

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on Wednesday, 11 January 2017 at 6.00pm in Meeting Room G3-G4, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors A J Burford, S Bentley, N A M England, K R Guy, S A W Reynolds (Chair) and J M Seymour

Also Present: Councillor A D McClements (Cabinet Member for Transport, Customer & Neighbourhood Services) (for minute number SMB17)

In Attendance: A Astley (Assistant Director: Neighbourhoods and Customer Services) (for minute number SMB17) and Deborah Moseley (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team Leader)

SMB-14 Apologies for Absence

Councillors V A Fletcher and E J Greenway

Apologies were also received from Councillor P J Scott and B Tillotson (Customer, Community and Partnership Scrutiny Committee)

SMB-15 Declarations of Interest

None

SMB-16 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 12 October 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

SMB-17 Holding the Executive to Account Session: Councillor Angela McClements, Cabinet Member for Transport, Customer & Neighbourhood Services

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member to the meeting and noted that Scrutiny was conducting inquiries into several areas within the Cabinet Member's remit and that it would not be appropriate to raise questions in regard to those issues pending the outcome of the scrutiny reviews currently in progress.

The Cabinet Member noted the following key areas of challenge and achievement:-

Waste:- The partnership with Veolia for the management of waste and recycling services was working extremely well and 99.8% of waste was collected on time resulting in 300% increase in compliments and 89% decrease in complaints. Recycling rates had increased by 18% and the authority now ranked 13th out of 33 West Midlands authorities. The HRC facility at Hortonwood was now open 362 days

per year, 7 days a week at a saving of £140K pa. Additional benefits were seen from Veolia's community based activities, including funding of over £11K for various community projects and work in local schools to provide information to children about recycling.

Members asked questions and received responses as follows:-

- *What expectations are there to increase recycling rates over the next 2-3 years and were there any targets in place?* The contract included targets which increased exponentially with financial penalties if targets were not met. The Council and Veolia were working in partnership towards the targets.
- *What was driving the increased recycling rates?* It was customer driven, supported by Veolia's promotion of recycling services, eg offering different bin sizes and a different way of dealing with landfill.
- *Was there any reason recycling couldn't be driven higher?* The contract was set at a certain level but this did not prevent an aspiration to a higher level. Food waste would be added from 2019, waste at the HRC no longer went into landfill, use of the Four Ashes energy recovery site to reduce landfill, and green recycling also contributed to increased recycling levels.
- *How would collection of food waste work - residents were often concerned about smells and limited collection times?* Food waste was a challenge for 2019, involving educational and promotional activity. The practicalities had not yet been agreed but the contract included a commitment towards food waste collection so there would be a considerable cost to renege on this aspect.
- *What education was being carried out about the types of plastic that could be recycled?* This was something that Veolia could be asked to engage in.
- *Welsh recycling rates were high and they were ranked 4th in Europe – could their model be followed?* The Council aspired to improving recycling rates and all options were considered.

Highways:- Significant investment had been secured including LEP funding towards the £20m growth point package to improve key roundabouts in the borough, £10m Department for Transport funding for the dualling of Rampart Way and a new footbridge, £1.3m LEP funding for the owners of Telford Shopping Centre towards a new bus station, and £2.5m Council funding had also been ploughed into improvement of roads, pavements and drainage. Investment had seen significant improvement made to The Wharfage at the Ironbridge Gorge which had received positive feedback. A permit scheme was being introduced for utility companies wanting to work on the road network, the proceeds of which would be reinvested in infrastructure. A retendering exercise was required for subsidised (non-commercial) bus routes and talks were underway with Arriva.

Members asked questions and received responses as follows:-

- *Since Arriva reviewed its commercial routes, many negative views had been expressed to Oakengates Town Council but it had been difficult to engage Arriva on the subject – how could they be approached to discuss the issues?* Issues with Arriva were acknowledged. Arriva had been requested to fulfil a reasonable request to attend this meeting to discuss the issues but to no avail.

