

# Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 25 May 2011

**Present:**

**Members of the Board:**

**Councillors:** John Appleton (Chair)  
Jeff Clarke (Vice Chair)  
June Tandy  
Tim Naylor  
Jerry Roodhouse  
Dave Shilton  
John Ross  
Les Caborn

**Co-opted members for partnership matters:**

Clare Edwards (Rugby Borough Council)  
Derek Pickard (North Warwickshire Borough Council)  
John Haynes (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council)

**Portfolio Holders:**

Colin Hayfield, Portfolio Holder Customers, Access and Physical Assets  
David Wright, Portfolio Holder Finance, Governance and IT  
Martin Heatley, Portfolio Holder Improvement and Workforce

**Officers:**

Dave Abbott, Democratic Services Officer, Resources  
Emma Curtis, Performance & Improvement Officer, Resources  
Michelle McHugh, Overview & Scrutiny Manager, Resources  
Janet Purcell, Executive & Member Support Manager, Resources  
Steven Smith, Head of Property, Resources

## 1. General

### (1) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Councillor Jeff Clarke, seconded by Councillor John Ross, moved and it was resolved that Councillor John Appleton take the position of Chair.

Councillor John Ross, seconded by Councillor John Appleton, moved and it was resolved that Councillor Jeff Clarke take the position of Vice Chair.

### Welcome

The Chair welcomed Councillor Martin Heatley back on behalf of the Board

**(2) Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Chris Williams, Councillor John Whitehouse, Councillor Bernard Kirton, Councillor Peter Fowler, Councillor Bill Gifford (District Councillor, Milverton Ward), and Janet Smith (NHS Warwickshire).

**(3) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

None

**(4) Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 10 March 2011**

The following comments were noted:

1. The Conservative member on the maternity services task & finish group will be either Councillor Angela Warner or Councillor Carolyn Robbins.
2. Officers would progress work on holding a seminar for all members, including district and borough councillors, to look at s106 agreement monies.

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny board held on 10 March 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**Part 1 Partnership Matters**

**2. Public Service Reform Task & Finish Group**

Councillor John Ross presented the report of the Task & Finish Group in relation to Public Service Reform. He explained that this report followed on from phase one of the review, which was considered by the Board and Cabinet in January 2011. The second phase of the Task & Finish Group's work looked at what would be involved in a move by the authority towards a strategic commissioning model, and the arrangements by the council for the procurement of 'common' goods and services. Councillor Ross thanked members and officers for their hard work on the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

1. The need to focus on co-aligned commissioning cycles was emphasised.

2. Concerns were raised about capacity to deliver commissioned services, both within Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and in other public agencies.
3. The Board had an important role to play in scrutinising any transitional plans.
4. Concerns were raised about reliance on the internet and e-communications. It was noted that there are a number of vulnerable people across the county without access to an internet enabled computer. Elderly people in particular may not be aware of the services available to them.
5. There is an unsupported assumption that combining purchasing power would drive down prices.
6. It was noted that potential disadvantages of a strategic commissioning model had not been fully explored in the report.
7. Concerns were raised about references to 'managing customer demands' and 'downsizing customer expectations'. This might be appropriate for some services but a great number of the authority's services are personal services that are demand led.
8. As the report makes a number of references to the 'seven principles', it was asked that they be put in the appendix for clarity of reference.

**Resolved:** The Board agreed the report and the following recommendations from the Public Service Reform Task and Finish Group and agreed they be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

Recommendations:

1. The Cabinet should review whether there is sufficient capacity to carry out the data analysis required by a strategic commissioning model and should review with public sector partners whether there are additional resources that could be shared.
2. The Cabinet should review with public sector partners whether commissioning cycles can be better aligned particularly around gap analysis and planning phases to ensure we are able to maximise the information we hold and our resources.
3. The Overview and Scrutiny Board should scrutinise the transition plan to assess whether it is fit for purpose having regard to the seven principles set out by the Cabinet Office and the issues raised by partners set out above.
4. In developing the strategic commissioning model for the Authority the Cabinet should be alert to the need to strengthen the following around procurement:
  - Activity around demand management

- Contract management to drive improvement
- Changing the culture of the organisation to look at cost not just price
- Market management and market intelligence

