

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 11th January, 2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jane Potter (Chair), Councillor Gay Hopkins (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Natalie Brookes, Michael Chalk, Matthew Dormer, Andrew Fry, Paul Swansborough and Nina Wood-Ford

Also Present:

S Harris, A Robert, C Bentley and A Pollard

Officers:

Jayne Pickering

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley

59. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Hill, Prosser and Wheeler. The Committee was advised that Councillor Brookes was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wheeler and Councillor Chalk was attending as a substitute for Councillor Prosser.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any party whip.

61. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 7th December 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

62. HEREFORDSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSFORMATION PLAN - PRESENTATION

The Committee welcomed Officers from the Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust and invited them to deliver a presentation (Appendix 1). During the delivery of this presentation the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Since the last update to the Committee progress had been made and there was now a Herefordshire and Worcestershire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP).
- A key focus of the partnership was on improving health and wellbeing within the area covered by the plan whilst tackling the financial challenges facing partners in the health service.
- Access and outcomes were important and shaped how the STP was measured at a national level.
- Work had been undertaken since the last update to solidify governance arrangements. There needed to be collective decision making for the STP and to help ensure that this occurred an independent Chair had been recruited to the board.
- An Engagement Officer had also been recruited, supported by external funding, to help improve the approach of partners to consultation in respect of the STP.
- Work was taking place on a Local Maternity Systems Plan, which would involve consulting with women, assessing levels of demand locally and designing services to meet community needs moving forward.
- Consultation was also being undertaken in respect of Cancer Services as it was recognised that this was a challenging area in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
- Such work sometimes entailed engaging with specialist groups based outside the area, such as the West Midlands Palliative Care end of life group, in order to obtain relevant expertise about how improvements could be made to local services.
- National care was an area that required further investigation. The STP had been able to access external funding to help address the impact of demand for services during the winter period and this had been invested in ambulatory services.
- Neighbourhood teams had been introduced across the two counties, including two in the Borough. This involved integrated partners pooling resources to meet health needs within their locality.

Following delivery of the presentation Members requested further information on a number of areas:

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- The current situation with regard to the Urgent Care Plan for the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch. Members were advised that partners had planned how to manage pressures on winter services as a whole system rather than as individual organisations and this had helped services to meet demand.
- The need to make appropriate plans to enable older patients to return to their homes with the assurance that they would receive appropriate care. A pilot initiative to address this, involving partnership working, had been held in Malvern but it had been concluded that this would be more appropriate to deliver at the Alexandra Hospital.
- The need for more work to be undertaken to review transport links between the north and south of Worcestershire and the impact that this might have both on patients and on staff.
- The extent to which representatives of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service had been involved in the work of local neighbourhood teams. The Committee was informed that representatives of the fire service had delivered presentations to the teams on subjects such as fire safety in the home and greater involvement was being piloted in some neighbourhood teams.
- The Local Maternity Systems Plan and the potential impact that this might have on staffing levels. Members were advised that this work was based on national strategies and was in the preliminary stages.
- The recent announcement at the national level by email that more training places were being commissioned for medical staff. Worcester University had a plan to train more medical staff and the STP was investigating action that could be taken to encourage trained staff to remain in the area once they qualified.
- The difficulty with national shortages in respect of a number of specialist medical professions and the impact that this had in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
- The introduction of new Health Care Assistant roles and the positive impact that this would have on the workforce.
- The availability of perinatal mental health services. Members were advised that the STP had an opportunity to bid for funding to enhance these services, which were currently available in Worcestershire though there were no such services in Herefordshire.
- The potential for neighbourhood teams to encourage people to report to the most appropriate medical professional to meet their needs, helping GPs to concentrate on the most serious cases where their skills were needed.

