

Minutes of the meeting of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 13 February 2023 at 9.15 am

Committee members present in person and voting: Councillors: Barry Durkin, Jim Kenyon, Jonathan Lester (Chairperson) and David Summers

Committee members participating via remote attendance: Councillors: Felicity Norman

[Note: Committee members participating via remote attendance, i.e. through video conferencing facilities, may not vote on any decisions taken.]

Others in attendance:

M Averill	Interim Service Director Environment, Highways and Waste	Herefordshire Council
J Barnes	Chief Transformation and Delivery Officer	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System (ICS)
B Baugh	Democratic Services Officer	Herefordshire Council
J Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner	West Mercia Police
J Coleman	Democratic Services Manager	Herefordshire Council
R Cook	Corporate Director - Economy and Environment	Herefordshire Council
A Davidson	Assistant Director Prevention	Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue
Councillor C Davies	Ward Member for Bromyard West	Herefordshire Council
Councillor G Davies	Cabinet Member - Commissioning, Procurement and Assets	Herefordshire Council
A Deans	Interim Programme Director – Major Contracts	Herefordshire Council
D Freeman	Corporate Director - Children and Young People	Herefordshire Council
H Hall	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing	Herefordshire Council
Councillor J Harrington	Cabinet Member - Infrastructure and Transport	Herefordshire Council
P Middlebrough	Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner	West Mercia Police
A Rees-Glinos	Democratic Services Support Officer	Herefordshire Council
H Speight	Higher Partnership Analyst	West Mercia Police
Councillor D Toynbee	Cabinet Member – Children and Families	Herefordshire Council
A Turton	Partnership Officer	Herefordshire Council
Councillor A Tyler	Cabinet Member - Housing, Regulatory Services and Community	Herefordshire Council
Superintendent H Wain	Local Policing Commander	West Mercia Police

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Paul Andrews, Tracey Bowes, Toni Fagan and Kath Hey.

18. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor David Summers was present in the meeting room as the substitute for Councillor Tracy Bowes. Councillor Felicity Norman participated via remote attendance on behalf of Councillor Toni Fagan.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to the item 'Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership' item, Councillor Barry Durkin advised the committee that he was the Vice-Chairman of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel.

During the item 'The Public Realm Services Future Operating Model', Councillor Jim Kenyon advised the committee that he had a non-pecuniary interest due to an association a sub-contractor.

20. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

21. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Pages 9 - 12)

Questions received and responses given are attached as Appendix 1 to the minutes.

22. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from councillors.

23. HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The purpose of this item was to undertake crime and disorder scrutiny function in relation to Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The key participants were introduced and the Cabinet Member - Housing, Regulatory Services and Community (and Chairperson of the CSP Board) gave an introductory presentation covering: the role and membership of the CSP; the CSP strategy, 'Our Plan to Keep You Safer' (2021-2024), which included the strategic priorities 'To prevent Violence Against Women and Girls' and 'To reduce the harm from Domestic Abuse'; the delivery of the strategy and funding arrangements; the structure of groups and sub-groups; data in relation to the strategic priorities; data on all crime trends and for comparative police force areas; positives and challenges in recent years; and an acknowledgement to all the partners, agencies and volunteers involved for their efforts.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) made opening comments about: CSPs predated PCCs; the value of scrutiny activity to check the effectiveness of the CSP; current PCC initiatives; the need to address behaviours and to support communities to be safe and resilient to stop crime happening in the first place; and the need to be resolute in the commitment to the strategic priorities.

The principal topics of the debate included:

1. The purpose of the 'Channel Panel', as part of the Prevent strategy, to support individuals at risk of radicalisation.
2. The impact of healthy relationships education and initiatives in schools and how to evidence outcomes over the next twelve months, including comparative data from other CSPs and feedback from parents / guardians.
3. The issue of elder abuse in the county.
4. The influence of social networking and other media platforms in shaping relationships and behaviours.
5. Challenges associated with funding to deliver programmes in schools were outlined but it was acknowledged that there were other opportunities to promote key messages across broader society.
6. The PCC questioned whether the council was assured that it was deploying resources effectively to address the strategic priorities.
7. The work being undertaken by the CSP with education professionals and practitioners to raise awareness about the damage caused by emotional abuse and controlling behaviours in relationships. Reference was also made to the Drive campaign which aimed to deter perpetrator behaviour.
8. The need to promote sources of help and support to enable people to recognise and respond appropriately to all forms of abuse. The PCC emphasised that help and support was available, whether or not victims wished to report incidents to the police. It was acknowledged that messages had to be communicated in ways that were relevant to young people and the voices of young people should be heard.
9. The work of the police in terms of child exploitation and online protection.
10. The training undertaken by West Mercia Police and Fire and Rescue Service personnel on domestic abuse matters.
11. In response to a comment about improving pastoral support in educational settings, the Corporate Director – Children and Young People advised that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee had considered an item on 'Children and Young Peoples Mental Health' which included a review of schools' pastoral support ([minute 31 of 2020/21 refers](#)). Later in the meeting, a committee member suggested that this topic should be revisited by that scrutiny committee.
12. Two strategic priorities had been identified but the CSP was responsible for, and had sub-groups undertaking activity on, a range of other issues. The Cabinet Member - Housing, Regulatory Services commented on the challenge for the CSP Board to manage its meeting time as effectively as possible.
13. The Chairperson noted that 'A Strategic Assessment will be undertaken every three years, while the HCSP Strategy will be reviewed annually by the HCSP Board to evaluate progress and ensure that the strategy adapts to changing needs.' (agenda page 58) and invited participants to identify what was working well and what was not working well as a partnership. In response:
 - The PCC commented on the need to respond and adapt to change, including the requirements and opportunities presented by the Serious Violence Duty.

