

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 5 June 2019**

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair), Sarah Boad, John Cooke, Judy Falp, Pete Gilbert, Andy Jenns, Bill Olnor, Dave Reilly and Adrian Warwick (Chair)

Other County Councillors:

Peter Butlin - Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property
Andy Wright

Officers:

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| Helen Barnsley | Democratic Services Officer |
| Barnaby Briggs | Deputy Chief Fire Officer |
| Craig Cusack | Assistant Director (Enabling Services) |
| Sarah Duxbury | Assistant Director (Governance and Policy) |
| Richard Hopkins | Project Executive CSW/BDUK Superfast Broadband |
| Paul Inman | E-Services Team Leader and Webmaster |
| Jacky Lawrence | Corporate Energy Manager |
| Chris Page | CSW Broadband Mapping and Data Manager |
| Rob Powell | Strategic Director for Resources Directorate |
| Virginia Rennie | Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance) |
| Paul Williams | Democratic Services Team Leader |

Before the meeting starting, the Chair welcomed new members to the Committee and placed on record his thanks to the previous Chair of the Committee, Councillor Heather Timms.

The Committee took a moment to reflect on the brave actions taken by those involved in D-Day and gave thanks, as the 75th Anniversary was marked across the country and in France.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke; replaced by Councillor Alan Webb
Councillors Andy Crump, Kam Kaur and Izzi Seccombe

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

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2019

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2019 were approved as a correct record. 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 Boad raised concerns relating to the ongoing work at Lillington library. There is scaffolding in place and the delay in the completion of the work has led to a rise in anti-social behaviour in the area, in particular, with the scaffolding being used as a climbing frame. It was agreed that Craig Cusack, Assistant Director (Enabling Services) and Sarah Duxbury, Assistant Director (Governance and Policy) would review the situation and provide an update for Councillor Boad.

4. Work Programme 2019-20

The Committee agreed that the following items would be discussed at the next Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC Chair and Group Spokes Meeting to be held on Thursday, 5 September 2019. Once details have been confirmed the items will be added to the work programme for 2019/20

- A review of the Museum and Archive Service
- Property Management Services
- Debt Management Process
- IRMP public consultation results
- WFRS – plans for the impact of HS2 and the construction phase

Resolved

That the Committee agrees the updated 2019-20 Work Programme, as set out in the report and notes the scheduled future meeting dates.

5. Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Superfast Broadband Project

Richard Hopkins, Project Executive CSW/BDUK Superfast Broadband and Chris Page, CSW Broadband Mapping and Data Manager presented highlights of the report which details the programme of works for the BDUK Superfast project. It was confirmed to the Committee that superfast connectivity will be delivered to 98% of the CSW region by the end of June 2020.

A demonstration was provided of the new web portal for members which will allow them to check on the status of projects in each division. The portal will show where there is already superfast coverage, which areas will be covered by contract 3, and those areas that are still waiting for funding. The portal will also show those locations which are still under review; where local providers have agreed to provide the service but the work is still outstanding. In these cases, alternative providers are being considered.

Councillor John Cooke welcomed the portal for members and raised a question about developers not being obliged to provide broadband in the same way as other utilities, asking if there was anything that the Committee could do to resolve this such as lobbying MPs. Councillor Peter Butlin, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property responded that this is an area that the Government has resisted putting into planning law. There is pressure on developers to keep new homes saleable, with pressure coming from customers. It was noted that current legislation is failing to satisfy this concern at this point in time.

Councillor Pete Gilbert supported Councillor Cooke's statement and in addition asked officers if the broadband service standard was consistent, rather than just meeting the target for a completed roll out. It was confirmed by officers that Ofcom have recently introduced a standard to hold internet service providers to account if they do not maintain the speed promised. The provider now has a set period of time in which to restore speed to the agreed service standard.

