

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 25 April 2018**

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair), John Cooke, Andy Crump, Andy Jenns, Bill Olnor, Jerry Roodhouse (replacing Councillor Boad), Maggie O'Rourke and Heather Timms (Chair)

Other County Councillors:

Peter Butlin - Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property
Howard Roberts – Portfolio Holder for Fire & Community Safety

Officers:

Helen Barnsley -	Democratic Services Officer
Kushal Birla -	Head of Customer Service
David Carter -	Joint Managing Director (Resources)
Sarah Duxbury -	Head of Law and Governance & Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Ayub Kahn -	Customer Service Manager
Rob Moyney -	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Virginia Rennie -	Strategic Finance Manager
Steve Smith -	Head of Property Services
Sushma Soni -	Performance & Improvement Officer (Policy Lead)
Paul White -	Strategic Procurement Manager

Other Attendees

One – Press

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Sarah Boad (replaced by Councillor Jerry Roodhouse)
Councillor Kam Kaur - Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation.

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

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2018

The minutes of the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 February 2018 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

2. Public Question Time

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

3. Questions to the Portfolio Holders relevant to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke requested information on the Blue Badge Scheme, stating that several of her constituents had informed her how difficult it was to obtain a blue badge and the confusion around the process.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation, it was agreed that Councillor O'Rourke would email her concerns and questions to Councillor Kaur and Kushal Birla, Head of Customer Service. It was agreed that Kushal Birla would produce a briefing note for the committee on the Blue Badge Scheme.

Resolved

That the committee agrees a briefing note will be produced for the committee on the Blue Badge Scheme.

4. Work Programme 2017-18

- 4.1** Councillor Pete Gilbert requested information relating to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and in particular when the report following the inspection was expected to be published and whether the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) would have the chance to see the report. Rob Moyney, Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the final report is expected in October 2018 and that it would be presented to the OSC. HMICFRS is expected to identify elected members they wish to be involved in the inspection process nearer the time.

It was also agreed that further information and training on the inspection process would be provided to elected members.

The Chair confirmed that the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Task and Finish Group would be re-established later in the year to review the new IRMP and potential work with Warwickshire County Council's Blue Light Collaboration Board. It was agreed that this will be discussed further at the next OSC meeting on 11 July 2018.

- 4.2** In the light of concerns from Councillor Maggie O'Rourke and Councillor Bill Olnier relating to the new County Council Your HR system it was agreed that a troubleshooting guide will be produced and sent to all elected members. Members were asked to contact Felicity Davies, HR Service Centre Manager

or Helen Barnsley, Democratic Services Officer, with any issues they experience using the system.

Sarah Duxbury, Head of Law and Governance & Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, informed the OSC that a member development day based on IT issues, including the Your HR, had been arranged for councillors on June 21 2018. Officers will be present throughout the day to offer support and advice.

Resolved

That the Committee:

1) Agrees the updated 2017-18 Work Programme;

and

2) Notes the scheduled future meeting dates.

5. Update on the Delivery of Digital Services and Usage of the Library Service

Ayub Kahn, Customer Service Manager presented the report to the committee. The following points were highlighted to members –

- Access to libraries has changed; it is no longer just a building based service
- Use of online services has doubled recently and continues to rise. Popular online services include free access to Ancestry.com and the ability to listen online to classical music.
- Traditional book lending had decreased
- Attendance at activities and events has increased

Members noted that digital inclusion is a key priority for the library service. Staff had helped over 100,000 residents access online services in the last twelve months.

Ayub Kahn informed members of a new innovation offered by Nuneaton and Rugby libraries called “Let’s Make” spaces which offer the latest digital technologies and equipment. The focus is for families and young people but the spaces are open to everyone and offer a range of activities such as 3D design and printing and virtual reality. The projects were made possible with help from the Arts Council Libraries Opportunities for Everyone Innovation funding.

In response to members’ questions regarding staffing levels and promotion for the “Let’s Make” spaces, it was confirmed that while there were no plans for extra staff, using the latest technologies and digital opportunities, as well as volunteers mean that there are no concerns about staffing levels. It was noted that the equipment can be moved and there are plans for roadshows and sessions in other libraries across the county.

With regards to the promotion of all library services there was a discussion about partnership working and in particular the joint surgeries held with the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), which includes working with the district and borough councils. Members learnt that staff were also trained on digital inclusion, and how to access some of the services to ensure they were able to offer the best services. There is a very comprehensive programme of inclusion but the committee was invited to send through any comments or suggestions to Kushal Birla.

It was also noted that it was not just front line staff that contributed to the success of the service. There is a wide range of other staff that includes ICT learning officers, van drivers, stock controllers, Book Start Coordinators and a children's outreach team.

With regard to point 5.4 of the report, it was confirmed that the physical visits made to community libraries are not included in the figures because there is no way to accurately count the visits - so the data cannot be verified. The digital services have led to a reduction in physical footfall but Warwickshire libraries offer a range of online services that allow residents to join a library and renew books. This is a service that is not offered by all library services nationally.

Following a question from Councillor Roodhouse relating to the growing number of visually impaired residents, it was confirmed that the Warwickshire library service works in partnership with talking books and the Royal National Institute for the Blind's specialist library in London. There is specialist equipment available in larger libraries including larger screens and keyboards. There is a six step accredited programme that the library service uses for the staff to be able to support the visually impaired. Kushal Birla commented that while there is a lot of work already in place to support visually impaired residents there is still a lot more that could be done. It was therefore agreed that the topic will be reviewed by officers and the findings brought back to the committee.

Following a discussion about the newly introduced community hubs and the surgeries run by libraries, officers were asked about avoiding confusion and duplication. It was confirmed to the committee that a paper would be presented to Corporate Board. It was hoped to report by the end of May 2018. It was acknowledged that there was a danger of duplication and that some terminology used by both services could be confusing. It was also unclear in some cases which locations were offering which services. The paper and resulting review will result in a position statement before further work is started. It was acknowledged that this will be a complicated process and it is important to get it right.

Resolved

That the Committee notes the contents of the report and the overview of the service provided.

6. Urgent Matters

None

7. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

8. Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) - Update Report

Paul White, Strategic Procurement Manager, presented the report to the committee which provided a background to ESPO and an introduction to the scale of the company's activity.

Resolved

That the Committee notes and comments on the report.

9. Property Services Review & Facilities Managements and Construction Delivery Options

Steve Smith, Head of Property Services presented the report to the Committee which outlines how property services at Warwickshire County Council could move forward.

Resolved

That the Committee notes and comments on the report.

The meeting rose at 3.35pm

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Chair