- The Assistant Director Prevention noted on the value of collaborative working but considered that there was more work to be undertaken on data sharing.
- The Higher Partnership Analyst said that there was a need to understand what other relevant data was held by the partners and to ensure that there was robust evaluation of the initiatives being undertaken.
- The Cabinet Member - Housing, Regulatory Services commented on the quality of the data from police but this could not be shared with communities. A concern was expressed about the limited resources available to the Partnership Team to support the safeguarding boards and partnerships.
- The Local Policing Commander commented on the importance of considering measures of effectiveness before delivering any sort of initiative.
- The PCC also commented on the value of sharing needs assessments and other drivers for organisational activity.

The Chairperson invited the partners to consider whether they were doing enough to promote the work of the CSP.

14. Further to point 10 above, further information was provided about the training of Fire and Rescue Service personnel and the roles of signposting and safeguarding officers and prevention champions.
15. The use and synchronisation of different communication channels was explored further, including the involvement of Talk Community.
16. The potential of Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology to detect and deter crime.
17. The function of Operation SNAP in handling video and photographic evidence from members of the public in relation to cycling and driving offences.
18. The PCC encouraged ward councillors to engage with local policing teams to identify opportunities to enhance visibility and accessibility.
19. The expansion of the Safer Streets Programme into other areas of Herefordshire.
20. The Corporate Director Community Wellbeing said that further consideration would be given to the contribution of the Talk Community hubs to the CSP strategic priorities. The Cabinet Member - Housing, Regulatory Services and Community added that capital funding had been allocated to enhance the hubs.
21. The Chief Transformation and Delivery Officer advised that the ICS intended to attend all CSP Board meetings but there had been some meeting clashes.
22. The potential to support community groups and improve facilities in order to enhance community resilience.
23. There was a discussion about the outreach to parish councils, particularly given the comment in Appendix A to the report that 'Resources are not available to complete Partnership surveys and information gathering to gain the views of Herefordshire people on how safe they feel and what concerns them the most' (agenda page 36). The Assistant PCC noted that some parish councils did not appear to be aware of the CSP, indicating a need to improve dialogue.

With input from the Democratic Services Manager and other attendees, the committee discussed potential recommendations to the Community Safety Partnership and agreed the following resolution.

Resolved:

That the following recommendations be submitted to the Community Safety Partnership:

- a) **Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to explore the current role of pastoral care within educational settings in enabling young people / their peers to recognise, record and report / refer abuse in all of its forms.**
- b) **CSP to utilise wider synchronization of social media and research commonly used channels used by differing cohorts of society to promote key messaging, sources of help and support.**
- c) **CSP to approach 'Talk Community' with a view to sharing data and to strengthen their network for communicating sources of support and help.**
- d) **CSP to respond to the committee request to broaden and strengthen its reach within the community, and particularly outreach to parish councils.**
- e) **CSP to explore how the Safer Streets funding can be channelled as effectively as possible in the county's rural areas.**
- f) **CSP to explore how we cultivate / new funding sources to further the priorities of the CSP.**

In addition to the recommendations above, the committee requested that the following actions be undertaken:

1. **CSP to present the evidence gathered on the healthy relationships education and its measurable impact on reducing domestic abuse / peer-on-peer / violence against women and girls in younger people.**
2. **CSP to present the evidence of the 'Drive Campaign' in relation to prevention of controlling and coercive behaviours / mental abuse related crimes.**
3. **CSP to explain how its priorities are changing as a result on new funding and interventions such as the serious violence duty and resulting strategy.**
4. **CSP to explain where improvements to sharing of data is enabling clearer understanding of trends and measures and how they influence operational practice.**
5. **CSP to explore innovative / smarter ways of working in relation to funding streams being deployed.**

[Note: There was a short adjournment before the next item.]