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- The role of social prescribers in helping to refer patients to alternative sources of support that could help to enhance their health and wellbeing in the long-term.
- The length of time that had been spent working on STPs in the country to date and the extent to which these plans had had a positive impact on health services.
- The negative press that had been received nationally in respect of STPs and the need for health services to improve communications about positive outcomes from work on the STPs in order to reassure the public.
- The extent to which population growth, as a result of housing development, had been taken into account when developing the STPs. Members were advised that Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) had a statutory duty to consult with local Councils and these issues should be picked up through this process.
- The approach taken to monitoring the performance of the STP. The Committee was informed that there were constitutional targets and data was provided in the form of a dashboard, the latest copy of which could be provided for Members' consideration.
- The value of receiving a further update on progress with the STP in approximately six months' time.
- The potential for representatives of the two neighbourhood teams in Redditch to attend the meeting of the Committee when the next update on the STP would be provided.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a further update in respect of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership be provided to the Committee in approximately six months' time;**
- 2) representatives of the local neighbourhood teams for Redditch be invited to attend the meeting when this update is delivered; and**
- 3) the report be noted.**

63. PLACE PARTNERSHIP - PRESENTATION

Members welcomed the Managing Director of the Place Partnership Limited to the meeting and invited him to deliver a presentation (Appendix 2). Whilst this presentation was provided the following matters were raised for Members' attention:

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- The Place Partnership Ltd was a public sector mutual in which partners had equal shares.
- The organisation had been incorporated in March 2015, a Managing Director was appointed in June 2015 and the company had been launched in September of that year.
- The partnership had succeeded the previous partnership arrangement that had been managed by Worcestershire County Council on behalf of some partners.
- A range of partner organisations were shareholders in the company including Councils, West Mercia Police and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.
- The partnership provided property services on behalf of partners and had inherited some excellent staff from those organisations. All staff were now on the same terms and conditions.
- The partnership had introduced a graduate programme and were due to recruit three new members of staff to this programme in 2018.
- The partnership had around 500 contracts, though officers were working to simplify this by reducing the number to approximately 15. This included a contract with 188 schools.
- The partnership delivered services across a wide geographical area encompassing Herefordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, though customers were located as far away as Altrincham in Greater Manchester.
- The Place Partnership had been involved in recent work on the One Public Estate exercise.
- A key consideration when managing Property Services was to maximise use of space and this could enable organisations to achieve efficiencies.
- There was a shareholders' agreement, a service agreement, between the company and the shareholders, and properly constituted articles all of which underpinned the governance arrangements.
- Each shareholder had a representative who sat on the board, which met on a quarterly basis, as well as acted as a voice for their organisation. The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources had this role on behalf of Redditch Borough Council.
- There was also a regular forum for shareholders, which was attended by the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management. These forums provided an opportunity to consider matters such as the partnership's business plans.
- When the partnership had been launched it had been anticipated that in total services would be delivered at a cost of

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£25 million by year five. In fact, by year two the partnership had running costs of £21 million.

- The partnership was achieving a greater level of savings for partner organisations than the previous shared service arrangement.
- The partnership had inherited some systems that were not considered to be fit for purpose. Action had been taken over the previous two years in an attempt to address this.
- The partnership had worked on a range of projects, including Hindlip Park and Evesham Fire Station each of which had been complicated but had helped to generate new jobs at a limited cost to the public purse.
- The partnership had been scrutinised by the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors (RICS).
- The organisation had received recognition as Property Manager of the Year in a national competition.

Once the presentation had been delivered Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The weaknesses of the partnership and how these could be addressed. Officers acknowledged that improvements could be made, though it was noted that the organisation had only existed for two years. This would take time and would involve a focus on improving customer services.
- The role of staff in helping to improve customer services. A new staff group, Your Place Matters, had been introduced to enable employees to discuss such matters.
- The potential for the partnership to also meet customer services by engaging with the customer to develop service action plans.
- The performance management arrangements for the partnership. The Committee was advised that the initial agreement underpinning the partnership had made no reference to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) though these had been developed locally. Members requested a copy of these KPIs for information.
- The potential to include KPIs in the new service agreements that were due to apply from 1st April 2018 and the need to link these to the Council's strategic purposes.
- The potential for conflicts of interest to arise where shareholders had both representatives on the board and an interest in achieving savings and generating revenue. Independent members had been recruited to the board to help achieve an appropriate balance and address any potential for conflicts of interest to occur.

