

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 17 March 2016**

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillors Nicola Davies, Peter Fowler (Vice-Chair), John Holland, Keith Kondakor, Phillip Morris-Jones, Matt Western (Chair)

Other County Councillors

Alan Cockburn, Deputy Leader
John Horner, Portfolio Holder – Community Safety
Richard Chattaway (sitting in for Neil Dirveiks)

Officers

Elizabeth Abbott, Business Partner - Planning, Performance & Improvement
Helen Barnsley, Democratic Services Officer
David Carter, Strategic Director, Resources Group
Tricia Morrison, Acting Head of Service
Rob Moyney, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Janet Neale, Infrastructure Delivery Manager
Lesley Tregear, Implementation Lead for the MASH
Paul Williams, Democratic Services Team Leader

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillors John Appleton, Neil Dirveiks, Bernard Kirton and Chris Saint

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2016

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2016 be signed as a correct record.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions received or presented at the meeting.

3. Questions to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders

In response to a question from Councillor Keith Kondakor regarding the announcement in the Government's budget on 16 March 2016, Councillor Alan Cockburn informed the Committee that information about the new business rates, and their impact on Council funding, would be available in the coming days. It was suggested that the decision would be beneficial to small businesses, as they would no longer have to pay business rates; however, it would impact the County

Council's income. It was agreed that a briefing note would be provided to the Committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Richard Chattaway regarding the public consultation about the Sunday closure of three public libraries; and the recent decision at Council to provide £54k to prevent the closure for 2016/17; it was confirmed that while the consultation was still ongoing, events at Council had overtaken it. The libraries will remain open for 2016/17.

4. Work Programme 2015/16

With regards to the changes facing the fire service it was confirmed that a report would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting highlighting the possible impacts.

Confirmation was also given to members that cross-border partnership working was in place for situations such as the recent floods although it had not been needed for the most recent flood episodes.

It was agreed that information regarding the recent floods in the County be circulated to members after the meeting.

Resolved

The Committee:

- 1) Agreed the updated 2015-16 Work Programme
- 2) Noted the scheduled future meeting dates.

5. 2015-16 One Organisation Plan – Quarter 3

Elizabeth Abbott, Business Partner - Planning, Performance & Improvement, presented the latest report to the Committee and confirmed that the information was for the end of quarter 3, for year 2, of the One Organisational Plan (OOP). The report had been presented in full to Cabinet in December 2015.

It was confirmed that the report being presented had been tailored around the remit of the Committee – and that this had been done for each of the overview and scrutiny committees. The full information, as presented to Cabinet, is available on the member dashboard. It was also confirmed to members that the commentary for each section has not been updated since the report was presented to Cabinet.

A question was raised as to how the target figures were set for the number of incidents attended by the fire service. It was confirmed that this was done using historical figures combined with the aims of the fire reduction programme.

Concerning the Property Rationalisation Programme, confirmation was sought that the figures on page 5 of the report should read £1million.

Following a question from Councillor Keith Kondakor, it was confirmed to the members that the figures used in the report show targets and a current end of year forecast. Service Managers are asked to provide up to date information for each

report that is published and they are used against the forecasted figures. The end of year report will show final, approved figures.

Members suggested that the information on page 5 of the report, relating to Capital Programme targets, would realistically never hit 100%. It was considered that the target should be more meaningful.

David Carter confirmed for members that the target figures for Property Disposal income are set from the total target price for the property.

Councillor Richard Chattaway commented that comparison between the authority's performance and other similar counties (demographically/size etc.) would be beneficial to members. David Carter was able to confirm that Price Waterhouse Cooper had previously provided comparison information that was shared but since that had stopped there had been a gap. It was confirmed that some comparison information was available from the Local Government Association; and that Grant Thornton has also started to provide comparison information. Warwickshire County Council has subscribed to this service. David Carter highlighted that the information received was new to the Council and that at this point it could not be said how useful it would be. Ambitious targets are set that are often above national benchmarking targets so while it may appear that targets are not met, the Council will have exceeded benchmarking targets.

