

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 10 MARCH 2011

Present:

Members of the Board:

Councillors: Les Caborn

Michael Doody

Peter Fowler

Tim Naylor

Jerry Roodhouse

John Ross

Chris Saint (Chair)

Clare Hopkinson (replacing Councillor Dave Shilton for this meeting)

June Tandy

John Whitehouse

Co-opted members

For Partnership

Matters

Councillor Claire Edwards (Rugby Borough Council)

Councillor John Haynes (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council)

Councillor Sue Main (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)

Portfolio

Holder

Councillor Alan Farnell

Councillor Colin Hayfield (Portfolio Holder for Customers, Workforce and Partnership)

Officers:

David Abbott, Assistant to Political Group (Liberal Democrat)

Elizabeth Abbott, Performance and Improvement Officer

David Carter, Strategic Director Customers, Workforce and Governance

Dave Clarke, Strategic Director Resources

Phil Evans, Head of Facilities Management

Monica Fogarty, Assistant Chief Executive

Ann Mawdsley, Principal Committee Administrator

Richard Maybey, Assistant to Political Group (Labour)

Tricia Morrison, Head of Performance

Jane Pollard, Democratic Services Manager

Martin Stott, Head of Environment and Resources

1. General

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Jeremy Bowden (North Warwickshire Borough Council), Councillor Bernard Kirton, Councillor Dave Shilton (replaced by Councillor Clare Hopkinson for this meeting), Janet Smith (Warwickshire Police Authority) and Councillor Sonja Wilson.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Jerry Roodhouse declared a personal interest as the Chair of Warwickshire LINKs.

(3) Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 12 January 2011

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 12 January 2011 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair. There were no matters arising that were not covered as part of the Agenda items.

Part 1 – Partnership Matters

2. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11

The Board considered the report of the Strategic Director for Customers, Workforce and Governance outlining the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny during 2010/11.

A discussion ensued and the following points were noted:

1. Members considered the Annual Report in its current draft form to be lacking in substance or any view for the future.
2. Members commended the "Scrutiny Bytes" document, and there was general consensus that the Annual Report should be in a similar format and content to that document.
3. Much of the substance of work carried out during committee meetings was missing from the report.
4. There needed to be a balance between the information provided in the report and other sources of information detail that could be linked to the report.
5. There needed to be greater emphasis placed on the outcomes achieved through overview and scrutiny.

It was agreed that the Chair would work with the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs to redress the report in response to the comments set out above. The revised report would then be forwarded to all members of the Committee electronically for comment, before being considered by the full Council in May.

Part 2 – Council Matters

3. Public Question Time

None.

4. Questions to the Portfolio Holder/Portfolio Holders Update

The Chair welcomed Councillor Alan Farnell and Councillor Colin Hayfield to the meeting.

In response to questions put to the Leader and Portfolio Holder, the following points were noted:

1. Councillor John Whitehouse stated that he and Councillor Tim Naylor were two of the three nominated Members on ESPO (Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation). ESPO were currently undergoing a major strategic review which would require Warwickshire County Council having to take a set of decisions about future arrangements. There was some concern that with the absence of Councillor Martin Heatley, that the Administration was not sufficiently engaged with this process. Councillor Tim Naylor stressed the importance of ESPO as a company with a turnover half the size of the County Council's turnover, and was an organisation that addressed many of Warwickshire's ambitions in terms of partnership working, commissioning and procurement.

Councillor Farnell acknowledged that this was an issue for Members to discuss, but this should ideally be done once the consultancy work being carried out was complete. He undertook to attend all future meetings of ESPO until Councillor Heatley's return.

2. Councillor Michael Doody asked when Members were likely to see a complete list of reduced bus services throughout the county and in particular, in rural areas.

The Chair noted that the remit of the Board covered the budget implications only, and that bus services were otherwise part of the remit of the Communities O&S. Councillor Farnell noted that the Council had agreed to additional money being put into bus services, and Dave Clarke undertook to send the full details to all Members.

3. Councillor John Haynes (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council) asked for an update regarding the decision made about Bulkington Library.

Councillor Hayfield noted that a review of all 34 Warwickshire libraries was being carried out, and that 16 had been identified as not being viable in their present form. He added that no decisions had been made about the closure of any libraries, and communities were being encouraged to work together to look at alternative solutions.

There was some discussion concerning the remits of the Board and the O&S Committees, and it was agreed that where issues were linked to both, such as with libraries, that a decision needed to be made about which committee should scrutinise an item, to reduce any duplication.

The Chair thanked the Leader and Portfolio Holder for their responses.

5. Development of Draft Measures and Targets in Support of the CBP 2011-13

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive presenting the proposed measures and targets for inclusion relevant to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Councillor John Whitehouse commended the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which had been distributed to Members of the Board, as these were a fair reflection of the discussions that had taken place in considering this report. He added that it was important that Scrutiny Committees had access to the appropriate Business Level Plans. In order to ensure that a better process was put in place for future years, he proposed that Members be provided with a visual reproduction of the process, including the timing of key stages and how the process sat within the decision making of the Council. Tricia Morrison undertook to look into this.

