

Minutes of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 June 2012

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillors Sarah Boad, Richard Chattaway, Clare Hopkinson, Barry Lobbett, Chris Saint, Ray Sweet, Claire Watson, John Whitehouse (Chair), and Chris Williams

Portfolio Holders

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Communities

Councillor Colin Hayfield, Portfolio Holder for Customers, Access and Physical Assets

Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety

Officers

David Abbott, Democratic Services Officer

Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport & Highways

Monica Fogarty, Strategic Director for Communities

Paul Hooper, Group Manager Community Safety & Substance Misuse

Lisa Mowe, Deputy Communications Manager - Media & Public Relations

Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Abdul Rahim, Community Safety Project Officer

Louise Wall, Head of Sustainable Communities

Invitees

Paula Deas, CWLEP Operations Director

Martin Yardley, Managing Director of the CWLEP

Hazel Wright, Stratford-on-Avon District Councillor representing the Studley Ward

Other Councillors

Councillors Alan Farnell (Leader of Warwickshire County Council), Jim Foster, Mike Gittus, David Johnston, Tim Naylor, Clive Rickhards, Bob Stevens, and Sid Tooth

Election of the Chair and Vice Chair

Councillor Sarah Boad, seconded by Councillor Ray Sweet moved and it was resolved that Councillor John Whitehouse take the position of Chair of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Chris Williams, seconded by Councillor Claire Watson, moved and it was resolved that Councillor Chris Saint take the position of Vice Chair of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1. Q&A session with Martin Yardley, Managing Director of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP)

Martin Yardley, Managing Director of the CWLEP, addressed the Committee and made the following points:

- The CWLEP covers around 850,000 people and its profile is fairly average in terms of population, geography, and funding.

- The CWLEP is run by a joint public and private sector Board of Directors. The public sector side is made up of Local Authority leaders, Cabinet members, and representatives from Coventry University and Warwick University – while the private sector side is made up of business leaders from companies based in the region.
- The CWLEP doesn't have the financial weight of the old Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), but it does have considerable power to influence the right people to get things done (the Department for Transport for example). Going forward it is likely that the Government will focus more funding and powers through the LEPs.
- The CWLEPs key objectives are creating business growth, creating high value jobs, and removing barriers to growth.

Councillors' Questions

Councillors' questions are in *italics* and responses are in normal text.

Infrastructure and regeneration

The Chair asked (on behalf of Councillor Robin Hazelton) what the CWLEP was doing to expand Coventry Airport, its surroundings and Ryton plant as an industrial complex.

Martin Yardley responded that the influence of the CWLEP gave access to enable infrastructure developments (the Coventry Gateway for example) to go forward. The Ryton site is in demand due to a shortage of warehouse sheds in the region; development there is vital so that businesses looking to expand keep their investment in the region.

Councillor Sid Tooth asked how the CWLEP was progressing regeneration projects such as 'Pride in Camp Hill' and what the position was with regard to regeneration funding.

Martin Yardley responded that the CWLEP's purpose was job creation, not regeneration. The current Government completely cut regeneration programmes, but there are signs that some money will be reintroduced for similar projects, housing improvement schemes for example.

Supporting small and medium sized enterprises

The Chair asked what support the CWLEP was giving to small and medium sized enterprises.

Martin Yardley responded that small and medium sized enterprises are represented on the Board and the CWLEP has ties to both the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Business.

The four areas that the CWLEP has decided to focus on, intelligent mobility, advanced engineering, low carbon vehicles, and digital technology, also include a lot of small and medium sized enterprises.

The CWLEP has also set up an 'access to finance group' that will help smaller businesses get in touch with people who can get them financing.

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked what the CWLEP was doing in terms of business advice for small and medium sized enterprises.

Martin Yardley responded that the CWLEP was not set up to fulfil that function. LEP's were set up with limited funding and have no dedicated staff to deliver that type of work.

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked how the CWLEP could provide an effective economic development service if there was a lack of dedicated staff.

Louise Wall, Head of Sustainable Communities, responded that WCC still has an economic development team and the CWLEP adds another dimension to their work. The CWLEP has also been an effective way of educating the private sector; on planning for example, where WCC is pro-business and pro-growth.

Martin Yardley said that limited resources had led Coventry, Warwickshire, and the District and Borough Councils together much more effectively and efficiently.