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- The meetings of the board and the potential for Councillors to attend these. Members were advised that partner organisations learned about meetings of the board through their representative.
- The progress that had been achieved with the One Public Estate project and the extent to which Members would be engaged with this. Officers advised that a draft document was in the process of being considered by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and was currently due to be considered by the Executive Committee in March, though the item was also scheduled for pre-scrutiny.
- The process that needed to be followed to report matters of concern to the Place Partnership. Members were advised that it was best to report issues to the organisation's contact centre.
- The existence of lead members of staff at the partnership who co-ordinated enquiries relating to a particular local authority area. This individual could help to ensure that any concerns relating to assets within that area were addressed.
- The level of profit that had been achieved by the partnership to date. Members were advised that in the first year of operation there had been a loss of £99,000. However, the audit had recently been completed of the year 2 accounts and this revealed that there had been a profit of £145,000 that year which was being reinvested in services.
- The provision of the same level of dividend to all shareholders regardless of the level of their contribution.
- The potential to generate more business by bidding for new contracts or undertaking specific pieces of work for external customers.
- The potential for the Redditch Fire Station to be regenerated as part of work on the One Public Estate project.
- The need for funding from the Council's capital programme to invest in capital projects delivered by the Place Partnership on behalf of the authority.
- The availability of £200,000 in a Localities Development budget which could be invested by the partnership in projects that met needs within the community.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted

64. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2018/19 TO 2021/22 - UPDATE REPORT (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES - TO FOLLOW)

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources delivered a presentation which updated the Committee on the current position in respect of the Council's budget (Appendix 3) and in so doing she highlighted the following matters:

- The Council was currently able to retain any additional growth over the baseline for growth of business rates. However, the baseline was due to be reset to the level at which business rates had already grown which would reduce the benefit of any growth to the Council in financial terms.
- The level at which the Council could increase Council Tax before triggering a referendum had been increased to three per cent. Within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Officers would be working on the basis that there would be a 2.99 per cent increase in Council tax.
- Worcestershire Councils had been in contact with the Government to try to find out why the Worcestershire Business Rates Pilot bid had been unsuccessful. This might help to ensure the success of any future bids.
- As a consequence the Council was remaining in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership's (GBSLEP's) business rates pool in 2018/19.
- Many local authorities had raised concerns about the need to pay the Government a negative grant from 2019/20 onwards and the government was therefore consulting on alternative funding models that could be introduced.
- Under the Local Government Funding Reform there would be a number of considerations that would be addressed by the government. However, the service specific cost drivers referred to in the Government's consultation papers were more like to apply to social care providers than to district Councils.
- The Council had assumed that £196,000 would be recovered in New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding but unfortunately fewer planning applications had been approved in the period relating to Band D properties or higher than had been anticipated meaning that the Council could not receive this NHB funding.
- In original forecasts the budget had been designed to take into account a one per cent pay rise per annum but this had since increased to two per cent in line with the national pay agreement.

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- The Senior Management Team (SMT) would shortly be meeting to discuss the budget in further detail which would involve a line-by-line review.
- The Council needed to achieve a balanced budget for 2018/19 in the MTFP. The subsequent three years covered in the plan did not necessarily have to balance.
- The Council's proposed budget would be considered by the Executive Committee on 6th February. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have an opportunity to scrutinise these proposals and could report any recommendations on to Council on 19th February 2018.

Once the presentation had been delivered Members requested further information about the following matters:

- The Government's consultation in respect of the negative grant. Officers advised that this would involve the Government reviewing the options available and consulting with local authorities about these.
- The number of Councils that would need to pay a negative grant under existing arrangements from 2019/20. Officers advised that the majority of local authorities were in this position, with Redditch Borough Council due to pay the Government a similar amount to the majority of other district Councils in Worcestershire.
- The housing development that had taken place in Redditch over the last year and the reasons why this had not been taken into account when reviewing NHB contributions. Officers advised that the majority of these houses had been Band A, B and C properties which were not covered by the NHB scheme.
- The potential for more Band D properties to be built subject to changes being made to the Council's Local Plan.
- The availability of land within the Borough on which to build new properties.
- The development of lots of properties just outside the Borough's borders which would mean that local authorities in those neighbouring areas would receive any associated NHB funding.
- The potential benefits of both residential and commercial development just over the border on the Borough, particularly in respect of economic development and employment opportunities.

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RESOLVED that

the Medium Term Financial Plan Update Report 2018/19 to 2020/21 update report be noted.

65. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

Officers advised that due to the inclement weather the meeting of the Executive Committee that had been due to take place on 12th December had been cancelled. For this reason there were no minutes from that meeting for Members' consideration.

An updated copy of the Executive Committee's Work Programme published on 8th January 2018 was tabled for Members' consideration. Officers advised that the One Public Estate exercise had been postponed and was now scheduled for the Executive Committee's consideration on or after March. At the advice of officers the Executive Committee meeting that had been scheduled to take place immediately prior to Council on 19th February 2018 had been cancelled and the work programme had been updated to reflect this.

Members briefly debated the meaning of key and non-key decisions. There was general consensus that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should focus on pre-scrutinising any reports on the work programme that were likely to have significant implications for the Council, which could be both key and non-key decisions.

66. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Committee's work programme and noted that the meeting of the Committee in March would now take place on 1st March 2018. This meeting had been brought forward to provide Members with an opportunity to pre-scrutinise the Leisure Business Case. The One Public Estate report had also been rescheduled for consideration at this meeting.

Officers from Worcestershire County Council were due to attend the meeting of the Committee on 1st March to deliver a presentation on the subject of Safeguarding and Early Help services. There was general consensus that that this was likely to be a subject of interest to all Members. It was therefore agreed that all Members should be invited to attend this meeting.

RESOLVED that

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all Members should be invited to attend the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee due to take place on 1st March 2018.

67. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS

a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Potter

Councillor Potter advised that there had been no meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group since the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7th December 2017. The following meeting of the group would take place on 30th January 2018.

b) Civil Contingencies Short Sharp Review – Chair, Councillor Prosser

In the absence of the Chair Councillor Dormer provided an update on the progress with the review.

Members were advised that there had been no further meetings of the group since the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The next meeting of the group would take place on 17th January. Members had originally intended for this to be their last meeting. However, a key expert witness had recently returned from maternity leave and would be interviewed at this meeting. It was possible that the evidence this witness would provide would change the direction of the review. For this reason the group was requesting an extension to their deadline to provide time for feedback from the witness to be taken into account.

c) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Dormer

Councillor Dormer explained that two meetings of the group had taken place since the previous meeting of the Committee.

During the first of these meetings officers had been interviewed about the difficulties that Members were experiencing when attempting to access the dashboard on their iPads as well as the problems the group had experienced accessing the dashboard at a recent meeting. Members had been advised that there had been some technical issues with wifi access, though it was anticipated that these problems had

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now been resolved. Officers had also introduced a new tab which could be used to help navigate the dashboard more quickly. It was understood that all Members could access this tab on the dashboard on their iPads.

At the latest meeting of the group Members had interviewed officers about a number of measures relating to the work of the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit (NWEDR). Many of the measures that were discussed involved data where there would be a significant lag in obtaining information from external sources. Members had requested that where this occurred brief commentary was added for clarification.

For the next two meetings of the group Members had invited officers to attend meetings to discuss measures relating to sickness absence and rent arrears.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the deadline for completion of the Civil Contingencies Short Sharp Review be extended to 1st March 2018; and**
- 2) the update reports be noted.**

68. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS (COUNCILLOR NINA WOOD-FORD)

Councillor Wood-Ford confirmed that there had been no meetings of either the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC).

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 9.09 pm