During the ensuing discussion, the following was noted:

1. Revised targets were given for Ambition 5 – Environment and Housing, Warwickshire is Clean and Green as follows:
Target for 2011/12 from 600 kg per annum to 589 kg per annum
Target for 2012/13 from 594 kg per annum to 552 kg per annum
Target for 2013/14 from 591 kg per annum to 539 kg per annum.
These revised targets would be reflected in the report to Cabinet in April.
2. All three O&S Committees had been dissatisfied about the information they had been given to scrutinise. Councillor Tandy thanked officers for the additional information which had been provided at her request, for the Children and Young People O&S Committee. Tricia Morrison noted the desire of all O&S Committees for a further report, including benchmarking data and trend direction.
3. Members agreed that even where targets were not available, that baseline and benchmarking information should be provided.
4. Locality Plans should be included under Ambition 1 – Community and Customers.
5. Under Ambition 1 – Community and Customers, information had traditionally been based on Public Satisfaction Surveys on a sample base, which was previously a statutory requirement set by the Government, which had been continued to preserve the baseline information. These were carried out every two years and it would be too expensive to carry out on an annual basis. It was agreed that consideration should be given to how annual surveys could be carried out to monitor how the public were responding to the transformation of the Council, with continued importance placed on surveying a balanced sample. The Chair asked Councillor Hayfield to discuss with David Carter and Monica Fogarty how best to take this forward.
6. It was suggested that the set of measures formulated by the Young Foundation to measure happiness should be considered to measure “Residents of Warwickshire are happy with Warwickshire as a place to live” under Ambition 1.
7. It was agreed that the document needed to reflect challenging targets at a county and locality level with a clear link between the ambitions of the County Council and outcomes.
8. In response to a query regarding the level of Member involvement in developing the measures and targets, Councillor Alan Farnell noted that he and Councillor Bob Stevens had been involved with discussions with the relevant officers from each Directorate. The role of scrutiny could support the process by considering whether targets were challenging enough and helping to challenge Strategic Directors and Heads of Service to meet those targets.

9. Tricia Morrison undertook to correct the duplication of e-services in Ambitions 1 and 7.
10. It was acknowledged that reducing the number of NEETs (16 to 18 year olds out of education, employment or training) in the present climate and against a national trend of increasing NEET numbers, would be challenging. The target reduction of 3.6% was against the current percentage. Elizabeth Abbott undertook to clarify for Members what the baseline was developed on. Councillor Colin Hayfield added that within Warwickshire there was an imbalance of NEETs, and that the target needed to be broken down to an area basis.
11. Under Ambition 7 – Organisation the word “optimum” was defined as wanting to be fully utilising property in the best interests of the County Council and its staff, by 2013/14. It was noted that the baseline utilisation for 2011/12 of 57% was poor and there had been difficulty in addressing this challenge for many years. It was suggested that where accommodation was not fully utilised, this space could be offered to partners or other organisations.
12. Dave Clarke noted that the importance of bearing in mind the optimum usage variable, and that it would not be possible to occupy some buildings to optimum capacity without considerable work and cost to sort out buildings, particularly historic buildings. Members agreed that Accommodation and Alternative Ways of Working should be considered as a future item on the work programme.
13. Dave Clarke confirmed that the County Council had been working to a tolerance of +1/-1% for a number of years already.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board, having considered and challenged the draft measures and targets relating to the Corporate Business Plan 2011-12, requested that the report to be considered by the Cabinet on 14 April 2011, be circulated to all County Council Members of the Board once approved by the Portfolio Holder..

6. Scrutiny Reviews Progress Report and New Proposals for Task and Finish Groups

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Customers, Workforce and Governance setting out the progress of scrutiny reviews and proposals for four new task and finish groups to undertake reviews.

The following Chairs and membership were agreed:

Maternity Services

Cllr Balaam (Chair)

Cllr Tandy

One Conservative (from the Teenage Pregnancy review)

Quality Accounts

Cllr Shilton (Chair)

Cllr Balaam

Cllr Clarke

Cllr Foster

Cllr Tooth

Cllr Warner

Older Adults Mental Health Services

Cllr Roodhouse (Chair)

Cllr Fowler

Cllr Tooth

Waste Disposal

Cllr Chattaway (Chair)

Cllr Hopkinson

Cllr Lobbett

Cllr Whitehouse

7. Work Programme 2010-11

The Overview and Scrutiny Board noted the work programme and made the following suggestions for future reports:

- Progress Report on the Transformation of Warwickshire County Council to the meeting on 28 September 2011.
- Staffing – a report to go to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information relevant to the remit of that Committee, followed by a report to the Board.

The Chair agreed to investigate holding a seminar for all Members and the District and Borough Councils to look at s106 agreement monies.

8. Any Other Items

The Chair pointed out that this would be the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board that Dave Clarke would attend before his retirement from the Council on 25 March. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Dave Clarke for his support and clarity of advice on financial matters over the years and wished him well in whatever he chose to do in the future.

9. Dates of Future Meetings

Members of the Board noted the dates of future meetings. It was noted that there would be a number of Members away for the 28 September meeting and it was agreed that this should be reviewed at the next meeting, following the Annual Council meeting.

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Chair

The Board rose at 12:00 p.m.