asked that before the Integrated Risk Management Plan goes to Full Council there needs to be clarity on the question of consultation.

4.9 Page 6 of 6 – Fire & Rescue – Doing our best

Gary Phillips was asked why a staff survey was not being conducted this year and responded that staff were consulted and asked for one every two years. The next staff survey is scheduled for April 2012.

4.10 The Chair asked why there were no performance indicators in the report for Libraries, Heritage & Culture, or Trading Standards.
Phil Evans agreed to check with colleagues and report back to the Committee.

4.11 The Chair suggested that the detailed business unit information might not be appropriate for the committee.
Phil Evans informed the Committee that a member group, led by Councillor John Appleton, is currently looking at how members can get the best value from performance data.

5. Report and Recommendations of the Residual Waste Task & Finish Group

Councillor Richard Chattaway introduced the report of the Task & Finish group and thanked the officers and members involved.

A discussion took place and the following points were noted:

- Waste technology is constantly changing and the Council needs to be as flexible as possible to achieve the best value.
- This is a very large contract that has the potential for considerable savings.
- WCC should make use of a variety of different technologies.

- WCC must learn from the mistakes of the past; being tied into long contracts with obsolete technologies for example.
- The Chair commented that there was already a mix of contracts in place with varying lengths and that it was critical to retain that variety.

Referring to recommendation 4, the Chair advised the Committee that it should be the decision of the Overview & Scrutiny Board whether to re-commission the Task & Finish Group or the Portfolio Holder if they decide to establish an advisory group.

Resolved

That the Committee endorse the recommendations within the report of the Residual Waste Task & Finish Group, subject to the following amendments:

Delete recommendations 7 and 8 and replace with the following:

Recommendation 7

Subject to final legal advice, the Competitive Dialogue procedure should be adopted so as to limit the amount of pre-specification and allow tenderers the flexibility to offer various solutions to meet the authority's needs.

6. Review of Support for the Local Economy – Final Report

Councillor June Tandy presented the report and thanked the officers and members involved.

A discussion of the report took place and the following points were noted:

- There are concerns that the LEP focuses on large economic development to the exclusion of small businesses.
- It is important to have a working group of elected members to inform and monitor progress on a local level.
- Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council are both committed to the success of the LEP.
- Referring to recommendation 1, the Portfolio Holder said it was not for the Committee to decide future budget requirements.
- Councillor Richard Chattaway said that economic development is key to supporting young people and Business Centres were an important aspect of that. By growing new businesses, the centres support our local economy.
- Councillor Alan Cockburn agreed that the Business Centres do a good job but questioned whether it was the role of WCC to provide that service.
- It was suggested that there were three important areas missing from the report; marketing, market failures, and best practice from other local authorities.
- Councillors suggested that due to the Committee's full work programme it may be necessary to hold a special meeting to look at this area of work in more depth.

The Committee discussed how to best monitor progress with the LEP and agreed that, in addition to a report to Council, there be a report to the next appropriate meeting of the O&S Committee after the next LEP Board meeting and that the Committee then agree a timetable for further reporting.

Resolved

That the Committee endorse the recommendations within the Review of Support for the Local Economy report with the following additional actions:

1. That the background information to the report be collected and made available to the Committee.
2. That the Chair writes a covering note to the report, summarising the debate, to submit to Cabinet.

7. Work Programme

Councillor Michael Doody asked if the Bus Service Reductions item could be brought forward because the changes are already having a big impact on residents.

The Chair asked Officers to find out how much information on the impact of bus service reductions would be available in six months time.

Resolved

That the Committee endorse the draft work programme for 2011-12, with the following additions:

1. Quarterly performance reports.
2. A review of the Corporate Business Plan.
3. Street-lighting savings – how the savings in the budget will be achieved.

8. Any Other Items

There were no urgent items.

The Committee rose at 16.10pm

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Chair