A question regarding the quality of life for Warwickshire residents was raised and David Carter was able to confirm that a joint quality of life survey, with Public Health, would be sent out in the next few weeks. This survey is undertaken every 2 years. The survey would also be sent out via social media to offer residents a broader way to engage with the Council. This was also considered to be a cost effective way of engaging with residents.

Councillor Nicola Davies raised concerns about the information relating to complaints and in particular those relating to Social Services. David Carter acknowledged that the situation needed addressing. The new Head of Service for Children's Safeguarding had prioritised this issue and it was improving. David Carter agreed to request that a briefing note be provided to members updating them with the latest information.

A report relating to the Customer Journey information was also requested following concerns raised by members. David Carter confirmed that issues had arisen as a result of contractor prices that were unacceptable to the Council. Tricia Morrison advised that positions had been filled with contractors on fixed term contracts; mainly due to the nature of the jobs that staff were required for. It was clarified for members that Officers were now looking at growing internal resources when the fixed term contracts came to an end but that all staff were now in place.

Concerns were raised regarding the underspend on rates as mentioned in 4.8 of the OOP report. David Carter responded that the figure was likely to have differed to expectations due to appeals against ratings given; if appeals were won, resulting in successful disposals, then the costs would go down. It was agreed that David Carter would supply up to date details to members.

The Chair raised a question to Rob Moyney, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, regarding the firefighter vacancies. It was confirmed that following a change in the duty

system at Stratford-upon-Avon and Alcester fire stations, staff on fixed term contracts had been bought in. These are all due to finish at the end of March. The vacancies will be held open to continue to make savings and would be taken as a loss within the establishment. The recruitment and retention of part time fire fighters is hampered by the loss of local employment. Retained firefighters have to move to find primary employment meaning that they are unable to provide the required cover. Following a request from the Chair, a briefing note on the turnover of retained firefighters in relation to this issue will be provided at the next meeting.

Tricia Morrison confirmed to members that the commentary in the OOP report should contain information regarding the remedial actions and that it would be part of the next report.

Resolved

The Committee considered the key messages set out in the report and asked questions in relation to its content and made recommendations they considered appropriate.

6. WCC Project and Programme Management Update

Tricia Morrison presented the report to members highlighting that the approach to managing all significant projects is up to date and that Governance enables effective decision making. The report reviewed 2 previous frameworks from 2013 and 2015.

The current process involves developing visibility of projects through a member dashboard; this will relate to the status of major projects. Member engagement will be sought on the development of the new dashboard to ensure that the focus is in the right place. Project and Programme Managers will also be involved. It was confirmed that the Officer version of the dashboard is expected to be released at the end of March 2016 and member engagement will then start as soon as possible.

Confirmation was given that the member dashboard is a live system and that quarterly updates will be provided. It was noted that Project Managers will have the ability to update the system as and when necessary meaning that real issues can be picked up in real time.

Following a request from the Chair the Kenilworth Station project will be used to provide an example for members of how the system would work for the next meeting.

Resolved

The Committee noted the report which provided an update on the project and programme management processes used at WCC.

7. Infrastructure Funding

Janet Neale, Infrastructure Delivery Manager, presented the report to members. It was confirmed that she had been in post for just over a year and had been bought

in to ensure that there was one place for all information to be held and that there was a coordinated approach.

Members were informed that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had not yet been implemented in Warwickshire. It was confirmed that a considerable amount of work had been carried out on ensuring that records were up to date regarding what funds the Council had, what had been asked for and what was still outstanding.

Janet Neale referred members to point 4.13 of the report which stated that information would be presented at the meeting rather than being part of the report. This was due to the caveats around the information that was included. The figures were not set in stone and contained various formulas and estimations. A full explanation was given to members regarding the information that was in the hand-out. It was confirmed that information referring to individual District and Borough Councils would be provided after the meeting.

It was then confirmed to members that Warwickshire County Council often fund up front developments before Section 106 monies are paid. In view of the changes that make this procedure harder, the Council is looking at alternative methods such as requiring developers building new schools rather than the Council waiting for the money from the developers to build the new schools.

It was confirmed that it is normal for CIL's to be introduced along with a local plan.

Clarification was also sought from members on the following points –

- 1) Will the requirements and agreements be the same for all developers and look at in the same way across boroughs and districts?
- 2) Can assurances be given that the benefits of section 106 monies will be spent in the area they were raised in?

