

**Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board  
held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

**Present**

**Members:** Councillor John Appleton (Chair)  
Councillor Les Caborn  
Councillor Richard Chattaway (substitute for Cllr Tim Naylor)  
Councillor Jim Foster (substitute for Cllr John Ross)  
Councillor Dave Shilton  
Councillor John Whitehouse  
Councillor Sonja Wilson

**Co-opted members:** Councillor Claire Edwards (Rugby Borough Council)  
Councillor Bill Gifford (Warwick District Council)

**Other Councillors:** Councillor Colin Hayfield, Portfolio Holder, Customers, Access and Property  
Councillor Martin Heatley, Portfolio Holder Workforce and Governance  
Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety  
Councillor Wright, Portfolio Holder, Finance, Improvement and IT

**Officers:** Georgina Atkinson, Democratic Services Team Leader  
David Carter, Strategic Director, Resources Group  
Phil Evans, Head of Service Improvement and Change Management  
Andrew Lovegrove, Head of Corporate Financial Services  
Mark Ryder, Head of Localities and Community Safety

**1. General**

**(1) Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Jeff Clarke, Alan Farnell, Julie Jackson, Tim Naylor, Jerry Roodhouse, John Ross, Chris Williams and Councillors John Haynes (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council) and Derek Pickard (North Warwickshire Borough Council).

**(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

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**(3) Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board  
held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

The Board agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

**2. Public Question Time**

There were no public questions received or presented at the meeting.

**3. Questions to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders**

Members considered the Forward Plan of decisions by Cabinet and the Portfolio Holders.

A concern was raised in respect of the levels of debts that were being written-off, in respect of the 'Irrecoverable Debts' decision for the Portfolio Holder of Adult Social Care. The Chair advised that the issue be raised directly with the Portfolio Holder or referred to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

A comment was raised with regard to 'Proposed Changes to On-Street Parking Charges in Warwick'. Cllr Shilton considered that the decision demonstrated a positive example of partnership working between the County Council and Warwick District Council and recommend that a similar approach be used with the other District and Borough Councils across the county.

In response to a question raised regarding 'Kenilworth Railway Station Project', Councillor Wright, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Improvement and IT, clarified that the virement from the highways maintenance budget would only be required if there was a shortfall in funding from the Department for Transport.

A discussion took place with regard to Fire Risk Assessment. Councillor Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, explained that all property owners had a responsibility to undertake a fire risk assessment. The Portfolio Holder decision proposed that a specialist contractor be commissioned to undertake fire risk assessments for all County Council properties. David Carter, Strategic Director of Resources Group, added that the bid had been approved by Budget Council on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013. On a separate matter, Councillor Hobbs confirmed that the Fire and Rescue Service worked in partnership with a number of agencies to undertake fire risk assessments and install smoke alarms in the homes of vulnerable people.

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In response to a question raised regarding the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Police and Crime Plan 2013-17, Councillor Hobbs advised that the PCC had expressed a commitment to public consultation and attending public meetings, such as Community Forums and meetings of the Community Safety Partnership. He added that the Police and Crime Panel had a responsibility to hold the PCC to account for strategic decisions, but not the operational aspects of policing.

With regard to 'Contract Standing Orders Review', David Carter explained that the purpose of the review was to simplify the existing Standing Orders and raise the threshold for minor contracts to achieve a more efficient process. Other areas of the review included monitoring arrangements and the implementation of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. In response to a specific question regarding the Rugby Western Relief Road project, Phil Evans, Head of Service Improvement and Change Management, explained that the 'lessons learnt' had been incorporated in the County Council's review of project management.

In response to a request for clarification of the 'benefits index' appertaining to the roll-out of Superfast Broadband, Councillor Wright explained that the index would be defined by the County Council. The purpose of the index would be to assess the benefit of rolling out Superfast Broadband in specific areas.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed to note the decisions.

#### **4. Work Programme and Scrutiny Review Progress Report**

Georgina Atkinson, Democratic Services Team Leader, advised that the annual Work Programme sessions would be scheduled for June 2013. Each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees would refresh the existing work programme with the assistance of the relevant Portfolio Holders and Heads of Service, in order to identify appropriate topics and areas for future scrutiny.

