

**CO-OPERATIVE & COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of the meeting of the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny**  
**Committee held on Wednesday 21st March 2012 at 6.00 pm in the**  
**Scrutiny Room, Civic Offices, Telford**

**PRESENT:** Councillors A McClements (Chairman), S Bentley, K Guy and A Jhawar.

**Also Present:** Cllr A England - Cabinet Member Leisure & Wellbeing, Cllr S Davies - Cabinet Member Environment, Co-operative Council & Partnerships, Cllr Rae Evans, Mike Vout – Urban Townscape Officer, Jules Millington – Information Officer, Delivery & Planning, Roger Lewis – Information Officer, Delivery & Planning, Debrah Byle – Projects Specialist, Jon Power – Delivery & Planning Manager, Paul Shuttleworth – Radio Presenter, Beverley Howard – T & W Volunteer Centre (CVS), Tracy Clarke - Scrutiny Officer and Wendy Buckley – Democratic Services Support Officer.

**CCSC-27     MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**CCSC - 28     APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors N England, J Loveridge, K Tomlinson and Scrutiny Co-optee L Baker-Oliver.

**CCSC-29     DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

**CCSC – 30     THE CO-OPERATIVE EMPLOYEE COMMISSION**

Various reports were presented by Debrah Byle – Projects Specialist, which provided information on how Telford & Wrekin employees believe the organisation should be working and could work better. 87 employees had joined the Employee Commission. Sub-groups were set up to discuss and make proposals in 5 priority areas which were:

- Employee engagement & communication
- Financial management
- Employee volunteering
- Social responsibility
- Skills planning and development

Skills planning and development – The sub group focused on how the council can liberate the untapped potential and unused skills of its employees with the following recommendations:

- Seek council agreement in principle to develop a mentoring scheme based on the sub-group's proposals, which can be costed and implemented subject to available resources.
- Seek council agreement in principle to implement an e-learning system based upon the sub-group's priorities, which can be costed and implemented subject to available resources.

Debrah Byle advised that one objective was to look at skills employees have but are not used particularly recently with restructures and changing roles. It was also explained that a mentoring scheme would help to transfer skills across the council. The mentor pilot scheme was due to start in procurement and contract management. It was hoped that the e-learning could be rolled out to all staff to up-skill and support the workforce. This would be via a phased approach which would be knowledge based learning and would run alongside existing training. Newly appointed apprentices would also begin a mentor scheme in leisure starting in April. It was also intended that all staff would have basic standards and competences from the e-learning based training.

Financial management – The sub-group focused on how employees could be more involved in financial management and business planning. The recommendations were to:

- Raise the profile of the Council spend above £500 with council employees.
- Develop a business planning framework which includes a mechanism to engage employees in the development and delivery of financially and community focussed services.
- The Skills Planning and Development sub-group focus on procurement and contract management skills as part of their recommended mentoring scheme.

In November the group implemented a list to raise awareness of cost and how Telford & Wrekin spend money. Employees were more aware of costs and could check what the employee's particular service area were spending when the amounts were above £500 although any service area could also be checked. It was agreed that it was very important that employees could see this document and that there would be no costs involved to implement this.

Employee engagement and communication – The sub-group focussed on how the Council currently communicates with its employees and how this can be improved. The recommendations from this sub-group were:

- Develop, cost and seek approval to implement mechanisms to improve communication with employees who do not have access to a work-based PC.
- Develop a guidance framework for team briefings for all employees.
- Develop and implement ways of celebrating and recognising success and achievement.
- Develop policies for the future use of Social Media (e.g. Online Communication System and e-me).

Councillors were surprised that 40% of employees did not have access to a p.c. It was hoped to develop access to a computer with the I.T. department looking into costs and the possibility of using the Stirchley Learning & Development Centre as a p.c. drop-in centre. The use of notice boards, messages on payslips and the use of employee 'champions' would also be considered.

There were inconsistencies between Team Briefs across the organisation and a guidance framework was required to ensure consistency regardless of where employees were based. Morale had understandably been affected by the restructure and it was hoped that this could be raised by celebrating successes. Councillor Guy suggested an achievement award could be presented by the Mayor to improve staff morale and to celebrate good work.

Employee volunteering – The sub-group focussed on developing outline proposals and options for an employer supported volunteer scheme at the Council. The recommendations were:

- Develop, cost and seek approval for a volunteering scheme based upon the sub-group's proposals.
- Develop a council volunteering policy across the organisation to ensure consistency for employees who volunteer.
- The volunteering policy should include time to volunteer based on the following:
  - a. A limited amount of paid time e.g. 2 days for employees to take part in special projects that are co-ordinated by the Council.
  - b. Unpaid time for employees to take part in other volunteering activities that links to the signposting element of the volunteering scheme.

The options discussed for employee volunteering were to either agree limited paid time for example 2 days leave or a scheme whereby 1 day would be paid and the other would be unpaid. National volunteering week was due to be held in June which would be a good opportunity to begin the council scheme. It was also hoped that this would increase staff morale. Members suggested that employees with large workloads may struggle to obtain 2 days off work for volunteering. Roger Lewis replied that it was on a volunteer basis and that it would increase morale. Telford & Wrekin already assisted companies with volunteer projects but would coordinate the project for Telford & Wrekin volunteers.

Social Responsibility - The sub-group focussed what social responsibility means and how it can be embedded at the Council. The recommendations were:

- Raise member and employee awareness and understanding to embed social responsibility through the Co-operative Values of: Ownership, Involvement, Openness and Honesty and Fairness and Respect.
- Six months after the social responsibility employee awareness campaigns, evaluate their success.

- Incorporate the principles of the social responsibility model within a business planning framework.

It was felt that social responsibility was an important issue as it affected all the priority areas of the employee commission and that everyone should take responsibility for their own actions. Councillor Guy suggested that information could be put in the Council newsletter where a wider audience could be made aware of the issue. The intention was to develop an implementation plan for recommendations agreed by Cabinet.

## **CCSC – 31 THE CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL COMMISSION**

The Co-operative Commission was established in September 2011 to involve partners in shaping and moving forward the delivery of a Co-operative Council. Jon Power, Delivery & Planning Manager, presented the reports and recommendations of the Commission's five sub-groups which had focussed on the following themes:

- Employment, Skills and the Economy
- Co-operative Values and Communication
- Volunteering
- Commissioning Services and Procurement
- Image of Telford & Wrekin

Rights & Fairness Telford had run a community forum for residents to input into the issues associated with each theme. Cabinet would consider the Commission's recommendations on 29<sup>th</sup> March.

Employment, Skills & the Economy - The group focused on two key areas: attracting businesses into the borough (inward investment and business support) and improving employability. The recommendations were:

1. Adopting a more commercial approach to economic development through the development of an Economic Development Board to aid information sharing, monitoring, transparency and accountability.
2. Telford and Wrekin Council promotes itself as a Business Winning Council.
3. Support employers through the creation of a highly skilled, adaptable workforce equipped for the modern economy through better, more co-ordinated working between education providers, businesses and the workforce.

There was a discussion about the Board and it was suggested that it should be a partnership between the Council, partners and the public, and that it was crucial to elect Board members able to drive forward the proposals. It was hoped that local colleges and employers could work together with the Board to bring long term employment possibilities and skills to create better job satisfaction.

Commissioning Services and Procurement – The group focused on two main themes; voluntary sector engagement and co-operative procurement. o increase engagement and understanding of the voluntary sector's role and to work co-

operatively to better exploit commissioning/procurement opportunities through the voluntary sector, by:

- 1 Establishing a Voluntary Sector Engagement Group.
- 2 The Council undertaking a review of how and what it procures and commissions with the voluntary and community sector.

Simplifying the procurement process and ensuring that the process is transparent, maximising the benefit to the local economy and community including employment and training opportunities. The council considers looking at alternative service delivery models as appropriate. That the council consider using the Co-operative commission to hold the Council to account to ensure that the Co-operative values, once approved are embedded in all that it does – including procurement. It was suggested that the list of £500 spend had a further column attached to it which gave the name of the supplier of the goods/service.

Volunteering – A strategic volunteering group with representatives from voluntary, public and private sector organisations is established with an initial focus on developing a coordinated approach to developing volunteering around four key areas:

- Promoting volunteering
- Recognising and valuing volunteers
- Promoting and sharing good practice
- Reducing barriers to volunteering

That the strategic volunteering group considers ways in which the impact of the proposed actions and the work of the group is monitored and evaluated. That Telford & Wrekin Council develops a strategic volunteering policy across the organisation to ensure consistency for volunteers that support the delivery of council services. That the council carry out CRB checks on behalf of small voluntary organisations at a reduced cost.

It was agreed that barriers and red tape needed to be broken down to assist with the recruitment of volunteers. A volunteers week would be held in June 2012 to find out what is available for volunteers within Telford & Wrekin.

Image of Telford & Wrekin – An overarching vision for the image of Telford and Wrekin is adopted as ‘improving the image of Telford and Wrekin’ to enable the borough to be ‘a good place to visit and therefore a good place to live’. The recommendations are:

- The Council, partners and community work together in new (co-operative) ways to enable Telford to become a Conference Town.
- The Council promotes itself as a ‘Business winning Council’.
- That the ‘joined up’ tourism offer in Telford and Wrekin should be improved together with the co-ordination of marketing, PR and visitor information across Telford and Wrekin.
- The council, partners and the community build on existing events and festivals to exploit and promote the assets of Telford and Wrekin, leading to a culturally vibrant place to live, work and visit.

- That Council, partners and the community should work together to promote Civic Pride for residents of Telford and Wrekin.

It was agreed that Telford & Wrekin required good quality hotels with integrated transport to bring in more visitors and conference business. The local taxis and Telford railway station required upgrading to win both business to Telford and residents pride in the town. It was hoped that once visitor numbers increased in Telford then the smaller market towns would also benefit. It was also agreed that there was a lack of nightlife in Telford which was required for conference users.

Co-operative values – The council values were to:

- Be accountable for own actions and empower people with the skills to help themselves.
- Be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way.
- Work together with the community, involve people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas.
- Respond to people's needs in a fair and consistent way.

The Council would like the community to:

- Take action and responsibility for themselves and their community to the best of their abilities.
- Be open and honest about what they want to improve in their community.
- Work with and support others, get involved and share their views to help the Council develop the way things are done.
- Respect and care for themselves and others, value the different ideas and skills that people bring and treat each other as equals.

The intention was to develop an implementation plan for recommendations agreed by Cabinet.

## **CCSC – 32 FORWARD PLAN**

It was suggested that the Employee Commission was monitored to maintain momentum and be placed on the forward plan.

**RESOLVED – that the Employee Commission be placed on the forward plan.**

**The meeting ended at 8.07pm**

**Chairman:**

**Date:**