Councillor Alan Cockburn confirmed that the planning authorities involved would retain control and manage the project. Janet Neale added that the County Council would have full responsibility. Virginia Rennie, Group Accountant, has been working with organisations that are already using CIL in order to prepare a set of regulations for Warwickshire County Council.

Following a query regarding the potential for claims from neighbouring counties for section 106 payments from developments that would affect them; it was confirmed that County Councils are consulted on developments from neighbouring counties where there would be a need for cross-border highway improvements. Host local authorities and developers are required to put in place all agreements.

A request was made for Councillor Alan Cockburn to take concerns back to Councillor Izzi Seccombe regarding the process of taking a planning appeal from the County Council to the Secretary of State.

The Chair requested confirmation that all the monies currently owed by Section 106 agreements had been paid. Janet Neale was able to confirm that if there was an agreement in place, the status of the monies was known about. There were some cases where planning permission had been granted but the development had not yet started; therefore no Section 106 monies had been received. Outstanding

invoices are in the process of being chased and Janet Neale was able to confirm that the process was now watertight.

Councillors noted that the report was very clear and helpful and thanked Janet Neale for her efforts.

Resolved

The committee noted the contents of the report and comments made; and the current position relating to Section 106 Monies.

8. Update on the development of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Warwickshire

The report was presented to the Committee by Lesley Tregear, Implementation Lead for the MASH, who confirmed that John Coleman had been recruited as the new MASH Manager. The report highlighted the progress that has been made and the key milestones that had been met.

Members were told about the new IT tracking system that was being procured for the MASH. The system was currently being checked by the IT team to ensure that it will be fit for purpose before licences were purchased. The feedback so far was that it does meet all the requirements. Clarification was given that although the IT system would not link all current systems, it would allow live case tracking. The process would involve all agencies coming together and being able to look at cases from their own systems as well as the tracking system and once a plan had been formulated, it could be added to, and tracked from, the system.

With regards to a performance management tool it was confirmed that before a framework could be agreed on, it would need to be ensured that it would marry up to the new IT system.

It was also confirmed to members that the MASH team would include an apprentice for the Ambulance Safeguarding team across the West Midlands.

The Committee was informed that John Coleman would provide an update in 6 months time.

Resolved

The committee:

- 1) Noted the progress of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Warwickshire; and
- 2) Requested a further report in 6 months' time following the implementation of the MASH.

9. Urgent Matters

- 1) Email received from Anthony JJ Morgan - representing members of the Retained Firefighters Union in Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service; raising concerns on the specific proposal by WCC to spend tax payer's capital funding in building a training centre.

Members were informed of the email received and were asked to consider the important views and concerns raised.

A discussion followed regarding the training college at Morten-in-Marsh; a large and well equipped college that had recently been privatised.

Rob Moyney confirmed that the college was an excellent training facility but since privatisation the costs of using it had become prohibitive. It was also considered that the location of the facility was at a distance that couldn't guarantee firefighters could return back in time if there was an emergency in their area.

Councillor Richard Chattaway proposed a recommendation to refer the email for discussion at Cabinet. Councillor Peter Fowler seconded the proposal.

Resolved

The Committee resolved to refer the email from Anthony JJ Morgan to the next Cabinet meeting in April 2016.

- 2) The Chair confirmed to the Committee that following the meeting in January 2016, he had spoken to Mark Ryder and David Ayton-Hill regarding the LEP and that a report would be presented at a future meeting.
- 3) The Chair requested clarification from David Carter regarding the change of hours at the Customer Contact Centre and how many calls were taken in the first, and last, 30 minutes of each day. David Carter confirmed that this information would be provided to members in a briefing note.
- 4) Following the meeting in January 2016, Councillor Peter Fowler confirmed to the Committee that he had written to Councillor John Horner requesting that a letter was sent to the Government regarding insisting that sprinkler systems are installed in all new build, domestic properties. Councillor Fowler confirmed that he would ask for an update for the next meeting.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee was confirmed as 18 May 2016 at 2 p.m. in CR2, Shire Hall.

The meeting rose at 16:18pm

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Chair