24. THE PUBLIC REALM SERVICES FUTURE OPERATING MODEL

Further to [minute 8](#) of the meeting held on 14 October 2022, the purpose of this item was to provide the committee with the outcome of a midpoint review of the council's public realm services and to invite comments and constructive challenge regarding the proposals to select and develop a Future Operating Model.

The Cabinet Member - Infrastructure and Transport made opening comments about: the background to the public realm service contract with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) that had been awarded in 2013; the key features of the existing model; audits undertaken of the public realm contract which had identified issues with the effectiveness of contract monitoring on the council side; various model types had been considered by Cabinet Members and by a cross party member working group; it was considered that Model Five, 'in house client and technical staff with existing provider (single contract) for top up professional services and works', would deliver the council's objectives.

The principal topics of the debate included:

1. The initial implementation costs of the model and opportunities to deliver efficiencies to reach a cost neutral position with ongoing service costs.
2. The learning from bringing public rights of way and traffic management services back in house in April 2022, particularly in relation to communications and staff planning.
3. The transfer of technical and professional services staff from BBLP to the council.
4. Encouraging the public to report potholes, with an enhanced digital presence.
5. The future management of assets and the modernisation of the vehicle fleet.
6. The options appraisal identified that Model Five would provide value for money and would negate risks for the council.
7. The Cabinet Member - Commissioning, Procurement and Assets commented on the benefits of competitive dialogue with potential suppliers, including on social value and environmental objectives.
8. The improvements that had been made to contract management, informed by the Major Contract Improvement Plan, including enhanced constructive tension between the parties.
9. The interim arrangements and plans for the recruitment of permanent heads of contract management, highways, and transportation.
10. The value of public rights of way, including for population health and wellbeing, and the importance of engagement with volunteers interested in supporting and improving the network, subject to appropriate supervision and mitigation of risks.

[Note: With the assent of committee members, the Chairperson determined that the meeting should continue beyond three hours.]

11. It was noted that there was limited detail on the additional costs and challenges referenced in paragraphs 18 and 19 of the report (agenda pages 64/65). The Cabinet Member - Infrastructure and Transport said that a preferred model had been identified but further decisions would not be taken until the new administration period. Comments were made about the importance of corporate memory and apprising councillors about the situation.
12. The need for flexibility in terms of potential suppliers for major infrastructure projects.

13. The need for clarity about the division of responsibilities between contractors and the council, and for the council to be the driver for communications and primary point of contact for the public.
14. With attention drawn to the statement 'The contract has a two year no fault termination clause which both parties can enact at any time, which is proposed to be retained' (paragraph 34, agenda page 68), assurance was sought about the contingency arrangements to retender the contract and mobilise within this timeframe in the event of the clause being triggered.
15. The new range of strategic performance measures could include working in partnership with the contractor on opportunities for commercialisation, innovation and new ways of working.
16. There was an intention to continue the cross party member working group and the members were commended for their input to date.

With input from the Democratic Services Manager, the committee discussed potential recommendations to the executive and agreed the following resolution.

Resolved:

That the following recommendations be submitted to the executive:

- a) **Herefordshire Council (HC) / Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) strengthen the publicity campaign to raise awareness of where / how residents of Herefordshire can report pot-holes.**
- b) **Clarification is given on how contracts are awarded and arrangements do not tie the council in to using just one supplier for major infrastructure projects.**
- c) **Considerations are built in to the new model for the in-house element of the council's operations to generate commercial income streams.**

In addition to the recommendations above, the committee requested that the following actions be undertaken:

1. **HC / BBLP more clearly communicate the opportunities for volunteers to support the work of HC / BBLP on, for example, litter picking, maintenance and improved access to local footpaths.**
2. **Paragraphs 18 to 19 of the scrutiny report be clarified to explain that budgetary pressures on contract delivery are 'future' pressures.**
3. **Assurances are given to the committee that internal expertise will be factored in to the new model that enables HC to assess the quality of major infrastructure and locality works to quality assure the work of our contractors.**
4. **Evidence is given to the committee that if the 'two year' no fault termination clause – if enacted – would enable HC to move in to new and adequate contractual arrangements within that two year period.**
5. **Assurances are given that corporate memory is built in to transition arrangements (from interim to permanent arrangements).**

6. That a note be made highlighting the progress toward the establishing the details of the new operating model post-election.

25. WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme for the committee was received and it was noted that there were no further scheduled meetings of the committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2022/23.

The meeting ended at 1.05 pm

Chairperson