

**Relevant extract from the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny
Committee meeting on Wednesday 23rd June 2010**

The Committee received oral reports in relation to current reviews, namely:

a) Local Strategic Partnership

It was reported that eight further recommendations had been drafted at the most recent meeting of the Task and Finish Group. An additional witness interview was due to take place in June. The review was still considered to be on course for completion ahead of schedule and it was likely that the Group's final report would be presented in July / August 2010.

b) Worcestershire Hub Review

The Chair thanked Councillor Hopkins for attending the meeting on behalf of the Committee. It was acknowledged that she had only recently taken on the role of the Council's co-opted Member on the Group and that she was not, therefore, fully conversant with the work of the review to date.

Councillor Hopkins reported that she had attended the most recent meeting of the Task and Finish Group and referred Members to her notes attached to the Agenda. She provided the following answers to the questions on the subject of the Worcestershire Hub service and Task and Finish review that had been proposed by members:

1) What stage has the Joint Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny Task Group reached in the review of the Worcestershire Hub Service?

Councillor Hopkins advised that, from what she had understood from the meeting, the review of the Hub was well past the half-way stage.

2) What actions are likely to be suggested to improve the delivery of the service?

Councillor Hopkins reported that a number of actions were already being implemented; specifically for Redditch, a similar change to that already made by Bromsgrove who have provided one telephone number for their Revenues and Benefits service which has, it would seem, helped to reduce the number of enquiries to their back offices. It was anticipated that a similar set up in Redditch would have a similar impact on reducing calls through the Hub.

Redditch had introduced the option for its Switchboard to offer callers the opportunity to key in Office extension numbers (if

known) which provided automatic transfers of calls and speeded up the process for passing on calls.

- 3) During the course of the Neighbourhood Groups Review in Redditch we consulted with residents who frequently complained about the Worcestershire Hub at Neighbourhood Group meetings. Has any attempt been made during the review to consult with residents about the service?

It was reported that a number of consultation processes were undertaken, namely:

- i) Customer Questionnaire – January / February
- ii) Worcester Viewpoint in May – a general newsletter but included an article on the Hub for feedback
- iii) Your Views Count – an online area on the Hub website which provided a questionnaire for users to complete and submit.

- 4) What measures are being taken to improve the Worcestershire Hub telephone service?

Councillor Hopkins advised that she had no further information on other measures to be taken at this time. It was reported that the Group's Chair had suggested that perceptions had indicated that the service had much improved. This view was not shared by the Committee and Members highlighted several of their own experiences when dealing with enquires through the Hub, namely:

- i) A Member reported that during an enquiry through the Hub until they mentioned they were a Borough Councillor; they had been treated in an unsatisfactory manner.
- ii) A Member recently ordered a new wheelie bin and after several calls, which lasted between ten and fifteen minutes each, they ended up with five wheelie bins.
- iii) A Member attempted to report a problem with a pavement to the Highways Unit. This had not resulted in any action and they had eventually been advised to contact a County Councillor to resolve the issue.
- iv) A Member reported that, in his experience, using the Hub to access services was very frustrating because you could not approach individual services to discuss issues.

It was questioned what value was added to the delivery of services if people were prevented from having direct contact with relevant services. Officers reported that the ultimate vision for the Hub had

been that a customer could contact any Hub in the County to resolve an issue regardless of where they lived in the County or who the responsible authority was. Due to technical difficulties, however, this ideal of service delivery still remained to be achieved.

Councillor Hopkins was asked to report the concerns and experiences highlighted by Members to the Joint Scrutiny Review Group for further consideration. It was noted that Councillor Hopkins would provide written updates for the Committee after every Review Group meeting.

In the context of external appointments, it was highlighted that, as Councillors, Members were appointed to a number of outside bodies, such as the Worcestershire Hub Board. However, they were not aware of providing updates on the work of these outside bodies for other Members' consideration. It was reported that feedback on outside Body appointments was supposed to be directed through the Executive Committee, although this rarely happened.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the updates be noted;**
- 2) Councillor Hopkins be asked to report the Committee's concerns and comments on the Worcestershire Hub service back to the Joint Scrutiny Review Group for consideration; and**
- 3) Officers be requested to review the arrangements currently in place for delivering reports on the subject of Members' work on outside bodies.**