

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 7 May 2014**

Present

Members: Councillor Nicola Davies
Councillor Neil Dirveiks
Councillor Martin Heatley (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones
Councillor Bernard Kirton
Councillor Keith Kondakor
Councillor Chris Saint
Councillor June Tandy (Chair)
Councillor Alan Webb
Councillor Chris Williams

Other Councillors: Councillor Izzi Seccombe – Leader of Warwickshire
County Council
Councillor Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader of
Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Colin Hayfield, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for
Customers, Warwickshire County Council

Officers: Sally Baxter, Democratic Services Officer
David Carter, Strategic Director, Resources Group
Tonino Ciuffini, Head of Information Assets
Craig Cusack, Commercial Enterprise Lead
John Parmiter, Network and Communications Manager

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Jeff Clarke.

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

None.

(3) Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 February 2014

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2014 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

Councillor Philip Morris-Jones stated that he did not receive the further information requested with regard to the scheduled

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decision, (exempt) Disposal of WCC HEP's. Councillor Izzi Seccombe confirmed that a decision had not been taken by the Cabinet and that all Councillors would receive information to clarify the position of the Council. David Carter, Strategic Director of Resources Group assured the committee that any response put forward by Members would be considered.

A briefing note to explain and provide a breakdown of the additional expenditure on Council office buildings had not been supplied as requested therefore it would be made available to the committee as a matter of urgency.

It was suggested that consideration should be given to other leases in addition to small-holdings. This would assist the Council in monitoring and measuring the performance of assets. A report regarding small-holdings would be considered at the next meeting of the committee and site visits would be undertaken on 12 June 2014.

The Chair suggested that advice should be taken from officers in relation to the conclusion of peppercorn rents and its potential effect on community services and whether mechanisms were in place to mitigate against any negative impact. (It might be appropriate that a Task and Finish Group to consider the impact).

Adult's and Children's Services performance figures for Quarter 3 were in the process of being finalised. Heads of Service were in the process of considering mechanisms to meet targets. Finalised figures would be provided to the committee.

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.

In response to concerns raised in relation to Assisted Area Status and the retention of business rates, Councillor Alan Cockburn explained that information had been presented to extend the Area Assisted Status to include Abbey in Nuneaton. Councillor Izzi Seccombe explained that areas of growth had been identified and therefore included resulting in the extension.

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The Chair commented that the Area Assisted Status was originally concerned with economic regeneration but its emphasis had shifted to economic growth. In determining areas requiring assistance the Local Enterprise Partnership had considered in-depth information.

The consultation document was technical and members would receive a copy upon request.

A question was asked regarding third sector consultation on the One Organisational Plan to which Councillor Izzi Seccombe highlighted the extensive number of operational documents and the Plan's relevance across all directorates. The One Organisational Plan would be monitored by Warwickshire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

It was confirmed that the application for approximately £2 million pounds made to Defra for the Rural Development Plan, if successful, would be the total amount for a period of 5 years (2015 – 2020).

4. BDUK Project

Tonino Ciuffini, Head of Information Assets informed the committee that the BDUK Project was on schedule to meet the aim of providing superfast broadband to the original target of 91% of properties in the sub-region, with a basic broadband speed of 2Mbps to 100% of properties. All expected dates had been met by the team.

John Parmiter, Network and Communications Manager, provided an overview of the project which included the level of investment made by Warwickshire County Council, BDUK and District and Borough Council's to upgrade 47,000 premises.

Some districts, identified as being most rural, required the most upgrade work. On 7th April 2014, Snitterfield was the first identified area to receive superfast cable in its cabinet which supplied broadband to the area. In terms of speed received, the closer a property was to the cabinet, the faster the broadband connection.

Phase 2 has already begun with BT completing a survey of Warwickshire which had identified the following priority areas: North Warwickshire, Warwick, Stratford on Avon and Nuneaton and Bedworth. It was acknowledged that Phase 2 was 2 months ahead of schedule with completion of the phase anticipated to be 2016.

A website was available for members of the public to monitor progress of the project and receive information about when the project was scheduled to come into effect in their area. The importance of this resource was noted due to the ever changing nature of the work.

