

**Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 14
September 2011**

Present:

Members: Councillor John Appleton (Chair)
“ Jeff Clarke (Vice Chair)
“ Les Caborn
“ Peter Fowler
“ Barry Longden (replacing Councillor Tim Naylor
for this meeting)
“ Jerry Roodhouse
“ John Ross
“ June Tandy
“ John Whitehouse
“ Chris Williams

Co-opted members: Councillor Bill Gifford (Warwick District Council)
Councillor John Haynes (Nuneaton and Bedworth
Borough Council)
Councillor Sue Main (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Derek Pickard (North Warwickshire Borough
Council)
Councillor Jim Shera (Rugby Borough Council)

Other Councillors: Alan Farnell, Leader
Martin Heatley, Portfolio Holder Improvement and
Workforce
Heather Timms, Portfolio Holder Child Safeguarding,
Early Intervention and Schools
David Wright, Portfolio Holder Finance, Governance
and IT

Officers: John Betts, Head of Finance
David Carter, Strategic Director, Resources
Tonino Ciuffini, Head of Information Assets
Phil Evans, Head of Service Improvement and Change
Management
Graeme Fitton, Head of Transport and Highways
Ann Mawdsley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Janet Purcell, Democratic Services Manager
Virginia Rennie, Group Accountant

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor
Bernard Kirton, Councillor Tim Naylor (replaced by Councillor

Barry Longden for this meeting), Councillor Dave Shilton, Clive Parsons (Warwickshire Police Authority) and Councillor Colin Hayfield.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 20 July 2011

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 20 July 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Page 5 – 5. Relationship with Schools

Councillor June Tandy noted that this report had been considered by the Children and Young People O&S on 1 September 2011 and referred to the summary of the Committee's discussions which had been forwarded to members of the Board, and to the suggested amendments to Recommendations R20 and R21 of the original report. She thanked Richard Maybey for his excellent summary of the debate.

Councillor Heather Timms noted that follow-up meetings were scheduled with all Headteachers this week, and a further report would be considered by the Cabinet in October.

There was a discussion regarding the different approach being taken by Academies on Local Authority Governors, and it was agreed that this should be included in the report on Academies scheduled to be considered by the Children and Young People O&S Committee on 14 December 2011. Councillor Heather Timms reminded members of the Board that this was not a statutory requirement.

The Chair noted that the results of the consultation would be reported to the Board.

Page 6 – 7. Review of Communication with the Public and Financial Accountability – Stage Two Report

The Chair stated that the report of the Task and Finish Group had been considered by the Cabinet on 8 September 2011 and the recommendations had been duly noted. It was agreed that he should have discussions with Councillor Alan Farnell to

resolve the issue of attendance by Cabinet portfolio holders at scrutiny meetings. This had happened, and a revised set of proposals was tabled and agreed. The Chair confirmed that Councillors Farnell, Hayfield, Heatley and Wright would attend all Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings. Councillor Richard Hobbs would attend Board meetings where flood risk management and emergency planning were being considered, and other Portfolio Holders would only attend by invitation.

In response to a query regarding Recommendation 2(b) (Holding all Councillors to Account), the Chair noted that the Member Performance Reference Group had agreed this recommendation, and suggested that this Group should appraise the Board of progress from time to time.

Members agreed that high priority e-mails should be clearly identified (Recommendation 2(b)) and that Recommendation 4 should be altered to a half day seminar for "senior officers to brief all members collectively and in political groups on the underlying financial position, emerging budget proposals and the implications of these on service users".

Page 7 - 10. Any Other Items

Janet Purcell noted that in response to concern being raised at a number of meetings about the resourcing of Democratic Services and the reduced support of scrutiny, an e-mail had been sent to Members explaining the new structure, and the interviews for the two vacant positions (Team Leader and Democratic Services Officer) were scheduled for 23 and 30 September. She noted that there had been some real benefits to the restructuring in that Democratic Services was now one team supporting the whole democratic service through integrated committee administration and scrutiny roles. Everyone in the team had taken to their new roles and relished the challenge and she recorded her thanks to her staff for their enthusiasm and energy in "just getting on with their new roles" and asked that Members support the team and provide any feedback they may have on the new support.

2. Public Question Time

None.

3. Questions to the Portfolio Holder/Portfolio Holders Update

Councillor David Wright

1. Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked Councillor Wright for his perspective on whether Warwickshire County Council could maintain the capital programme currently in place through the next financial year and beyond. Councillor David Wright responded that the management of capital debt was as important as other parts of the budget and if capital debt was allowed to get out of control the problems for the Council would increase. Councillor Roodhouse stated that managing capital debt would be challenging to maintain, and asked whether there was likely to be any slowing down or stopping, as the capital programme was causing more concern than revenue, and both areas were equally as challenging. Councillor Wright agreed that it was a challenge, but that it was part of managing the programme.
2. Councillor John Whitehouse stated that interest on borrowings was included in revenue costs, but that the capital budget included an amount of unallocated budget expenditure. He added that possible bids had been invited against this unallocated amount, and asked whether any of these bids had been successful. Councillor David Wright did not have details to hand.

