

MINUTES of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 19 March 2012 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor A Seldon (Chairman)
Councillor JW Millar (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: AM Atkinson, PL Bettington, WLS Bowen, MJK Cooper, EPJ Harvey, MAF Hubbard, RC Hunt, TM James, Brig P Jones CBE, JLV Kenyon, JW Millar, R Preece, SJ Robertson and PJ Watts

In attendance: Councillors: AJM Blackshaw (Cabinet Member - Highways, Transportation and Waste, RB Hamilton, JG Jarvis (Leader of the Council), PM Morgan (Cabinet Member - Health and Wellbeing), GJ Powell and PD Price (Cabinet Member – Corporate Services and Education).

Officers in attendance J Jones, Head of Governance; D Powell, Chief Officer Finance & Commercial; R Hemblade, Parks Countryside & Leisure Development Manager; N Bridges, Sustainable Communities Manager; T Brown, Democratic Services.

84. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor PGH Cutter; Councillor P Rone and Mr P Burbidge.

85. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

7. TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - TOURIST AND TEMPORARY EVENT SIGNAGE REVIEW.

Councillor Brig P Jones CBE, Personal, By virtue of being a Trustee/Director of Leominster Tourist Association..

8. HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP.

Councillor WLS Bowen, Personal, By virtue of being the Council's representative on the West Mercia Police Authority.

11. TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - INCOME AND CHARGING.

Councillor SJ Robertson, Personal, By virtue of a family connection to a car parking business..

87. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February, 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman; and

- b) **that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February, 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the word “public” in the penultimate line on page 3 of the Minutes being amended to read “private”.**

88. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

A Councillor referred to a specific incident relating to a patient being discharged from hospital.

It was noted that it had been agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to enquire into rehabilitation services for trauma and stroke services, and agreed that the Group would also seek clarification on arrangements for discharges from hospital.

It was also noted that a letter had been received regarding the Three Counties Cancer Network and this would be discussed with the Network lead before deciding whether any further investigation was necessary.

89. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mrs M Morawiecka asked at the meeting why the European Procurement Rules did not appear have been applied to funding allocated to Hereford Futures Ltd.

The Chairman responded that a written reply would be given.

90. TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - TOURIST AND TEMPORARY EVENT SIGNAGE REVIEW

(Councillor Brig P Jones CBE, declared a Personal interest by virtue of being a Trustee/Director of Leominster Tourist Association.)

The Committee considered the findings arising from the Task and Finish Group –Tourist and Temporary Event Signage Review and whether to recommend the report to the Executive for consideration.

Councillor R Preece, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, presented the report.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- It was noted that the report supported the use of symbols on signs and it was agreed to check whether there was a village hall symbol.
- The recommendation stressing the importance of the prompt removal of signs once they were no longer required was welcomed.

It was questioned why the report was recommending further review of various aspects rather than itself having reviewed the issues and proposed new policy solutions in accordance with the original scoping of the project.

The Leader of the Council commented that the operation of the Task and Finish Groups needed to be reviewed in the light of the first round of reviews to reappraise their role in policy development.

It was generally recognised that Members needed to be equipped with the necessary skills to carry out their role and that there was a consistency of approach to the policy

development role. This was something that would be discussed further at the Committee's forthcoming workshop.

It was suggested that there needed to be some flexibility in the management of signage especially given the current economic climate. The scope to charge for a licence to display signs and an appropriate enforcement regime needed to be considered.

RESOLVED:

- That (a) the Committee agreed the findings and recommendations contained in the report of the Task & Finish Group – Tourist and Temporary Event Signage Review and to forward the report to the Executive for consideration; and**
- (b) the Executive's response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response.**

91. HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

(Councillor WLS Bowen, declared a Personal interest by virtue of being the Council's representative on the West Mercia Police Authority.)

The Committee received an update on the current priorities and issues for the Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership (HCSP) formerly known as Safer Herefordshire and considered the refreshed Herefordshire Community Safety Strategy 2011 – 2014.

Superintendent Charles Hill introduced the item, as Vice-Chair of the Herefordshire Partnership Executive Group which has taken on the role and function of the Community Safety Partnership for Herefordshire.