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Further funding in the region of £3.68 million had been made available to extend superfast broadband. To access the additional funding, a bid for match funding would be considered at the next meeting of Cabinet scheduled for 5 June 2014 and a bid has already been submitted via the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Following discussion and questioning from the Committee, the following points were noted:

- 1) Additional funding, if successful, would increase coverage from the current aim of 91% to at least 95%. It was explained that the funding was also aimed at ensuring all areas received at least 2Mbps.
- 2) Funding was not allowed to be used for areas where the private sector had or have plans to install commercial broadband.
- 3) Private providers had been contacted to ascertain if they were going to invest in any areas in Warwickshire. The process would need to be repeated if there is additional funding.
- 4) Copper cabling did not used to support the infrastructure County wide thus as running fibre to individual households was not feasible and too expensive. Instead, fibre would be installed into the existing cabinets.
- 5) Stratford on Avon district was receiving a substantial part of the funding for superfast broadband however, a large part of the district would still not benefit. During Phase 1, 50 cabinets had been installed countywide with fibre, 30 of which were located in Stratford. Further information would be provided to Councillor Chris Saint.
- 6) It was clarified that the target figure of coverage was based on premises across an area not population.
- 7) It was confirmed that consumers would be charged to upgrade their service to superfast broadband. This applied to all providers and not just BT.
- 8) In relation to future housing developments and those that were currently being developed, the developer should be required to install cabinets to serve the area. A working group had been established and in future, would feed into the planning process to raise developers' awareness.
- 9) Further information was available via the <http://cswbroadband.org.uk/> website and this would assist local members in disseminating information to residents.
- 10) Local MP's supported the BDUK Project and the involvement of European MP's would be explored.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

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- 1) Notes the update of the BDUK Project to date.

5. WES Traded Services

Craig Cusack, Commercial Enterprise Lead for Warwickshire County Council, provided the committee with an overview of the Warwickshire Educational Services (WES) including how WES operates, its performance and potential future.

WES provided 28 support services which were broken down into three elements; pupil, building and office. It was important that the services remained fluid and responsive to the needs of schools especially when schools were moving away from the maintained model and were moving towards academy status.

The market was considered to have a number of pressures in terms of changing local structures, increased academisation, delegated funding, customer budget pressures and an ever increasing number of suppliers.

Despite the market pressures, WES was performing well; it had achieved a customer satisfaction score of 7.4 out of 10 by putting value first to lower issues by 66% and improve resolution time by 25%. By building resilience through procuring cross county work and establishing the reshaping of the provision and structures, sustainability would be achieved and secure the potential future for WES.

Following discussion and questioning from the Committee, the following points were noted:

- 1) WES focused on quality of the service provided not price. In comparison with other providers, WES was competitive.
- 2) Despite the freedom of choice and other providers, WES continued to grow with the number of academy clients increasing.
- 3) The service was a 'one stop shop' which was important to build and maintain relationships with schools.
- 4) Private companies would need to have the same insurance policies as a public. However, due to the history of schools and local authorities working together, WES would have a consolidated approach and a better understanding of schools' needs.
- 5) A service was available to advise schools with regard to their energy consumption and promote energy efficiency.
- 6) WES was a different type of provider however, it worked alongside the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO).
- 7) Customer satisfaction was monitored and compared by tracking complaints. The information was monitored by the Board.

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Resolved:

That the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to note the information contained in the presentation.

6. Work Programme 2013/14

The Chairman presented the Committee with the Work Programme for the remainder of 2013/14 and invited members to suggest additional items for consideration at future meetings.

In light of the WES Traded Services presentation and the increasing pressures of school budgets, the committee suggested that Steve Smith, Head of Property, be invited to discuss school buildings and the pressures facing the Council in keeping them in good working order.

Further to the earlier discussion with regard to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), it was noted that a new Chairman would be leading the LEP and he would be invited to a future meeting of the committee to discuss progress.

A question was asked with regard to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and whether it was legally in force and being implemented by the Council. It was agreed that a briefing note would be circulated to members of the committee and it would be considered at a future meeting of the committee.

The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed:

- 1) The proposed Work Programme 2013/14 and;
- 2) The proposed Action Plan and;
- 3) Invite Steve Smith to present information about school buildings at a future meeting of the committee and;
- 4) Receive a briefing note detailing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with consideration to be given at a future meeting of the committee.

7. Urgent Matters

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There were no urgent matters raised for discussion.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that the date of the next meeting had been scheduled for 7th July 2014 at 10 a.m.

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Chair