Members were advised that at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013, the Cabinet had agreed to a recommendation from the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a Task and Finish Group be appointed to participate in the soft market testing exercise prior to the formal tendering of Civil Parking Enforcement. The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways had agreed to adjust the timetable by one month, to allow the Task and Finish Group to commence in May 2013. Councillor Whitehouse, Chair of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, requested advice on the involvement of both 'twin-hatted' County Councillors and District/Borough Councillors on the Task and Finish Group. David Carter advised that as the review would present a conflict of interest for those members, it would not be

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appropriate to appoint them as members of the Task and Finish Group. In light of this, it was agreed that 'twin-hatted' County Councillors and District/Borough Councillors would be invited to present their views to the Task and Finish Group as part of the evidence-gathering and consultation process.

The item continued with the Board's consideration of three proposals for Task and Finish Groups, which would commence in the new municipal year, as follows: 'Vulnerable Children with Mental Health Issues'; 'Transition from Children and Young People Services to Adult Services'; and 'Quality Accounts'. Members considered that it would be beneficial to achieve continuity in Task and Finish Group membership for the first two reviews, if possible.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board noted the agreed to updated Work Programme 2012/13 and agreed:

- 1) To note the arrangements for the annual Work Programme sessions;
- 2) To note the update on the existing Task and Finish Groups;
- 3) To endorse the Task and Finish Group regarding Civil Parking Enforcement and that this be conducted by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- 4) That three Task and Finish Groups be appointed to consider the following – 'Vulnerable Children with Mental Health Issues'; 'Transition from Children and Young People Services to Adult Services'; and 'Quality Accounts' – and that these commence in the new municipal year.

### **5. Transformation through Strategic Commissioning**

Phil Evans, Head of Service Improvement and Change Management, provided members with a progress update on developments regarding the Transformation through Strategic Commissioning Programme. It was reported that since the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet had considered three Business Cases for the following service reviews: IT Infrastructure and Support; Equality and Diversity; and Transport and Highways. Members of the Board had received a copy of the report prior to its consideration at Cabinet.

A copy of the Governance Chart from tranches one and two of the Programme was circulated to members. A discussion took place with regard to the review of Fire and Rescue and the Strategic Alliance with Northamptonshire. Members were advised that the review had been undertaken in parallel with the Integrated Risk Management Plan

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(IRMP) and it was anticipated that both key areas would be included in the Business Case.

In response to a question raised regarding the governance of the Programme, Phil Evans explained that as the approval of Business Cases would be made in accordance with the County Council's Scheme of Delegation, they could be approved by individual Strategic Directors via consideration by Corporate Board, Cabinet or Council depending on the decision that was being proposed. Following the approval of a Business Case, further stages of implementation and monitoring would be undertaken, during which the involvement of Overview and Scrutiny might be considered appropriate.

It was acknowledged that whilst there had been some slippage in the service reviews, that the Corporate Programme Office was committed to keeping the Programme on course whilst ensuring that the quality of reviews was not compromised. Councillor Whitehouse suggested where slippage had occurred that the dates be identified by using text in a different colour. Phil Evans agreed that this could be incorporated into the document.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to note the verbal update.

### **6. Scrutiny Action Plan and Recommendations Monitoring Spreadsheet 2012/13**

Georgina Atkinson presented the Board with an update on the Scrutiny Action Plan document which had been designed to capture recommendations that had been previously submitted by the Board and subsequently approved by Cabinet. She explained that the document provided members with an opportunity to regularly track the implementation of recommendations and identify instances of delay.

With regard to the Recommendations Monitoring Report 2012/13, it was considered that the monitoring undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees needed to be more consistent. The Board stressed the importance of consistent and effective monitoring across each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed:

- 1) To note the update on the Public Services Reform Scrutiny Actions Plan;
- 2) To note the Recommendations Monitoring Action Plan 2012/13; and

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- 3) That the Chair of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee review and refresh their Committee's section of the Recommendations Monitoring Report 2012/13.

**7. Public Engagement**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board was advised that the first section of the report outlined the wider public engagement activity that was undertaken across the County Council. In response to a question raised regarding the internal and external consultation groups, members were advised that they reported annually to Cabinet.

With regard to the second part of the report, Georgina Atkinson explained that it focused specifically on public engagement in Overview and Scrutiny. It had been recognised, both by members and officers, that scrutiny needed to be more 'outward-facing' and deliver improved and more consistent methods of public engagement. She explained that enhanced public engagement would increase the validity and relevance of scrutiny topics by reflecting issues which mattered to residents. In light of this, work had been undertaken to explore opportunities that would increase and improve scrutiny's interaction with the public.