He advised the Committee that the Community Safety Strategy had three priorities for 2012/13: Integrated Offender Management, Alcohol Harm Reduction and Empowered Localities. The Partnership would also be developing an education package to inform young people on issues such as alcohol and drug misuse, road safety which can impact on their quality of life and long-term health and well-being. He also emphasised that Herefordshire was essentially a very safe county in which to live and work and this was the message he urged ward members to give to their communities.

He emphasised that as with other areas within the public sector, funding both for the Community Safety Partnership and individual partners was reducing significantly and that there was therefore a need to work together to maximise impact. He also made reference to the Police and Crime Commissioner who would be elected in November 2012 and the need for the Community Safety Partnership to work closely with the Commissioner in the future to ensure that the community safety issues across Herefordshire were understood and addressed. Liz Smith, Head of Service in Herefordshire for the West Mercia Probation Trust, advised the meeting that Prolific and other Priority Offenders were being targeted and that there was very effective partnership working especially between the police and probation to tackle this issue.

Issues raised by Councillors included the rise in rural crime, particularly the theft of metal and scrap, concerns about unlicensed taxis, anti-social behaviour, especially linked to alcohol misuse, as well as speeding through rural areas, cold calling, concerns on the pricing of alcohol and the need for supermarkets to be more responsible about the sale of alcohol and the need to get reassurance messages out into communities.

In answer to issues raised, Superintendent Hill advised that the Police had instigated Operation Ignite to tackle rural crime. He asked elected Members to advise local businesses and residents to use products such as SmartWater to forensically mark property and valuables. He spoke of the partnership work taking place to address alcohol misuse with licencing officers and licensees. He suggested that an approach to take in high crime areas, such as South Wye and parts of Leominster would be to set up multi-agency teams targeted on the most vulnerable, often with complex issues. He agreed to take back the request for community speedwatches as a way of empowering communities to address speeding.

There was support for the work of the Community Support Officers (CSOs) across Herefordshire. Superintendent Hill advised that the budget for CSOs would be held by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Committee agreed that it would be important for the PCC to know the strength of support for the continued level of CSOs across the County.

There was also recognition at the meeting of the importance of an overall alcohol strategy which looked at both crime and health issues. The Committee agreed to consider how this could be included in its work with the Health and Wellbeing Board.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the Committee noted the content of the report;**
 - (b) the Committee noted the refreshed Herefordshire Community Safety Strategy 2011 – 2014; and**
 - (c) the Committee would consider how to include community safety into its Committee work programme at their forthcoming workshop.**

92. TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - ADULT SAFEGUARDING

The Committee considered the findings arising from the Task and Finish Group – Adult Safeguarding and whether to recommend the report to the Executive for consideration.

Councillor JW Millar, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, presented the report. He highlighted the review's focus on assurance processes, the key interface with the police, the role of the Care Quality Commission and, with a growing elderly population, the need to ensure that the relevant services were appropriately resourced.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- There was a need to ensure that the review's findings were subsequently considered alongside the findings of the ongoing review of Safeguarding Children to establish whether there were any common areas of concern that needed to be addressed. It was welcomed that no specific concerns had been identified in the adult safeguarding review that needed to be investigated by the Safeguarding Children Review.
- There was support for the finding that the Committee needed to carry out a further review of access to GP Services in particular the out of hours service.

It was proposed that recommendation 2 should be expanded to make clear that appropriate, clearly defined authority should be granted to any co-located team to enable it to take action. It was noted that if physical co-location proved not to be possible every effort should be made to promote integrated working and team building.

A discussion took place on the role of the Care Quality Commission with regard to adult safeguarding.

RESOLVED:

- That
- (a) recommendation 2 contained in the Task & Finish report be expanded to make it clear that appropriate, clearly defined authority should be granted to any co-located team to enable it to take action;
 - (b) the Chairman of the Committee be authorised to finalise the report for submission to Cabinet in consultation with the relevant Vice-Chairman of the Committee to take account of comments made by the Committee and any proofreading corrections needed;
 - (c) subject to (a) and (b) above the Committee agreed the findings and recommendations contained in report of the Task & Finish Group – Adult Safeguarding and to forward the report to the Executive for consideration; and
 - (d) the Executive’s response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response.

93. TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - COUNCIL PROCUREMENT AND LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

The Committee considered the findings rising from the Task and Finish Group –Council Procurement and Local Employment and whether to recommend the report to the Executive for consideration.

Councillor AM Atinkson, Chairman of the Task & Finish Group, presented the report. He highlighted various elements which had led to the recommendations.

A Member sought clarification on the composition of the Team undertaking the negotiations on the Amey contract. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that the Team was being led by him and the Director for People’s Services. The Team had an understanding of the relevant services covered by the Contract but was sufficiently removed from service delivery to provide independent challenge. The involvement of the Council’s auditors provided a level of external challenge.

RESOLVED:

- That
- (a) The following recommendations be added to the report:
 - I. The Council reviews the benefits of joint venture companies to see if they are distorting the market and consequently do not represent value for money; and
 - II. The potential for the Council’s buying power to drive down costs be explored;
 - (b) the Chairman of the Committee be authorised to finalise the report for submission to Cabinet in consultation with the relevant Vice-Chairman of the Committee to take account of comments made by the Committee and any proofreading corrections;

- (c) **subject to a) and b) above the Committee agreed the findings and recommendations contained in report of the Task & Finish Group – Council Procurement and Local Employment and to forward the report to the Executive for consideration; and**
- (d) **the Executive’s response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response.**

94. TASK AND FINISH REVIEW - INCOME AND CHARGING

(Councillor SJ Robertson declared a Personal interest by virtue of a family connection to a car parking business.)

The Committee considered the findings rising from the Task and Finish Group –Council Procurement and Local Employment and whether to recommend the report to the Executive for consideration.

Councillor EPJ Harvey, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, presented the report. She noted that following approval of the original scope of the review the Commercial Board had separately commissioned PriceWaterhouse Coopers to review the Council’s income management. This had overlapped with the remit of the Group and it had refocused its work accordingly as described in the report.

She highlighted:

- The implications of the charging principles adopted by Cabinet in June 2011, with a move to cost recovery for services.
- The importance of improving the transparency for charging with a clearer understanding of what was chargeable and what was not.
- The need to make clear what services were subsidised, why and to what extent and, align subsidies to the Council’s policies in an equitable way.
- The need to explain to the public the rationale for charging.
- The importance of providing the necessary infrastructure to allow income to be collected efficiently and economically.
- The additional recommendation at page 164 of the report that a report be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2013, setting out how much of the projected additional income had been achieved and reviewing the intended and unintended consequences of new/additional charges.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- That a number of issues were associated with introducing charges that would require careful consideration including: the implications of means testing, the risk of unintended consequences, already experienced with car parking charges.
- That outsourcing of services also required careful consideration.
- That if charges were introduced where, by paying more, someone received a better service, as in the case of recent changes to planning charges, it was essential that the charging structure was publicised effectively.

- In terms of car parking charges a Member suggested that consideration should be given to charging for concessionary parking disks for the over 65s rather than removing the concession. It was also important that the current concession to Councillors ended and they contributed to the cost of parking when on official business and that staff should also be charged for parking.
- That the effect of the introduction of the recent car parking charges demonstrated the importance of consulting Ward Members and keeping them informed.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the Chairman of the Committee be authorised to finalise the report for submission to Cabinet in consultation with the relevant Vice-Chairman of the Committee to take account of comments made by the Committee and any proofreading corrections;**
 - (b) subject to a) above the Committee agreed the findings and recommendations contained in report of the Task & Finish Group – Income and Charging and to forward the report to the Executive for consideration;**
 - (c) the Executive’s response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive has approved its response; and**
 - (d) a report be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2013, setting out how much of the projected additional income had been achieved and reviewing the intended and unintended consequences of new/additional charges.**

95. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme and noted that the programme would be discussed further at the Committee’s forthcoming workshop.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm

CHAIRMAN