

Minutes of a Meeting of the North Warwickshire Area Committee held on 13 September 2006 at the Magistrate's Court Building, Sheepy Road, Atherstone

Present: -

Members of the Committee

Councillors

Ray Sweet (Chair)
Richard Grant (Vice Chair)
Peter Fowler
Colin Hayfield
Joan Lea
Brian Moss
Mick Stanley

Officers

Peter Endall, Senior Solicitor
Adrian Litvinoff, Area Manager, NW Library Service
Ann Mawdsley, Senior Committee Administrator
Dave Potter, Area Schools and Communities Officer
Alistair Rigby, Community Partnership Officer North Warwickshire
Joanne Roberts, Administrative Assistant North Warwickshire
Kathy Robinson, Area Community Safety Manager North
Diana Spragg, Area Manager for Early Years and Childcare, North Warwickshire
Lee White, Project Manager – Major Public Transport Schemes
Kate Wilding, Participation Youth Worker
Alison Williams, Area Manager North Warwickshire

Also in Attendance

Chief Superintendent David Whitehouse
Sarah Jevons, Voice 4m
Matthew Woolard, Voice 4m
10 Members of the Public attended.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anne Forwood, Chief Inspector Naughton, Julia Brook, Dave Clarke and Nick Gower-Johnson.

(2) Members' Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as set out below:

- (1) by virtue of them serving as North Warwickshire Borough Councillors as follows:-

Councillors Peter Fowler, Colin Hayfield, Joan Lea, Brian Moss, Mick Stanley and Ray Sweet.

(3) Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 July 2006 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the North Warwickshire Area Committee meeting held on 26 July 2006 were agreed as a correct record with the following correction:

Page 1 – 1(1) Apologies – Replace the word “Norton” with the word “Naughton”.

Matters Arising

None.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 August 2006 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the North Warwickshire Area Committee meeting held on 15 August 2006 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

None.

2. Public Question Time

(1) Question from Sue Healy, Ansley Parish Council

“Could the Area Committee consider dropping the curb at Drayton Court, Trentham Road, Hartshill where members of the public were having problems with wheelchairs, pushchairs etc? A request had been made to the Borough Council who had replied that this was the responsibility of the County Council.”

Councillor Richard Grant and Alison Williams agreed to look at the best way of taking the matter forward and to liaise with Ms Healy.

3. Youth Opportunities Funding Panel Presentation

The Committee received a presentation from Sarah Jevons and Matthew Woolard on behalf of the Youth Opportunities Funding Panel on the finances spent to date on two projects in Coleshill and Kingsbury. They noted that the Panel consisted of 12 young people from across North

Warwickshire who managed Government funding in an amount of £28,000 for capital projects and £25,000 for opportunity funding for projects and activities. These amounts were for one year and would be repeated in April 2007 before the scheme ended in 2008. Groups of young people from 13-19 could bid for funding to support new activities or capital projects which would benefit groups / young people in North Warwickshire.

Kate Wilding, Participation Youth Worker, added that this was a national scheme and the programme had just started and had been advertised in all local press, through the Youth Service, and voluntary organisations. Visits to all schools were planned to promote the programme.

Members thanked Sarah and Matthew for their presentation and for the work they were doing and requested that if Members could help in any way that the Panel contact the Area Office.

The Committee requested a progress report in six months.

4. Presentation on Safer Neighbourhoods

Chief Superintendent David Whitehouse gave a presentation to the Committee about the Warwickshire proposals for safer neighbourhood policing, which were 18 months in advance of the national programme. While there had been a reduction in crime in North Warwickshire it was important to work with local communities and partners to address the continued feeling of insecurity and lack of police officers. There would be four teams in North Warwickshire and while there would be no additional police resources, the number of Police Community Support Officers would increase to 124. There was a commitment from the Government to fund additional PCSOs countrywide and it was expected that the number would increase further to 187. He added that the outcomes from safer neighbourhood policing would be:

- a stronger engagement process
- people being reassured
- less crime and disorder
- effective partnership working.