Following a question from Councillor Dave Reilly it was confirmed that in some parts of Warwickshire the outstanding areas for broadband coverage were businesses. It is often prohibitive costs that are the main concern for alternative network providers who have made an offer to provide fibre cable. It was confirmed that there is a priority points scheme in place to identify key areas that have work outstanding as well as additional funding which is allocated specifically for businesses.

Resolved

That the Committee notes the good progress that the Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire (CSW) Superfast project is making to extend Superfast connectivity across the sub-region.

6. Update on the Launch of the New 'warwickshire.gov.uk' website

Paul Inman, E-Services Team Leader and Webmaster presented the report to the Committee which provided an update on the implementation and next steps for the new warwickshire.gov.uk website.

Following a question from Councillor Bill O'ner it was confirmed that provision is made to teach older residents or those who needed support, such as Silver Surfer courses offered at libraries along with other engagement programmes.

Councillor Pete Gilbert added that while the new website was a positive development, Warwickshire County Council still has a role to provide services to those who are not computer literate or who do not have access to internet; often the most vulnerable residents. Craig Cusack Assistant Director (Enabling Services) gave assurance to Members that a fundamental part of the process had been demand management which will continue to be used moving forward to identify where demand for access to services comes from.

In response to a question from Councillor Judy Falp it was confirmed that negative feedback often relates to specific incidents for individuals. User experience with the School Admissions Programme was being reviewed by the Digital by Design team in response to issues raised by customers. The Committee noted that 1,200 members of the public had been involved in determining the structure of the new website.

Resolved

That the Committee welcomes the delivery of the new warwickshire.gov.uk website.

7. Delivery of the Warwickshire Energy Plan: Establishing a Collective Fuel Switching Scheme – Warwickshire Switch and Save (WSS) End of Year One Progress Report

Jacky Lawrence, Corporate Energy Manager presented the report to the Committee confirming that quality criteria are used, as well as research for the cheapest options for single and dual fuel deals.

The Committee noted that the project has enabled officers to help residents with issues such as condensation or boiler repairs. This has been done in partnership with Act on Energy. The scheme has also supported vulnerable residents such as those without access to the internet or those who have lost partners who were previously responsible for sourcing energy deals. There has been an increase in confidence in hard to reach groups who are now more able to switch and save on their energy deals.

Following a question from the Committee it was confirmed that the scheme does not primarily focus on finding green energy solutions but twice renewable energy suppliers have won auctions.

Following a question from Councillor Pete Gilbert in relation to the numbers of residents who refuse the offer made it was confirmed that approximately 75% of those who signed up for the last auction could save money. Some residents only sign up out of interest, and some do not follow up by providing enough information to go further. Members noted that officers do not want to push people into the scheme; working with residents to save money where possible creates trust which could be lost if they were pushed into accepting an offer.

It was noted by the Committee that recommendation three of the report suggests that the scheme will only continue if sufficient referral fee income is achieved and questioned if the Council should be supporting the scheme financially even if costs are not covered through referrals. In response, it was confirmed that without take-up from residents, the scheme wouldn't continue however, officers stated that the project always had a finite life time. If residents can be given the confidence to be comfortable in searching out the best deals and switching energy providers, then the aim of the scheme has been achieved. Councillor Peter Butlin, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property took on board the comments made by the

Committee in relation to financially supporting the scheme further and agreed that consideration would be given to offering financial input for wider promotion of the scheme.

Resolved

That the Committee recommends to Cabinet that:

- 1) Following the initial two year funded trial period, the Warwickshire Switch and Save Scheme continues for a further period, provided that the continuance of the Scheme is on a self-funded basis at no cost to the Council other than staff time;
- 2) Annual referral fee income from year two to be allocated towards the costs of delivering a marketing and promotional campaign in year three for up to three reverse auctions; and
- 3) If sufficient referral fee income is achieved to cover costs to the Council, the WSS Scheme to continue whilst sustainable.

8. Urgent Matters

None

9. Any Other Business

None

The next Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Meeting will be on Thursday 26th September 2019 at 2pm, Shire Hall.

The meeting rose at 3:25p.m.

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Chair