Councillor Sarah Boad asked what the CWLEP was to support the gaming and digital technology companies based in and around Leamington Spa.

Martin Yardley responded that the CWLEP provided generic services that all businesses need, such as access to finance, premises etc. A number of company heads from those industries are represented on the Board and the Growing Places Fund was very favourable towards bids from digital technology companies.

Democratic accountability

A number of Councillors had questions related to the democratic accountability of the CWLEP.

Martin Yardley responded that there is currently no legal framework regarding the running of LEPs, which put Board members at risk in terms of accountability. To resolve that issue, the CWLEP is looking to incorporate as a company limited by guarantee. It is a complex process; incorporation would give the Directors a legal obligation to support the company's best interests which could be difficult for politicians who have to balance the needs of the CWLEP with the needs of their Local Authorities and the people they represent.

All LEPs are currently being consulted about infrastructure decision making; whether power should rest with the local Highway Authority, whether power is shared equally between the local Transport Board and the LEP, or have the responsibility rest solely with the LEP. The first option is the preferred route for Coventry and Warwickshire because there is clear political accountability but the consultation is still on-going.

Councillor Clare Hopkinson asked how the Board members were chosen.

Martin Yardley responded that as the CWLEP moves towards incorporation this will be an important issue. The preference was for a sub-group that considers applications and makes recommendations to the Board.

Strengths, weaknesses, and achievements

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked what the key strengths and weaknesses of the CWLEP were, and how the CWLEP was performing.

Martin Yardley responded that the strengths of the CWLEP were its political influence and the partnership it had fostered between the public and private sectors.

The CWLEPs' weakness had been the time taken to develop relationships and getting the private sector to understand the difficulties Local Authorities are faced with when interacting with Central Government departments.

Regarding performance, it is hard to measure and judge in a meaningful way. The CWLEP has not *directly* created any jobs; it creates an environment for growth. Benchmarking is of limited value because all of the LEPs were formed in different ways.

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked what the key achievements of the CWLEP were.

Martin Yardley responded that the CWLEP has led the public sector to better understand what the private sector wants, and has helped Local Authorities to better understand how to influence Central Government to enable investment in the region to stimulate business growth and job creation.

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked if there was any truth to the perception that the LEP is more focussed on Coventry than Warwickshire.

Martin Yardley responded that it was normal for both sides to think they are the weaker partner but in reality it is reasonably balanced. The Regional Growth Fund Phase 3 has £150m worth of bids, five from Coventry and four from Warwickshire, the Growing Places Fund had two bids from Coventry and three from Warwickshire, the Rural Growth Network is worth £5m to Warwickshire, and Rural Broadband is contributing around £3m to Warwickshire.

Councillor Tim Naylor asked how WCC could best use their experiences and structures to complement the work of the LEP.

Martin Yardley suggested that Local Authorities should allow a degree of influence to be gained from the private sector. For example, when LAs talk to Central Government about infrastructure projects, they should use private sector companies from the area that will benefit to help push things forward.

Louise Wall added that WCC was trying to frame everything we do with the CWLEP; there is close engagement at a senior officer level.

The Chair asked if the CWLEP was going to provide a regulatory service for businesses, similar to the Greater Birmingham LEP which provides a central point of contact for regulatory services in the region.

Martin Yardley responded that it was true that businesses are more likely to engage with LEPs than the Local Authorities, and stressed that Local Authorities needed to learn to be more pragmatic and flexible rather than rigidly following process.

Louise Wall asked for members and senior officers to send the LEP team any ideas or examples of good practice so they can look at implementing them in the future.

End of questions

Councillor Tim Naylor said it would be useful to hold a debate at Full Council or an information session to make members aware of the new approaches and highlight how members can have an influence.

The Chair noted that the CWLEP would be an area for on-going scrutiny, both for WCC and colleagues in Coventry City Council, and suggested that it could be an opportunity for joint scrutiny between the authorities to avoid duplication.

The Chair asked for party spokespeople to put some thoughts together for further scrutiny of the CWLEP for discussion at the next agenda planning meeting to be held on 11 July 2012.

The Chair thanked Martin Yardley and Paula Deas for attending the Committee and answering members' questions honestly and thoughtfully.

2. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Mike Doody.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

(3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted that briefing notes had been circulated to members on changes to safety camera operation and Police and Crime Commissioners, and asked members to take any feedback they had on them to the next agenda planning meeting to be held on 11 July 2012.

(4) Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 April 2012 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair with the following corrections:

Changes are in **bold and underlined**.

Page 3 of 11 – Update on the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Councillors discussed the CWLEP and the following points were noted:

2. Councillor Alan Cockburn responded that WCC is the accountable body for the Growing Places Fund **and there is a panel of members and officers who can make recommendations to the CWLEP Board.**

Matters Arising

Page 2 of 11 – Warwickshire Flood Alleviation

A report that went to Cabinet on 14 June 2012 resolved the referenced flooding issue.

Page 4 of 11 – On-street parking

It was noted that the Portfolio Holder decided to lower the proposed minimum car parking charge in Leamington Spa in line with recommendations from the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Warwick Area Committee.

Page 5 of 11 – The Community Impact of Bus Service Reductions

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Board had agreed the scope for a task and finish group set up to address some of the issues the item had raised. The group will be reporting its findings and recommendations back to the Committee in September

3. Public Question Time

It was agreed that Councillor Hazel Wright, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, would ask her question about the closure of Studley Fire Station during the discussion of Item 6: the Fire and Rescue Position Paper.

4. Questions to the Portfolio Holders

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways

Street lighting part-night operation

Councillor David Johnston asked the following five questions about upcoming changes to street lighting. Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways, was not in attendance at the meeting but it was agreed that officers would answer questions where appropriate then the questions would be sent to the Portfolio Holder for any additional answers, which would be circulated to the Committee.

Q1 What alternatives were considered to part-night turn off such as more efficient lighting systems, or dimming rather than turn off? If not why not, if so why were they rejected?

Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways, responded that dimming would have been too expensive because all of the equipment would have had to be changed. The savings period would have been 15-20 years compared to 3 years with part-night lighting. WCC will be using dimming where new infrastructure is put in place.

LED lighting was not chosen because it was a new technology and was still relatively expensive, however as the cost reduces WCC will re-evaluate it.

The Chair asked to see figures showing the cost of implementing LED lighting and the savings that would be achieved. Graeme Fitton agreed to provide the Committee with that information outside of the meeting.

Q2 How was the criteria used to decide which lights to leave on and which to turn off decided upon?

Graeme Fitton responded that the criteria, including Police hotspots, town centres, areas where there is CCTV, and hospitals, were chosen for practical, common sense reasons. The public engagement had been designed to identify any areas that WCC had missed.

Councillor Sarah Boad asked whether special consideration was being given to dangerous roads and noted that, based on the maps that had been released, implementation was inconsistent.

Councillor Claire Watson asked why WCC was not switching off every other light.

Graeme Fitton responded that WCC is going through public engagement to identify any problem areas and potentially would make changes based on those responses. Regarding turning off alternate street lights; it wouldn't be safe due to the stroboscopic effect drivers would see and it would not have achieved the required savings.

Q3 *Chairs of Community Forums are asked whether they wish to have a presentation on this topic. Are you happy that these requests are being met? Are members able to propose variations to the current planned split at this stage?*

Graeme Fitton responded that WCC had been able to send a senior officer to Community Forums that requested a presentation.

Q4 *What undertaking is the Administration prepared to make about reviewing the system after 12 months of operation, when information on the impact on road safety and levels of crime are able to be assessed?*

Q5 *Is the Administration prepared to commit to considering any issues raised by local councils or the police, and where necessary restore lighting to all-night operation?*

Councillor Alan Cockburn, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Communities, responded that the reason for the engagement exercise was to identify and mitigate local concerns. WCC was working with the Police and there would be regular monitoring of crime statistics.

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked what the total cost of the part-night lighting project was to the Council including the borrowing costs. He noted that there was a difference in the figures that had previously been brought to the Committee compared with figures mentioned in a briefing to Full Council on the AGM on 15 May 2012.

Monica Fogarty, Strategic Director for Communities, responded that WCC was looking at reinvesting budget underspends to reduce spending on debt payments where appropriate.

Councillor Richard Chattaway commented that a number of Community Forums and residents associations have asked for the Portfolio Holder to talk to them directly and answer their questions, instead of senior officers.