## Part 2 Council Matters

### 3. Public Question Time

None

### 4. Questions to the Portfolio Holders/Portfolio Holders Update

None

### 5. Progress on Property Review

Steve Smith, Head of Property, presented the report. He explained that the report was a progress update since the previous report to the Board on 5 October 2010.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

1. That the reports were difficult to read because of the small font size and requested that future reports be in a more readable format.
2. WCC is in communication with Borough and District Councils to identify areas where partnership working could realise shared goals; for example, the County Council has been working with Rugby Borough Council to identify land that could be used for affordable housing
3. The property review is being driven by identifying opportunities in individual localities.
4. There is a need to keep local members involved at every stage of the process.
5. Property values reflect the current market value and the property savings target is based on the current valuations.
6. Concerns were raised about whether the decision to dispose of an asset is made based on the need in local areas, or the capital receipt. Steve Smith advised the Board that services do not necessarily have to be delivered from County Council buildings. The disposal of an asset would not automatically equate to a service being withdrawn.
7. Steve Smith advised that the disposal of assets was treated on a case by case basis and took a number of factors into consideration including current market

conditions, the value of the property, and maintenance costs.

8. It was noted that there had been some criticism from the District and Borough Councils regarding the number of empty County Council properties. Steve Smith assured members that information would be shared with the district and borough planning authorities regarding the Council's empty properties.
9. Steve Smith highlighted that two housing developers had expressed interest in entering joint ventures with the County Council, to develop housing on land owned by the Council. If Council land is donated for use as social housing, then County Council would have to find a way to balance the loss of the capital receipt
10. Since the start of the review no properties had been disposed of.
11. Steve Smith agreed to send a written response to the Board outlining what happens to the equipment within properties that are disposed of.

It was agreed that the Board receive a further update on the Property Review at its meeting in November.

**Resolved:** The Board noted the progress of the property review and requested a written response from Steve Smith outlining what happens to equipment within properties that are disposed of.

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

Michelle McHugh, Overview & Scrutiny Manager, presented the report.

It was noted that a number of proposed Task and Finish Groups considered by the Board had not been commissioned and it was important for the Board to understand what had happened to those issues. Michelle McHugh agreed to bring a report to the Board on the status of rejected proposals for task & finish groups.

### Post-16 Transport Task & Finish

Councillor June Tandy presented the proposal for a Post-16 transport task & finish group.

It was proposed that the review would commence in January 2012, but that the Task and Finish Group would hold an early meeting to scope and plan the review.

Resolved: The Board agreed the proposal for a Task & Finish Group to review Post-16 Transport with the following Chair and membership:

Councillor Peter Balaam (Chair)  
Councillor Martin Ashford  
Councillor Richard Chattaway  
Councillor Tim Naylor  
Councillor Chris Saint

**Resolved:** The Board requested a report from Michelle McHugh on the status of previously rejected proposals for task & finish groups.

## 7. Work Programme 2011-12

Michelle McHugh, Overview & Scrutiny Manager, presented the report.

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

1. The cumulative impact of service reductions on communities be considered as a future report. It was noted that officers have already started work in this area which could be considered by the Board in due course.
2. It was suggested that the Leader of the Council be invited to talk to the Board after Full Council 28 June regarding the future of the partnership landscape.
3. It was suggested that consideration should be given early on as to what role of the Board would play in the 2012/13 budget process. The Chair agreed to hold discussions with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Leader and report back to the board.

**Resolved:** The Board agreed the draft Work Programme 2011-12 with the following amendments:

1. A report on the cumulative impact of service reductions on communities.
2. The Leader of the Council to be invited to the Board to talk about the future of the partnership landscape.
3. The Chair to report back to the Board on the role of the Board in the 2012/13 budget process.

## 8. Any Other Items

None

## 9. Dates of Future Meetings

The future meetings of the O&S Board are scheduled as follows  
at 2pm on:

**It was agreed that the September meeting of the Board be re-arranged  
from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> as a number of Councillors were unable to  
attend the date set.**

**20 July 2011  
14 September 2011  
30 November 2011  
25 January 2012  
28 March 2012**

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Chair

The Board rose at – 15:17