During the discussion the following points were highlighted:

1. Police were aware of the problems people faced in contacting them and it was felt that the new teams would deal with routine matters which would give the system more flexibility to deal with demand.
2. PCSOs serving rural areas would be given bicycles to cover the larger areas and the initiative putting PCSOs onto mobile libraries would be reinvigorated.
3. PCSOs did not have powers of detention but were considered invaluable as the eyes and ears in the community and a standardised set of powers expected in place by the end of the year would give PCSOs the power to issue fixed penalty notices and search for alcohol and drugs.
4. Members recognised the work being carried forward by Warwickshire Police in terms of both the local and national picture and acknowledged their role in changing local perception by

supporting the work of the Police and passing good information on. One vehicle for achieving this would be through the Local Area Agreements (LAAs) which would bring greater accountability for Councillors.

5. Members welcomed the idea of a fortnightly e-mail with updates on what was happening locally.
6. Members agreed that it would be better to consolidate police presence to Area Forum meetings, but also requested that a meeting be set up every six months with all Parish, Borough and County Councillors with the Commander to discuss issues.
7. Police surgeries would be set up by local teams accordingly to local needs.

The Chair thanked Chief Superintendent Whitehouse for his presentation and noted that the Area Committee was fully committed to working with partners to make North Warwickshire a safer place.

5. North Warwickshire Well-being and Social Inclusions Funds 2006/07

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development detailing the Well-being Fund Commissions for decision and to note the progress of previous allocations.

Alison Williams noted that the project 'Governance through the ages' were looking for a number of Trustees to work with young people and requested that any Councillor who was interested in this to contact the Area Office.

Resolved:

That the Area Committee:

1. note the end of project reports for two funded projects 'People in Employment' and 'Supporting Financial Inclusion'.
2. approve Well-Being Fund Commissions for:
 - i) Healthy living/personal safety workshops - £2,523
 - ii) Governance through the ages - £1,500
 - iii) Vital Villages - £5,000
 - iv) Enhanced Mentoring Services - £5,000
 - v) Local Skills for Local Needs - £5,000
 - vi) North Warwickshire Play Strategy - £4,000
 - vii) Village Traffic Plans Officer - £15,000 pa for three years, subject to the continuation of Well-Being Funds
3. defer to the 29 November meeting the Well-Being Fund Commission 'Community Regeneration Project - £10,000' to allow further information to be provided.
4. approve the use of Social Inclusion Funds to support the project 'Homelessness Prevention & Financial Literacy Project - £10,000'.

6. Review of North Warwickshire Area Business Plan 2005/06

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development considering the County Council's performance and proposed actions on promoting lifelong learning and personal development in the North Warwickshire Area.

2005/06

The following responses were given to queries put forward by Members at the Area Committee meeting on 26 July 2006:

1. In recording points scores for pupils on School Improvement Strategy for 16-19 year-olds, this involved a wide number of agencies such as the LSC. In the future it was expected that these statistics would be available.
2. Diana Spragg noted that in terms of the development of universal early years and childcare entitlements it was reported that the completion of Phase 1 has been completed in March 2006 and had included two Children's Centres in North Warwickshire. Phase 2 was due for completion in March 2008.
3. It was noted that the Library Service had not been able to engage with the Children's University programme due partly to ongoing staffing problems due to protracted health issues and the focus being on frontline services in libraries. It was noted however that the programme was expanding and that there were currently 15 Warwickshire schools involved and the introduction of a Kids College aimed at Stage 1 pupils was being considered.
4. It was reported that the first of the two-part building programme at Woodlands School has just been completed and the second part was due for completion in February 2007. It was agreed that the best time for Members to visit the new school would be during the summer holidays in 2007 and Alison Williams agreed to investigate the possibility of holding an Area Committee meeting at the school. Dave Potter paid tribute to the staff at the Woodlands School for their role in the programme.
5. The drop in school attendance had been mainly due to the winter flu epidemic and the focus on holidays during term-time being made by the Education Social Workers. Members requested that they be given the actual numbers as well as just the percentages given in the report.
6. Adrian Litvinoff had requested information from Trading Standards on Talking Shop and would revert with the information once it was to hand.
7. Adrian Litvinoff reported that the reason the retention rate had dropped in 05/06 was attributed partly to the adult and children's schemes being run simultaneously causing pressure on staff having to run both events together and parents who wanted to take part in the adult event and observe their children's participation. Due to the above the events were run separately in 2006/07.
8. Adrian Litvinoff reported in terms of supporting reading generally, that nationally and locally there had been a gentle decline in the

general promotion of reading and lending books in libraries. The Library Service had worked hard to promote growth in reading and to help people in this area, particularly those for whom reading was difficult. He added that there had been nine libraries in Warwickshire that had increased lending and four of those had been in North Warwickshire.

8.

2006/07

- a. It was noted that now that Hugh Disley was in place as the County Youth Officer, that work on the youth offer was expected to move forward. Members reported that there were a number of local programmes already underway with young people in many areas.
- b. Alison Williams agreed to check if there were any targets available for under 18 Conception Rates particularly in light of the Government target to halve the under 18 Conception Rate in England by 2010.
- c. Members agreed that there ought to be a strategy in place for upskilling local people to meet regeneration and to affect a skill base in the area. It was noted that there were a number of local initiatives in place to increase learning in North Warwickshire involving a wide range of agencies and the LAA would have a dimension of upskilling. Dave Potter noted that discussions were underway on how best to transfer the newly published Children and Young People Plan to local delivery with respect to skills. Adrian Litvinoff agreed to discuss with the Adult and Community Learning Service the changes that had been brought about due to changes in LSC funding and whether the service was any clearer in terms of supporting skills in Warwickshire.
- d. Dave Potter acknowledged the enormous commitment from staff in North Warwickshire schools where trends were generally improving and while there was always room for improvement, felt the staff were a credit to the Authority.

Resolved:

That the North Warwickshire Area Committee:

1. Notes the Performance Report for 2005-06 in respect of Promoting Lifelong Learning and Personal Development.
2. Approves the Business Plan for 2006-07 in respect of Promoting Lifelong Learning and Personal Development.

7. Development of the Warwickshire Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The Chair reported that Nick Gower-Johnson was unable to attend the meeting and the Committee agreed that the item should be deferred and considered at a seminar to be held at a date agreed by Members.

8. Train Services to North Warwickshire Stations and the Future of Polesworth Station

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy informing Members of the changes from December 2008 to train services calling at North Warwickshire stations and requesting that Members confirm their views on the future of Polesworth Railway Station.

Lee White noted the following:

- i. Following the completion of the modernisation to the West Coast Mainline (WCML) in December 2008, there would be increase in the train service to approximately 32 trains a day to Atherstone and Polesworth Stations linking to major points between London and Liverpool/Crewe.
- ii. An alternative scheme for Polesworth Station providing a ramp costing approximately £400,000 as opposed to the replacement bridge estimated at £1.5 million was proposed. It was felt this stood a greater chance of success and would strengthen the case for keeping Polesworth Station open.
- iii. It was agreed that an increase in the rail service would have a significant effect on the community and would be a big incentive in terms of jobs and the economy.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

1. Polesworth Station currently had a limited service that did not meet the aspirations of town residents.
2. Members were pleased to support the proposal and would support any objections to the Station at Polesworth being closed.

Resolved:

That:

1. Area Committee welcomes the increase in train services to North Warwickshire stations proposed in the December 2008 timetable.
2. Area Committee supports the retention of a limited train service to Polesworth station of up to three trains per day in each direction, subject to the external funding of the infrastructure works required to return the station to full operation.
3. If external funding is not forthcoming to carry out the infrastructure works at Polesworth Station, Area Committee supports the provision of an hourly train service to Atherstone and that Officers should seek to ensure the Department for Transport or the rail industry funds a public transport link to Atherstone and Tamworth Stations from Polesworth.
4. The above recommendations of the Area Committee are made known to Cabinet should the Department for Transport seek to start the formal closure procedure for Polesworth Station.

9. 2006-07 Capital Programme for Transport - Delegated Budget

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy outlining a modification to the junction of the B5000 Grendon Road and Common Lane in Polesworth made by Councillor Stanley which could be funded from the £40,000 delegated budget allocated to the Area Committee for transport projects to address local priorities. The Area Committee were requested to authorise that a consultation with local residents be undertaken prior to the scheme being included in the programme for 2006-07.

Members requested a full breakdown of the estimated cost of the improvement of £25,000.

Resolved:

That a consultation with local residents be undertaken on a proposed improvement to the junction of the B5000 Grendon Road with Common Lane, Polesworth.

10. Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee agreed the provisional items identified for future meetings with the following inclusions:

Seminar (date to be determined)

Local Area Agreements

29 November 2006

Arts in North Warwickshire

Well-being Fund 2006/07

Looked After Children in North Warwickshire

Area Business Plan

11. Any Other Items

There were no other items.

Date of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Wednesday 29 November 2006 in Atherstone.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 8.20 p.m.