The Chair advised members that there was a task and finish group currently looking at street-lighting, with a report coming to the Committee's September meeting, and it would be an area that the Committee would keep under review.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety

The 'troubled families' initiative

The Chair asked, regarding a joint press release from Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and WCC about the Government's new 'troubled families' initiative, where the local portion of the funding would come from? (The small print of the press release said the Government would provide 40% of the funding and the LA and its partners would have to identify the remaining 60%)

Councillor Richard Hobbs responded that it was not new money that had to be identified; it was about using the money WCC already spends in a more focussed way.

Mark Ryder, Head of Localities and Community Safety, advised the Committee that the funding also included contributions from partner agencies and noted that WCC is already working with the families identified by Central Government in an effective multi-agency way.

Councillor Richard Chattaway requested a breakdown of where the money was coming from and how it would be spent; including the impact of the proposed performance based funding mechanisms. Mark Ryder agreed to supply the Committee with that information outside of the meeting.

Fire and Rescue Service – Barford Incident

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked how many Fire Fighters were trained for swift water response and suggested that it be considered as an area for improvement in the updated IRMP.

Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, responded that all Fire Fighters in Rugby were trained in water rescue and underwent intensive training.

The Chair requested that part of an upcoming visit to Fire HQ be used for a briefing on water rescue.

Councillor Claire Watson asked if the Fire Service had learnt any lessons from the incident.

Councillor Richard Hobbs responded that there was a de-briefing session later that day where Senior Fire Officers would discuss how the service can learn from the incident and improve.

Gary Phillips added that the incident had highlighted some issues regarding inter-agency working and there was a regional piece of work led by Hereford and Worcestershire Fire Service looking at resolving those issues.

The Chair asked that the areas discussed in Committee be discussed at the upcoming IRMP review meetings.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee extended their thanks to the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and all of the agencies involved; the

Police, the paramedics, and local residents, for all their effort and hard work during the incident.

5. Anti-Social Behaviour Update

The Committee considered the report which gave an overview of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Warwickshire; including how it is recorded, upcoming changes to legislation, and what action the Council is taking. Paul Hooper, Community Safety & Substance Misuse Group Manager, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- ASB was always a high priority within the County Council and the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). The CSPs are currently updating their own ASB strategies.
- Tackling ASB is a multi-agency problem and involves the Police, landlords, the District and Boroughs Councils, and a number of other agencies working together.
- The key changes to ASB legislation include a move to three categories of ASB (down from 12), and a move to incident based reporting rather than a case management based approach.
- WCC plans to have a cohesive updated ASB strategy in place by the time the Police and Crime Commissioner is in post.

Councillors Questions

Councillor Richard Chattaway asked if both WCC and its partners, specifically the Police, had the resources to support the new ASB strategy.

Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, responded that there is the resource within both the County Council and the Police to carry out the new strategy. WCC works closely with Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Police Community Support Officers who are better able to engage with communities to prevent crime.

Abdul Rakim, Community Safety Project Officer, advised the Committee that there were a number of overlaps between ASB and crime. The majority of ASB powers rest with the District and Borough Councils and the local Housing Authority.

Councillor Clive Rickhards asked for clarification about the database system that would be used for information sharing.

Paul Hooper responded that the current pilot requires information sharing across a number of different partners. The system would be used to identify where a number of individual complaints are made across the agencies, which when combined highlight significant risk to an individual. If used correctly the system would make sure important cases aren't missed.

Councillors asked how the 'troubled families' initiative linked to ASB work.

Paul Hooper responded that ASB is one strand of the troubled families work. The initiative covers a number of inter-related areas of work and it should be of benefit to those areas.

Councillor Claire Watson asked if the ASB team had a good relationship with the NHS Primary Care Trust, Child and Adult Mental Health Services, and independent young people's mental health organisations such as Compass.

Paul Hooper responded that Case Officers do refer individuals to those organisations but the service was looking to improve those relationships.

Councillor Clare Watson asked if ASB statistics were split between urban and rural areas.

Paul Hooper responded that the team uses Mosaic and Wombat, mapping and profiling software that allows local level incidents to be geographically linked and a better understanding of the populations that are affected.

Councillor Chris Saint brought up the issue of aggressive dogs and said WCC needs to be proactive about tackling the issue.

