

Minutes of Leader Decision Making Session held on 4 February 2011

Present: Councillor Alan Farnell (Decision maker)

Other Councillors: Councillor Richard Hobbs

Officers: Janet Purcell –Executive and Member Support Manager
Mark Ryder – Head of Trading Standards, Heritage & Culture
Tricia Morrison – Head of Performance
Elizabeth Abbott - Performance and Improvement Officer

1. General

(1) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None

(2) Minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2011

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2011 be agreed as a correct record.

2. Warwickshire County Council Response to the DCLG on consultation on the proposed single Data Set

The Leader considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which set out a proposed response to the Department of Communities and Local Government on the proposed Single Data List. It was noted that the purpose of the single data list is to catalogue all the data collections made with a view to reducing their number where appropriate. It was stressed that this is not a list of measures we are expected to collect and the old National Indicator set no longer exists. Where data collection has been solely for calculating national indicators, these data collections have ceased.

The Leader concluded that the proposed response was appropriate, in particular to request that there is not duplication of collection across partners leading to an increase in data demand and burden across the public sector.

Resolved

That the Warwickshire County Council submission the Department of Communities and Local Government on the proposed Single Data List be as set out in the appendix to these minutes.

3 Any Other Business

None

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Leader

The meeting rose at 12.10 pm

Warwickshire Council Submission to the proposed Single Data List

1	<p>Specific requests about inclusion, retention or deletion of data collections.</p> <p><u>Inclusion</u> There are no data collections that we would like to see included on the Single Data List that are not already included.</p> <p><u>Retention with a review of content or collection frequency</u> Supporting People Data Collections – We would question the validity of keeping and collecting the amount of data required given the reduction in the supporting people grants. Whilst we are not proposing the deletion of this data set we may wish to review the amount of data collected.</p> <p>Capital returns Generally it is difficult to understand how these collections aid the administration of funding. We would question the requirement to provide a forecast return as well as four quarterly returns and propose instead that a mid-year return suffice.</p> <p>Children in Need Census – This data collection takes approximately 2 months to complete and whilst we are provided with the outputs from this collection, in the existing format they are not useful and would therefore welcome a review of how the output could be made more useful.</p> <p>Children Looked After – The complexity in collecting the data makes this collection difficult to understand. However, we would not want to see the collection dropped but would welcome a review on its content</p> <p>Safeguarding (New Collection) – as the results of the Munro review are not yet available, there is concern about the extra demands placed on resources to provide this additional information.</p> <p>Key Stage Assessment Data – The Single Data List does not reflect the amount of work required to produce this data collection as it covers more than one key stage and detailed information has to be provided down to each child.</p> <p>School Census – There is a huge burden on schools to collect this data. Whilst the information is useful, given the amount of time and resources required to collect it, we would question the need to produce it on a termly basis.</p> <p>Waste information will continue to be input into WasteDataFlow by Districts / Boroughs / County and DEFRA should be able to extract the required statistics. The only concern is that it may not be easy to identify tonnage of “fly tipped” waste and we would question the value of knowing this.</p> <p><u>Deletion</u></p> <p>Business Improvement Districts This is no longer covered by WCC and as such we will not be able to report on this at a County level.</p> <p>Bus punctuality indicator This indicator is costly to collect and its value has been questioned.</p> <p>CRILL – Care Quality Commission has now stopped producing the LARL that was fed by CRILL (Capturing Regulation Information at a Local Level). We therefore question the need to continue with the data collection in its existing format.</p>
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	<p>Revenue Grants – With the reduction in the number of revenue grants received by the authority, it is difficult to see a rationale for a separate return and as they are audited by the government department, the spend information is already available.</p> <p>ELGAR The 'data to be collected for Enhanced Local Government Accrual Reporting' otherwise known as ELGAR is an additional burden announced this year. This is a report for actual spend for each quarter on an accruals basis and at present do not have the system in place to produce these reports. We would welcome clarity with regards to the usefulness of this collection both for central and local government. This does add to our list of returns and it is not clear what has been removed to compensate.</p> <p>Traded Services return – With Local Authorities having a general power of competence it is not clear as to the benefit central government would derive from the monitoring of trading activity as this level (the costs of services are collected through other data sets).</p> <p>Capital Forecast Return. We would welcome the deletion of this collection as we find it of little value. It is due in January and is merely a forecast for the following year's spend and financing which is then subject to change as a result of priority changes etc.</p> <p>Section 251 – This data collection is complex and difficult to understand and we therefore question the necessity for central monitoring. The distribution of resources for children's services should be decided locally without the need for central monitoring, certainly for parts 3 and 4 of the return.</p>
2	<p>General Topics</p>
	<p>As a general comment on Central Government finance returns, we would welcome the issue dates to be later than present in order to assure accuracy prior to the publicised release date and therefore reduce the burden of repeat requests for completion. Known issues include lack of notification of delays in issuing returns and validations in the forms not working.</p> <p>We would welcome more feedback from CLG about their understanding of local accountability. The local authority should be in a position to determine what information is required in order to ensure local accountability rather than this to be pre determined.</p> <p>Local accountability information submitted to central government in the interest of improving local accountability. We would welcome greater clarification on the main reasons for collecting the information in particular around local accountability. There is need to ensure the ability to determine at a local level what information is required in order to be held locally accountable by local communities.</p> <p>It is also unclear as to how this information will be published in order to be more accountable. It is unclear whether as from the 1st April, there will be an additional requirement to publish existing data sets that are returned to the relevant government departments in a different format.</p>
3	<p>List as a whole</p>
	<p>The latest version of the Single Data List currently appears to capture all the required amount of information to meet our statutory responsibilities and we have not identified any omissions. However, we welcome the opportunity to review the list on an annual basis to ensure that it is up to date and the collections listed are still relevant.</p>

In the current list, there are 7 new data collections the additional burden this places on the local authority is unclear at this time.

We recognise the purpose of the Single Data List is to a) aid transparency and b) facilitate the control of the volume of data central government asks of local government.

We would welcome the opportunity to have an open dialogue with CLG in order to have a shared understanding of the wider information burden on local authorities not only in terms of the time and resources required to collect the data in the Single Data list but also the emerging proposals from the Local Government Improvement Board for a shared set of metrics measuring cost productivity and customer satisfaction.

Whilst the removal of the NI set has been welcomed in allowing us the freedom to develop more locally accountable performance measures, we are concerned that the new single data list does not provide the complete picture from a partnership and local area perspective and we would also welcome a fuller picture of the data requirements placed on partners in a "geographical area".

There is some concern that the single data list will be repeated by other Central Government Departments for other partner agencies such as the Police and as a result, there is the potential risk for duplication, recreating silos and an overall increase in central government data demand and burden across the public sector. We would like to see the principle of collect once, use multiple times adopted.