[Administrative Note: Members of the Board were subsequently informed that no decisions had been made in relation to this money, other than those agreed at Council for NUCKLE and Stratford Parkway.]

Councillor Martin Heatley

3. Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked Councillor Martin Heatley for an update on the request that had been made to him at the last meeting of the Board to provide a report on staff capacity, training and career development and staff morale. Councillor Heatley noted that he was in receipt of an interim report, which he agreed to share with Members of the Board. He said that progress was being made in these areas, as expected, and that a report would be brought to the next meeting.
4. Councillor Jerry Roodhouse asked Councillor Martin Heatley how many letters of risk were still outstanding and whether there was another round of voluntary redundancies and job reductions planned for the next cycle. Councillor Martin Heatley noted that approximately two thirds of the target of 750 redundancies/retirements had been achieved to date, and that this information would be included in the report referred to in 3. above.

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holders for their responses.

4. Refocusing our approach to Resourcing our Priorities

Phil Evans, Head of Service Improvement and Change Management introduced the report establishing the approach to developing a Strategic Delivery Plan for the Organisation, including Medium Term Financial Planning and the Budget.

During the discussion that followed, the following points were made:

1. Members noted their concern that no account had been taken of scrutiny in the process. There was agreement that scrutiny did not have a role in the setting of the budget, which was better placed through political groups, but it was felt that the budget-setting process needed to be open and transparent. The value of scrutiny would come into play in scrutinising the consequences of the budget.
2. Members would be asked on Council Day to approve a strategic delivery plan and the budget, and Overview and Scrutiny needed to be informed of the objectives of the organisation, that the budget would be setting out to deliver. Members welcomed the revision of the timetable so that the budget followed the strategic delivery plan, which had been raised as a concern in previous years.
3. Members noted the constitutional difficulties arising from performance falling under the remit of the Audit and Standards Committee.
4. There needed to be pragmatic engagement with Members through this process, both in and out of formal meetings.
5. There was some discussion around language used within the report and Officers undertook to ensure that use of jargon was minimised in the future.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed to:

- Note the revised approach to planning for the Organisation approved by Cabinet on the 14 July.
- Note the work underway to reframe the Performance Management Framework.
- Receive feedback from the Performance Member Group to the November meeting.
- Receive the final report, with full measures and targets had been built in, in January 2012, before consideration by the Cabinet, to allow for the Board to comment on the report.

5. Treasury Management Monitoring Report 2011/12

John Betts, Head of Corporate Finance, presented the report setting out the progress of the treasury management process during 2010/11.

Members requested that future Treasury Management Monitoring Reports include levels of capital borrowing and the revenue impact of current capital borrowing.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board endorsed the report.

6. ICT Strategy and Savings

Tonino Ciuffini, Head of Information Assets introduced the report updating the Board on the progress of the ICT Strategy and savings targets.

During the ensuing discussion the following was noted:

1. Members welcomed the report and the move towards cloud based services, which allowed easier sharing of information and the ability to access information from anywhere.
2. In response to a query about where Warwickshire ranked as a county on broadband speed and users, it was noted that Warwickshire was typical with approximately 11% not having 2 megabytes of broadband. It was noted however, that although the Local Authority was not responsible for delivering broadband into the community, the County Council was looking to use its network to improve broadband services across the county.
3. There were areas such as Govconnect and social worker databases that would not be included in the cloud.
4. Warwickshire County Council was doing a lot of trailblazing for the Government in this work, which brought benefits to the Council in working closely with different sectors on areas such as security and data protection.
5. Members noted their concern about the security of confidential information.
6. There continued to be a challenge in balancing ease of use against security of managing with the delivery of IT. Training was available for Members where needed.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board endorsed the progress of the ICT Strategy and savings activities.

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

Councillor Les Caborn, Chair of the Adult Social Care and Health O&S Committee updated the Board on the Task and Finish Group that had been set up “virtually” to consider the Paediatric Cardiac Surgery Services in England.

During the discussion of the report, the following points were raised:

1. Councillor Barry Longden had replaced Councillor June Tandy on the Maternity Services Task and Finish Group.

2. There had been an officer capacity issue to support the Older Adult Mental Health Services Task and Finish Group. This had been resolved and the TFG was now back on track.
3. Councillor Bill Gifford introduced a briefing note on Anti-Social Behaviour and Mental Health. It was agreed that this would be considered alongside the Mental Health Strategy report early in 2012. The briefing note would also be forwarded to the Older Adult Mental Health Services Task and Finish Group for their consideration.
4. Members noted that some task and finish groups were driven by external influences, particularly from the Adult Social Care and Health O&S Committee, and noted the need for a better understanding of what the capacity of the new Democratic Services environment would be to support this work.
5. Members agreed that task and finish groups provided good value and that there needed to be more rigorous monitoring of recommendations.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board endorsed the progress on scrutiny reviews.

8. Work Programme 2011-12

The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed the work programme.

9. Any Other Items

None.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

Agreed.

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Chair

The Board rose at 4:25 p.m.