Councillor Ray Sweet brought up the issue of nuisance of motorbikes which was a very serious issue in his ward. Paul Hooper agreed to follow up on this issue outside of the meeting.

The Chair asked what effect the proposed 'community trigger' would have on ASB work in the County.

Paul Hooper responded that the community trigger could be exploited as a numbers game but equally it could be very valuable to communities.

The Chair thanked Paul Hooper for the report and noted that there were unresolved issues about resources being available to our partners, aggressive dog ownership, and WCC's response to the requirement for community triggers, which could be areas for further scrutiny work.

Councillor Richard Chattaway, seconded by Councillor Ray Sweet proposed an amendment to replace the word 'endorse' in recommendation one to 'note'. A vote was taken and the amendment failed.

A vote was then taken on each of the original recommendations separately. Recommendation one was carried, and recommendations two and three were carried unanimously.

Resolved

1. That the Committee agrees that anti-social behaviour (ASB) remains a priority for Warwickshire and endorses the approach being taken by the County Council and its partners to reduce the impact of ASB on individuals and the community in Warwickshire.

2. That the Committee, in the light of proposed legislation, endorses the proposal to prepare for this by developing a new Tackling ASB implementation plan in collaboration with partners.
3. To agree any areas for further scrutiny, as appropriate.

6. Fire and Rescue Service Position Paper

The Committee considered the report which gave updates on the progress of the Fire and Rescue Service's improvement plan, the strategic commissioning review, and the updated integrated risk management plan (IRMP). Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- Strategic commissioning is at the initial assessment stage and the service would be taking a report to Corporate Board outlining different ways of delivering services. Members would be involved throughout the process at previously agreed stages.
- Water rescue will be a key issue in the updated IRMP.
- Permanent wholtime crewing of Alcester Fire Station will be brought forward to October 2012.

Questions and Discussion

Stratford-on-Avon District Councillor Hazel Wright asked the following questions relating to the decommissioning of Studley Fire Station.

Will the retained service at Studley be kept in place if there are any problems implementing full time crewing at Alcester?

Gary Phillips responded that Alcester Fire Station is likely to be up running with a fulltime crew before the deadline, therefore both stations will run in parallel for a time to ensure continuous service. The Fire Service's highest priority is the safety of residents. Gary Phillips promised to keep Councillor Hazel Wright and other local members informed of the situation.

Following the closure of Studley Fire Station, what statistics can you show to prove residents are safe?

Richard Hobbs responded that the IRMP working group assessed the risks to each community. The response times should be better for the Studley area; performance figures will show that.

Councillor Richard Chattaway quoted figures showing that, from September 2011 to April 2012, the service hadn't consistently met response time targets.

Gary Phillips responded that there were other factors behind those statistics; for property fires two appliances are needed, one would travel from Bedworth

and one would travel from Nuneaton, so while the first appliance would be within the standard response time, the second might not be.

The Chair asked that the IRMP working group clarify those statistics and then circulate a note to Committee members. Councillor Clare Hopkinson requested to see the equivalent information for the Warwick area.

Councillor Sarah Boad asked how much time and resource was being put into the strategic commissioning review and if this was distracting from other areas.

Gary Phillips responded that The Fire Service was initially sensitive to those issues but recognised that investing time now could improve services and give better outcomes over the long term.

Councillor Sarah Boad asked if the Fire and Rescue Service had been consulted on the County Council's decision to move to part-night street lighting.

Gary Phillips responded that the Fire and Rescue Service had been consulted but street lighting wasn't really an issue because they use portable lighting systems for night time operations.

Resolved

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the report and resolves to support the following:

- Bring forward the commissioning of whole-time crewing at Alcester Fire Station to 1st October 2012; and
- Bring forward the decommissioning of Studley Fire Station and the RDS provision at Alcester Fire Station to 1st October 2012.

The Committee to also note and comment as appropriate on the arrangements for the Strategic Commissioning Review and development of the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Councillor Richard Chattaway abstained from voting

The Committee extended its thanks to the Fire Fighters and staff at Studley Fire Station for their hard work over the years protecting the community.

7. Work Programme 2012 (Standing Item)

The Committee considered the latest version of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny work programme (attached at Appendix A) and made the following additions:

Anti-social behaviour update

8. Any Other Items

There were no urgent items.

The Committee rose at 13.20pm

.....
Chair