It was reported that discussions had taken place with the Localities and Partnerships team to identify practical solutions for engaging members of the public in the work of scrutiny through the Community Forums. This had focused on two key areas: sharing of information; and public involvement in scrutiny reviews.

Georgina Atkinson explained that because of the extent of public engagement methodologies, there would be value in the development of a Public Engagement in Overview and Scrutiny Strategy. This would present a structured and co-ordinated approach by Overview and Scrutiny for engaging with the public, to ensure that an appropriate method was, used depending on the section of the public to be involved and the nature of the review. The Strategy would act as a toolkit, to provide scrutiny members and officers guidance when the need for public engagement in a particular piece of scrutiny work had been identified. Members were advised that the Strategy would be developed with the assistance of the Communications service, the Localities and Partnerships team, Warwickshire Observatory and the Third Sector.

It was acknowledged that the level of engagement, particularly through Community Forums, was dependent on the nature of the issue. In addition, it was considered that the County Council's libraries and One Stop Shops offered additional opportunities for public engagement and should be used to complement electronic methods of engagement, such as the use of social media.

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In response to a number of comments raised, Georgina Atkinson clarified that the report did not propose that scrutiny be undertaken by the Community Forums; the report proposed that Community Forum meetings be used as an opportunity to achieve direct contact with the public and invite their views on particular issues, as part of a Task and Finish Group's evidence-gathering process.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed:

- 1) To request a copy of the annual report to Cabinet, regarding the County Council's internal and external consultation groups;
- 2) To note the proposals regarding methods of public engagement in Overview and Scrutiny; and
- 3) That a Public Engagement in Overview and Scrutiny Strategy be developed and presented for consideration and approval at its next meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

### **8. Scrutiny Outcomes Report**

Members considered the Scrutiny Outcomes Report in respect of the 'Communication with the Public and Financial Accountability' Task and Finish Group. Georgina Atkinson explained that the report was the first of its kind to present a 'before and after' account of how the scrutiny recommendations had delivered improvements for the County Council. The key areas of the report included: what the issue was; what the Task and Finish Group recommended; how the recommendation had improved the situation; and any required future action.

Members were advised that a Scrutiny Outcomes Report would be completed for each Task and Finish Group review, once all of the relevant recommendations had been agreed as completed by the responsible Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Report could also be used to demonstrate the impact of other significant recommendations that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee may have submitted, and was not just restricted to recommendations arising from a Task and Finish Group review.

A discussion took place with regard to the publicity of Scrutiny Outcomes Reports. It was considered that although it was designed for a member audience, it could also be circulated to a wider audience. For example, the reports could be published on the County Council's web site and Intranet, and via the WarksDemocracy blog. In addition, relevant reviews could be sent to external partners.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board:

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- 1) Approved in principle the format and style of the Scrutiny Outcomes Report; and
- 2) Requested that a copy be sent to all members for comment and feedback.

**9. Treasury Management Monitoring**

Andrew Lovegrove, Head of Corporate Financial Services, presented the Overview and Scrutiny Board with the Treasury Management Monitoring report. It was reported that approximately 30 per cent of the County Council's reserves was invested in the external manager, Aviva Investors. Members were advised that the Council had adopted a very cautious Treasury Management Strategy 2012/13, with a decision to invest in high quality, low risk institutions. Andrew Lovegrove advised that a significant aspect of the policy included the placement of funds with the UK Government Debt Management Office for a period of up to three months. He confirmed that the cautious approach of the Treasury Management Strategy would remain unchanged for 2013/14.

In response to a question raised, members were advised that the County Council has commissioned the interest rate forecast from Sector Treasury Services. In addition, Sector Treasury Services also monitored the performance of Aviva Investors and ensured that the County Council's investments were safe and secure. He added that Aviva Investors used a wide range of AAA products, so the overall risk to the County Council was low.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board noted the report.

**10. Any Other Items**

No further matters were raised for discussion.

**11. Dates of Future Meetings**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board noted that the date of the next meeting had been scheduled for 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013, subject to approval at Annual Council.

The Board rose at 4.10 p.m.

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Chair