

## Minutes of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2012

### Present:

#### Councillors

Richard Chattaway, Michael Doody, Mike Gittus, Barry Lobbett, Tilly May, Chris Saint, Ray Sweet (part of the meeting), Helen Walton (part of the meeting), John Whitehouse (Chair)

#### Other Councillors

Alan Cockburn, Portfolio Holder Sustainable Communities  
Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder Transport and Highways  
Colin Hayfield, Portfolio Holder Customers, Access and Physical Assets  
Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder Community Safety  
John Vereker, Police Authority Vice Chair and Stream Lead for Policing Communities

#### WCC Officers

David Abbott, Democratic Services Officer  
Georgina Atkinson, Democratic Services Team Leader  
Neil Benison, Principle Highway Control Engineer  
Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport & Highways  
Monica Fogarty, Strategic Director Communities Group  
Simon Moseley, Assistant Lighting Engineer  
Louise Wall, Head of Sustainable Communities

#### Other Attendees

Jessica Crowe, Executive Director, Centre for Public Scrutiny

### 1. General

#### (1) Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Sarah Boad, who was replaced by Councillor David Johnston.

#### (2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Richard Hobbs declared a prejudicial interest in items related to HS2.  
Councillor Michael Doody declared a personal interest in items related to HS2 as a member of the executive of 51M and declared a personal interest in item 5 as Leader of Warwick District Council.

Councillor Chris Saint declared a personal interest in item 5 as Leader of Stratford District Council.

Councillor Helen Walton declared a personal interest as a member of Rugby Borough Council.

Councillor Mike Gittus declared a personal interest as a member of Stratford District Council.

Councillor Tilly May declared a personal interest as a member of North Warwickshire Borough Council.

Councillor Ray Sweet declared a personal interest as a member of North Warwickshire Borough Council.

**(3) Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed Superintendent Martin McNevin from Warwickshire Police, and Jessica Crowe from the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

**(4) Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

The minutes were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

**Matters Arising - HS2**

Councillor Alan Cockburn updated the Committee on Warwickshire County Council's response to the recent HS2 announcement from Central Government.

On 10 January 2012 Justine Greening, Transport Secretary, announced that HS2 would go ahead. A revised route was published with a number of small changes affecting Warwickshire, including an extension to the proposed tunnel through Burton Green.

Following the announcement, Councillor Bob Stevens and Mandy Walker, Lead Officer for HS2 at Warwickshire County Council, met with 51M to discuss the possibility of seeking a judicial review. A report went to Cabinet on 16 February 2012 with recommendations on how Warwickshire County Council should proceed, and a decision will be published following that meeting.

**Matters Arising - Library Service Transformation**

Ayub Khan, Head of Libraries Strategy, updated the Committee on the progress of the Libraries Transformation Programme. A sheet was circulated with information and a timetable for community library opening dates and is attached at Appendix A.

Councillor Colin Hayfield thanked Tejay de Kretser, Corporate Equalities and Diversity Manager, for her vital work acting as a liaison between community groups and Warwickshire County Council during the transformation process.

Opening Dates

Councillor Chris Saint asked why 4 of the libraries on the timeline had a considerably wider gap between the County Council service closing and the replacement community service opening than the others.

Ayub Khan responded that the opening dates were developed in consultation with community groups.

In some cases equipment and stock has to be transferred into a new building. Harbury, for example, will have to do some internal work on the building.

Training is another factor that can affect the opening date.

#### Warwick Library

Councillor Mike Gittus asked how the new library space in Shire Hall was progressing.

Ayub Khan responded that the Library Service is very excited about the Shire Hall library, and it will be a great showcase for what a modern library can be. There will be greater integration with other services, and longer opening hours than the previous venue allowed.

There will be a publicity campaign at the next meeting of Full Council to encourage elected members to join up and use the service.

The new Warwick library is due to open on 26 February 2012.

#### Fines Amnesty

Councillor John Whitehouse asked if there will be a 'fines amnesty' over the period between Warwickshire County Council libraries closing, and community libraries opening.

Ayub Khan responded that staff will be sympathetic to the disruption and the Library Service will publicising the dates 3 weeks in advance to minimise problems.

## **2. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

The Chair raised the issue of low public engagement with the Committee and asked for ideas on how to improve the situation. There was a discussion and the following points were noted:

- The Council's communications department could publicise key items and meetings. This had been tried before with some success.
- Day-time meetings mean that the majority of working people can't attend.
- Online consultation could be done to ask when and where meetings should be held.
- Scrutiny could be done in Community Forums; it would add a local dimension.
- Meetings could be made more accessible by conducting them via video-conferencing or streaming on the Internet.
- Some Community Forums are holding focused single issue meetings, on Health for example, to encourage more people to attend. Scrutiny could take a similar approach.

The Chair requested that Councillor David Wright, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and IT, be asked the Council's views on broadcasting meetings over the Internet. The response will be circulated to the Committee.

### **3. Questions to the Portfolio Holders**

#### Questions to Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways

##### **The Impact of Reductions to the Bus Service**

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked what had been learnt from the 6 month 'continual review' of the bus network?

The Portfolio Holder responded that the review process had been very successful. On Blackhorse Road in Nuneaton, for example, the No. 60 bus service was removed. Following feedback from residents a new, more regular, subsidised service was implemented.

##### **Gritting and Snow Wardens**

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked the Portfolio Holder to thank those involved in gritting Warwickshire's roads over the recent period of bad weather.

The Chair asked the Portfolio Holder how successful the first year of the snow warden scheme had been.

Councillor Helen Walton added that she was the snow warden for Brownsover and hadn't been contacted at all by the County this year.

Councillor Ray Sweet, snow warden for Baddesley Ensor, also hadn't had any contact from the County.

The Portfolio Holder responded that the snow warden scheme is still new and they are keen to improve it. He asked Councillors with local concerns email him directly.

Councillor Ray Sweet said he was told there are now too many grit bins and it was difficult for the County to fill them.

Peter Butlin agreed to look into the issue but stated that as far as he was aware the policy was that if grit bins are installed then the County Council will fill them.

#### Questions to Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety

##### **Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan**

Councillor Mike Gittus asked how much public feedback there was to the Fire & Rescue Service's mid-term Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Councillor Richard Hobbs responded that there had been very little feedback from members of the public. There were no negative comments about the plan.

## **High Speed 2**

Councillor Chris Saint asked for reassurances that Warwickshire County Council would pay close attention to protecting the natural landscape of Warwickshire.

Councillor Alan Cockburn responded that the County Council's main responsibility is to mitigate issues for residents of Warwickshire. The Council has been engaging very positively with HS2 Ltd. and the Department for Transport to ensure that happens.

## **4. Neighbourhood Policing**

Superintendent Martin McNevin presented the report and the following points were noted:

- The Police have had to respond to a number of large budget cuts over recent years. The new policing model has been put in place to provide the best possible service with reduced resources.
- The priorities for the new model are to; deliver the right response, cut out duplication, and to work together as a unit.
- The number of Safer Neighbourhood Team locations has been halved.
- The role of the Safer Neighbourhood Team has changed and the numbers of officers in each team has reduced.
- Safer Neighbour Teams no longer carry a crime caseload, but they will still deal with low level, low harm, crimes such as anti-social behavior. This is to ensure most of their time is spent on their beat. A response team is in place to respond to the majority of crimes.
- There will be more change on the way due to the upcoming Strategic Alliance but the Safer Neighbourhood Team model will stay.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, addressed the Committee and the following points were noted:

- Regulation A19, that could force officers with 30 or more years experience to retire, didn't have to be enacted in Warwickshire. This has meant the Force has 30 more officers than initially expected.
- There has been good engagement through the Community Forums.
- Neighbourhood Watch has been 'reborn'; more people are getting involved and recruitment is up.
- Your Town, Your Choice, a community initiative to raise awareness of the consequences of anti-social behaviour and violent crime, has been very successful in Stratford and will be explored across the County.

## **Police Authority Budget Discussion**

Councillor Helen Walton asked if Warwickshire Police Authority would 'freeze' Council Tax at a 0% increase in-line with Warwickshire County Council.

Councillor John Vereker noted that the final decision on Council Tax would be made at the Police Authority meeting scheduled for 22 February 2012; and that there could potentially be a 4% increase.

Councillor Mike Doody, seconded by Councillor Richard Chattaway, proposed that the Committee send a letter to the Police Authority asking them to freeze Council Tax at 0%, in-line with Warwickshire County Council, because during a recession it would be inappropriate to claim more money from the residents of Warwickshire.

The Chair informed members that in his opinion the stated proposal was outside of the remit of the Committee, but a vote was taken on the proposal and the results are recorded below.

**FOR (4, WON)** - Councillors Michael Doody, Chris Saint, Barry Lobbett, and Tilly May  
**AGAINST (1, LOST)** - Councillor John Whitehouse  
**ABSTAINED (4)** - Councillors Richard Chattaway, Mike Gittus, David Johnston, and Ray Sweet.

The proposal was carried and the Chair asked that a letter be sent to the Police Authority, as part of their ongoing budget consultation, expressing the majority view of the Committee. After the meeting it was determined that the Police Authority were only consulting via email and so an email was sent instead of a letter.

### **General Discussion**

Councillors discussed the report and the following points were noted:

- Councillors expressed concerns about the reductions to numbers of active Police Officers. In some areas there is only one Officer covering a very large area and there are questions about how effective a job that person can do by themselves.
- At a recent Community Forum meeting the crime figures suggested there had been an increase in crime in Bedworth.
- There were concerns that some areas have seen a greater diminution of service than others.
- There is an issue of public perception, the changes should be better publicised to give people more confidence in the Police offer.
- There were concerns about reports of significant growth in rural crime due to the perception that there is no longer adequate police cover.
- It is vital that Police Officers have good local knowledge of the areas they are expected to cover.
- There needs to be better publicity for contact points; what are they are and where they are.

- There were concerns over capacity, especially in cases of high levels of absence.

Superintendent Martin McNevin responded and the following points were noted:

- Busier areas have more resources allocated to them, it is based on local area demands. The Police assess according to harm, threat, and risk.
- If a particular area has an extremely low crime rate then we wouldn't put more resources into that area. If crime then did increase, greater resources would be allocated.
- The model is built upon the need to respond quickly and dynamically.
- The reduction to the workforce is clearly a concern but the Police have to deliver the best service with the numbers they have.

Councillor Richard Hobbs noted that there needs to be greater knowledge of Contact Points and that a clear distinction has to be made between Contact Points and the Safer Neighbourhood Team bases of operation.

### **Architectural Liaison Officer**

Councillor Tilly May asked what the role of the Architectural Liaison Officer was.

Martin McNevin responded that the Architectural Liaison Officer's job is 'designing out crime'. They work with planners and private companies to ensure the design of new buildings is conducive to safety and security (i.e. no unlit alley ways).

There is one Architectural Liaison Officer that covers the whole of Warwickshire.

### **Volunteers**

The Chair asked what the current situation was with regards to volunteers. Appendix A of the report shows volunteers are attached to all teams.

The Chair also expressed concerns over Community Speed Watch - there is a weak link when it comes to the processing of data and sending of letters. Volunteers are willing to take over this role but they have been told they are not allowed to due to the existence of the Central Leamington volunteer team.

Superintendent Martin McNevin responded that there are currently 27 volunteers attached to Safer Neighbourhood Teams and there are plans to increase that number. Regarding Speed Watch, there is no reason why a volunteer shouldn't take over that role and it will be looked in to.

### **Crime Statistics**

Councillor Barry Lobbett, following complaints from residents, asked why Police Officers were asking for 'irrelevant' details when people reported crimes (sexuality, religion etc.).

Superintendent Martin McNevin responded that all Police Forces have a duty to record certain crime statistics, which are then compiled and fed back to National Crime Recording Standards.

## 5. Major Infrastructure

Louise Wall, Head of Sustainable Communities, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- When new development takes place there is a range of provision competing for available funding; transport, education, social housing, health and social facilities, fire service, libraries, police, and open spaces.
- Private development has to be commercially viable so there is a limit on how much private funding can be made available for public infrastructure. The County Council has to be mindful of this when seeking infrastructure improvements, making sure that requests are reasonable and in scale with the size of the development.
- The decision to grant planning permission is made by the relevant planning authority. For major development in Warwickshire that means the District and Borough Councils and the Local Planning Authorities.
- To simplify the process of negotiation WCC set up the Strategic Infrastructure Group to oversee response to consultations by Planning Authorities on major developments. There is a group of elected members connected to the Strategic Infrastructure Group.
- The group is still in its infancy; the County Council is trying to balance the involvement of members with the speed of officer delegated powers.

The Chair noted that there were no Health or Social Services officers in the membership list, and asked to see the terms of reference for the member group.

Louise Wall responded:

- Public health representatives will be joining the group.
- The terms of reference for the member group will be sent to the Committee after the meeting.
- Decisions are made at the officer's discretion. The process has to be fast, there are tight targets in place for the processing of planning applications.
- There is already a fairly high level of member involvement.

Members discussed the item and the following points were noted:

- WCC could do a better job of setting up on-going transport funding.
- A local member may have insights into what a community needs that an officer doesn't. There is scope for greater member involvement.
- Local members don't get informed early enough. Currently members are only informed after the response to the planning application has been given.



- Once planning permission is granted we need to be alert to how it will be implemented. There needs to be better communication with regards to implementation.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy agreements are likely to be different in each District and Borough - ideally there would be uniformity across the whole County.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy has a 'duty to cooperate' and will present interesting challenges - not just across the County but across County borders.
- The County Council needs to invest time in the upcoming challenges presented by the new National Planning Framework.

Councillor Richard Chattaway informed the Committee that the Planning Advisory website had recently announced £20m funding from Central Government that was made available for training Local Authorities on the new planning challenges.

### **Resolved**

The Committee agreed that the Chair and Party Spokespeople would discuss areas for further scrutiny at the next agenda planning meeting.

## **6. Street Lighting Energy Savings - preliminary report for a Task and Finish Group**

Simon Moseley, Assistant Lighting Engineer, and Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport & Highways, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- A Task and Finish Group is being set up to look at the switch to part-night street lighting.
- The group will be looking at proposals for consultation that will begin at the Summer round of Community Forums.
- Equipment has already started to be installed into street lighting columns.
- It will be important to keep elected members and members of the public informed. 80% of lights will have to be switched off at night so almost everyone in the County will be affected.
- The Task and Finish Group is due to report back to Communities OSC in September 2012.

Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways, said that it will be important to inform and engage with the public, and to deal with some common misconceptions that surround the issue (that there would be an increase in crime, for example).

### **Implementation**

Councillor Mike Doody asked how long the entire project would take to implement.

Graeme Fitton responded that the project will take 12 months to roll out. There will be a base station in Budbrooke, with sub-stations located throughout the county that would

control all street lighting columns. It will take time to procure the technology and install equipment on all street lighting columns.

### **Involvement of Partners**

Councillor Mike Gittus asked if Warwickshire County Council was involving partners other than Community Safety; for example the Highway Agency, Parish Councils, private car parks etc.

Graeme Fitton responded that there will be wide engagement, and the County Council will be talking to other organisations.

### **Energy Costs**

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked if rising energy costs could mean more cuts to the service in future.

Graeme Fitton responded that a saving of £500k needed to be made regardless of the cost of energy.

## **7. Work Programme 2012**

The Committee agreed the following additions to the Work Programme:

### April 2012

- Police and Crime Commissioners
- Fire & Rescue Service Strategic Alliance - Update Report

### June 2012

- Flood Risk

The Chair asked that representatives from Districts and Borough Councils were invited to the next meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Impact of Bus Services on Communities item.

The Committee rose at 13:00pm

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Chair