- *What assurances could the Cabinet Member give that utility companies would be penalised for delays in undertaking work?* Fixed Penalty Notices could be issued under the permit scheme, this included for delays at Limekiln Roundabout which had caused significant dissatisfaction to everyone affected to the extent that the Council had had to make the problems public and be robust in its approach. The scheme was working well.
- *What lessons could be learnt from the experience at Limekiln Roundabout?* Lessons included communication management to ensure the public were kept abreast of delays. This involved investigating the use of electronic signage to help drivers with route planning in real time – signs would be arriving soon.
- *Was night working considered to lessen disruption?* This had been implemented as part of works at Limekiln and Shawbirch Roundabouts.

Street Lighting:- Over 200K LEDs had been installed in over 20 wards resulting in £40K in energy savings. A new contract would be entered into in April 2017; the preferred bidder was yet to be chosen. Capital investment would see LEDs rolled out borough-wide (starting in high energy usage areas) by end March 2019 to achieve energy savings of £400K.

Members asked questions and received responses as follows:-

- *Were LEDs installed automatically on new build estates?* Planning Design Guides contained the new specification.
- *Some columns were in a poor state of repair – would they be replaced?* The new contract included identification of all assets.

Environment:- The number of Parish Environment Teams (PETs) had increased to 12 which was equal to £300K partnership funding from the Parishes and served 75% of residents, partnerships with Parishes had also funded park flower beds resulting in £20K savings, there had been an increase in numbers of snow wardens (now at 250) and street champions (now at 450), 200K had been invested in Pride Initiatives and there had also been a reduction in complaints and increase in compliments. The Service would engage with the Customer, Community & Partnership Scrutiny Committee in a review of the Grounds Cleansing and Maintenance Contract.

Members asked questions and received responses as follows:-

- *How many farmers cleared snow from roads on the Council's behalf in the rural areas?* This information would be provided in written form.
- *In the rural area gullies were only cleaned once every 2 years and a restriction on road sweeping meant that gullies were becoming blocked, resulting in flooding – what could be done?* Troublesome gullies were cleaned more often.
- *Restriction of the pavement on Dawley Road was dangerous for pedestrians, what could be done to make improvements?* The impact on Dawley Road was acknowledged and the Cabinet Member had walked the route with a disabled resident to enable her to have a greater understanding of the difficulties faced. However, finances were an issue and the cost to remedy the situation, involving tackling the hedge and pavements, was proportionately significant.

Customer Services:- Benefits and Customer Services had now merged under one Service Delivery Manager, and a new Contact Centre Manager had been appointed; both had been working hard to improve services. In April 2015 just 30% of calls were answered in under 10 minutes but by November 2016 this had increased to 99.5% with the longest wait being 12 minutes 6 seconds and the call abandonment rate had reduced to 5.2%. Improvements in intelligent automatic voice recognition software (eg for when bins were due to be collected), and webchat functionality have been implemented alongside the launch of the My Telford website portal (developed in-house). The money saving benefits of channel shift were clear (face to face contact cost £16, by phone cost £9.50, but contact via the web cost just 25p) but services would always be retained for those who were unable to make the shift.

Members asked questions and received responses as follows:-

- *7000 service users had signed up to use My Telford – how was it being rolled out more widely?* There had been a soft launch, with users needing to sign up for school admissions but a formal launch would take place in March.
- *How would the My Telford portal evolve to meet demand?* The website was constantly evolving with the next version including an update on issues/reports, and later this year it would be able to advise whether other users had already reported an issue.
- *Could My Telford be used to pay/enquire about Council Tax?* This element was being tested for security.
- *“Being the Change” was often cited – what did this mean for this Service area?* Services were thinking about being more commercial and less dependent on government grants, identifying new income streams and working in partnership with other organisations. Being the Change sought a culture change and prompted Council Officers to think differently.

Key challenges over the next four years:- channel shift, securing value for money from the Grounds Cleansing and Maintenance Contract, managing expectations of key stakeholders in light of staffing restructures, and keeping Telford moving during major road investments and the new food recycling service. The Cabinet Member also expressed that she had an open mind with regard to Civil Parking Enforcement and awaited the outcome of Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee’s in-depth review.

Members asked questions and received responses as follows:-

- *Did the Cabinet Member foresee that the Council would have to stop delivering some services as a result of cuts?* No doubt there would be some things – for instance as a result of reviewing the Grounds Cleansing and Maintenance contract but whilst it was hoped to secure the same service at a lower cost it would be a big challenge. Staff savings across the Service had been delivered early so this should result in some stability for the next few years. Wherever possible, challenges were being met by income targets not cuts (eg delivering on the Permit Scheme).
- *Managing expectations was essential – what impact had the restructures had?* The restructures would take some time to settle. All of

Neighbourhood Services had relocated to Second Floor Addenbrooke House and it worked much better to be located together.

- *In terms of making savings on ground cleansing and maintenance, what scope was there to retender early?* An independent review had indicated that there were potential savings to be made but as the tendering process would take approximately 12 months the costs involved would outweigh the benefits.
- *Members commented that the Council had been short-changed when it went unitary and split from Shropshire Council.* The Cabinet Member acknowledged that complications could occur from the fact that Shropshire should hold plans and documents but they were not able to provide them.
- *Did data exist on how many roads were at capacity and what plans were in place to deal with these challenges?* Modelling software was used to look at capacity and there had recently been a Member Information Seminar on this topic – the detail could be circulated if requested. One of the Council's capital projects had funded scanning of road surfaces to see where improvements were needed.
- *What other income generation options were being explored?* There was a possibility that further income could be generated by the Registrars Service.
- *Had the Council looked at energy production opportunities?* Veolia's Four Ashes site already provided this service.

SMB-18 Scrutiny Work Programme – Interim Update

Members received the report of the Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement and Commissioning which set out the progress to date on delivery of the Scrutiny Work Programme.

Members received a summary of the work to date expressed as the number of scrutiny meetings held compared to the resource allocated at the meeting on July 2016 together with a copy of the current work programme for each Scrutiny Committee.

Members noted the way that resources were changing following the restructure of Democratic and Legal Services in April 2016 and expressed their thanks to Fiona Bottrill, who had recently departed the Authority, and to Steph Jones who would be leaving at the end of March. In light of this, Members were asked to consider undertaking work programming early in the year to maximise the time available for scrutiny in the next municipal year and a suggested timeline was attached to the report. Members also received a draft template report for provision of summary information to Scrutiny which could reduce the requirement for verbal presentations and allow meetings to focus on evidence gathering. Members also discussed alternative ways that Annual Reports could be considered and used to inform the work programme (eg, NHS Quality Accounts, Local Safeguarding Children Board and Adult Safeguarding Board and the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership) and agreed that these should be received for noting and if Members had any concerns these could be raised as appropriate.

RESOLVED – that

- (a) the utilisation to date of the 2016/17 allocation of resources be noted;
- (b) the work programmes of each Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (c) the time table (at Appendix 2 of the report) for work programming for 2017/18 and criteria for Scrutiny be approved;
- (d) the initial allocation of resources for 2017/18 be approved; and
- (e) the template for future scrutiny reports be approved

SMB-19 Chairs' Updates

Each of the Scrutiny Chairs provided an update to the meeting on their current areas of work:-

Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny – a lot of work was being undertaken on the review of Civil Parking Enforcement and work on scrutiny of the budget was about to begin.

Customer, Community & Partnerships Scrutiny – the Scrutiny Committee were grateful to have had the opportunity to have met over and above its resource allocation and still anticipated work being done this year on Selective Licensing, the draft Homelessness Strategy and Ground Cleansing.

Children & Young People Scrutiny – the Committee had received an interim update following its in-depth scrutiny review of multiagency working against Child Sexual Exploitation and would also be doing some follow up work on the Council's "getting to good" strategy following the recent Ofsted inspection. Additionally, the Committee hoped to consider this year's GCSE results and educational attainment.

Health & Adult Care Scrutiny – the main ongoing issue for this Committee was the adult care budget and Cost Improvement Plan which was being carefully monitored. Looking ahead, the Committee would be undertaking some in-depth work on the Mental Health Strategy.

The Committee recorded their thanks to Fiona Bottrill and Stephanie Jones for their contribution to Scrutiny over a number of years.

The meeting ended at 7.55pm

Chairman:

Date: