

CO-OPERATIVE & COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 25th July, 2011 at 6.00 p.m. in the Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors A. McClements (Chairman), S. Bentley, N. England, J. Loveridge; Scrutiny Co-optee L. Baker-Oliver.

Also Present: Councillors S. Davies, I. Fletcher, V. Fletcher, C. Turley; Richard Partington, Assistant Chief Executive; Stephanie Jones, Scrutiny Group Specialist.

CCSC-1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor K. Tomlinson. Cllr. McClements informed the Committee that Cllr. Clive Elliott had stepped down from the Committee due to a potential conflict of interest with his special responsibility for Communication, PR and Marketing, and that Cllr. Amrik Jhawar had been nominated as a replacement but had not received notification of the meeting.

CCSC-2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

CCSC-3 CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL AND CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION

Cllr. Shaun Davies, Cabinet Member for Co-operative Council & Partnership, presented the Cabinet report on the Co-operative Council. This meeting presented scrutiny members with an opportunity to review the report before being presented to Cabinet on 26th July, and Cllr. Davies said he would welcome questions and observations on the report.

Cllr. Davies highlighted the following elements of the report:

- That the Co-operative Council is a key plank of the administration's vision for transforming Telford and Wrekin into a co-operative borough over the next 10 years
- That the report outlines the first steps in this journey
- A 60 strong Co-operative Commission would be announced at Cabinet on 26th July which would include representatives from partner organisations, local businesses and the voluntary and community sector
- The Co-operative Commission would be looking at key services and how they could be delivered in a different way
- A number of "Early Adopter" schemes were outlined in the report. South Staffordshire and Sandwell Councils had already set up Small Business Loans Funds to support small businesses unable to attract bank lending, but Telford & Wrekin had gone further by securing private sector investment into the fund.
- Running in parallel with the Co-operative Commission, an Employee Commission would be set up to look at how the approach to co-operative working could be moved forward internally.

- The Co-operative and Employee Commissions would start work in September and report to Cabinet in January 2012.

Members asked a number of questions and made a number of observations:

From an external point of view, the general public may find the approach described in the report complicated and multi-layered. There should be more transparency and clarity in how this is explained to the general public.

The report sets out the first steps in two strands of work - with the community and with staff – that will be built on to become a Co-operative Council. The model has been used in other authorities, although it has been tailored for the specific needs of Telford & Wrekin. The report was written for Cabinet members, and would not be communicated to the public in this way. Briefing sessions have already been held with over 500 staff, and with many of the partner organisations identified.

How were members of the Co-operative Commission chosen?

They were identified by Cabinet members from key partners and other organisations representing the local community.

How will members of the public be able to get involved?

It is anticipated that the Co-operative Commission will set up self-selecting sub-groups to focus on specific issues. The sub-groups will include Commissioners with particular expertise and knowledge of the issue and will identify how members of the public can be further involved in the work.

In response to Mrs. Baker-Oliver's point that there needed to be clearer communication with the public, Cllr. Davies said he could come back to scrutiny to provide an update on the sub-group work streams and the communication strategy.

How will the Co-operative Commission work with scrutiny?

Cllr. Davies said he hoped that the Commissioners can feed into scrutiny and vice-versa. Cllr. McClements said the work programmes could be linked in September once the Commission has identified its work streams.

Do you have any information about how the Co-operative Council works in other areas?

We have looked at models in other authorities but have not replicated them as we have tailored the model to meet the needs of Telford & Wrekin. A key difference is that in other areas scrutiny had not been included in the process from the beginning, whereas in Telford & Wrekin we want scrutiny to be involved from the start so that scrutiny members can play a pro-active role and not a reactive one.

Cllr. Bentley requested further information from other authorities.

How will you ensure against any potential conflicts of interest in granting the Small Business Loans Fund?

The details of the scheme are currently being worked up and contributions from private sector investors are being negotiated and firmed up. The scheme was likely to be administered through a third party and will be monitored by the Monitoring Officer and interests will need to be declared.

Cllr. Bentley requested details of the model.

Scrutiny has statutory roles and rights: what rights will the Commissioners have, for example over access to information which may be sensitive or confidential?

It is expected that the information the Commissioners will use will already be in the public domain but there will be guidelines governing what information can be disclosed to Commissioners and legal advice will be sought on this.

How is the Co-operative Commission work being resourced and how has it been budgeted?

The Commissioners will work on a voluntary basis and will not be paid. Internal resources have been identified to support the work of the Commission.

Have all the organisations (that will be announced at Cabinet) been approached to establish their interest in the Commission?

All the Commissioners who will be announced at Cabinet have been approached to establish their interest. The people on the list are not necessarily Board members, but are operational staff working for the organisations who can bring a hands-on understanding of the issues and services.

When Councillors are the elected representatives, why are they not being used to do this work?

Scrutiny has been approached early on in the process to become involved. The intention is that the Commissioners will bring additional expertise to supplement the knowledge of elected members, extend the range and depth of consultation on services and stimulate innovation. The Commission can add to the contribution that members make and will make recommendations to Cabinet.

It was noted that Cllr. Davies had been invited to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board to discuss further the ways in which scrutiny could be involved with the Commission.

What are the plans for the Brookside pilot?

We will work with ward members and parish councillors to develop the approach. There will be a walkabout in September to which ward councillors will be invited, and we will talk to partners working in the area to identify what needs to be done.

Cllr. Austin suggested that the Commission's work should include looking at how partners, especially voluntary and community organisations, can be enabled to access alternative sources of funding.

Cllrs. Bentley, I. Fletcher and V. Fletcher left the meeting at 6.30pm.

CCSC-4 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee discussed and considered the suggestions for the work programme as shown in Appendix 1 of the report of the 2011/12 Work Programme.

Members agreed that suggestion 2 was not a topic but a point to note in carrying out the work programme, that suggestions 7 and 8 (the Management of Community Centres) should be linked and considered as one topic and that suggestion 10 (the media) was not suitable for scrutiny as scrutiny cannot control what the media print.

The remaining suggestions were then considered and members prioritised the suggestions for the work programme by scoring the 3 items they felt were the most important for scrutiny as follows:

3 = top priority

2 = second priority

1 = third priority.

The points awarded to each suggestion were added up. Suggestions which scored no points would not be included in the work programme at this stage. For the suggestions which scored points, members discussed the possible method of scrutiny, the timing of a review and identified items which may potentially overlap with the work of the Co-operative Commission.

The suggestions were prioritised and agreed as follows:

Table 1

Suggestion (and number)	Score	Agreed
Management of Community Centres (7,8)	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That this is a priority for in-depth review • To defer scoping the review until after the first meeting of the Co-operative Commission so that work can be co-ordinated.
Social deprivation (9)	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That this is a priority for in-depth review • That this is a large and complex area and a review would need to be clearly scoped and focused on specific issues • To explore the option a joint review with the CYP Scrutiny Committee on child poverty • To defer scoping the review until after the first meeting of the Co-operative Commission so that work can be co-ordinated.
Concessions policies in leisure and culture (6)	4	Include this in the work programme as a single-agenda item Committee meeting (Special Interest Meeting) in September or October.
Environmental maintenance (3)	3	Possibly a short review linked to the work of the Co-operative Commission.
“One Business” single point of contact for businesses (1)	2	Include this in the work programme as a single-agenda item Committee meeting (Special Interest Meeting) in September or October.

Working with town & parish councils (4)	1	To be included in the work programme if capacity is available after the other topics have been reviewed.
Service review of libraries (5)	0	Not included in the work programme at this time.

RESOLVED -

- a. that the items and methods of review shown in Table 1 would be included in the Committee’s work programme**
- b. that the next 2 Committee meetings would be held at 6.00pm on 12th September and 10th October to consider the “One Business” single point of contact for businesses and the concessions policies in leisure and culture.**

The meeting ended at 7.15p.m.

Chairman:

Date: