



## SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

### Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on Wednesday, 9 May 2018 at 6.00pm in Meeting Rooms G3/4, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford

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

**Also Present:** Councillor S Davies

**In Attendance:** Deborah Moseley (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Team Leader) and  
Richard Partington (Managing Director)

#### **SMB-12**      **Apologies for Absence**

None.

#### **SMB-13**      **Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **SMB-14**      **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 9 January 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

#### **SMB-15**      **Holding to Account Session with the Leader**

The Chair welcomed the Leader, Councillor Shaun Davies and the Managing Director, Richard Partington, to the holding to account session and invited questions from Members.

*Is Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) definitely going ahead? Scrutiny had asked for more information prior to the announcement being made that additional funding had been secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner.*

The Leader advised that in principle, Cabinet had agreed to start the process of applying for CPE powers but this included a consultation period. The Administration had had some concerns about the financial shortfall and so negotiations with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had taken place which had secured £200K over four years on an open book accountancy basis. This meant that if there was a surplus, the financial offer could not be drawn down but the funding would be ring-fenced for policing priorities in Telford and Wrekin. The Department for Transport had said that any applications would not be processed until Summer 2019 and this posed an opportunity to ensure the appropriate regulations were in place. It was anticipated that consultation would take place over Summer/Autumn 2018.

*Concern remained that the financial offer was not substantial enough.*

The last financial offer made by the Police & Crime Commissioner and considered by Scrutiny was much lower. It was important to note the context that no parking enforcement was taking place. Looking forward, the Council would adopt a 'carrots not sticks' approach in the first few years. The opportunity to ring-fence funding gave the

opportunity to improve parking around schools in particular with safer routes for schools, increasing capacity outside schools and investment in walking bus.

*Scrutiny had asked Officers dealing with the CPE for information from other authorities on the types of models being implemented but there had not yet been any follow up on this. Concern was expressed that commitments could be made without all the answers being available.*

The Leader confirmed that there had not been any commitment made and the public consultation would have a role in shaping the form that CPE might take. The Leader did not favour the simplistic approach of ticketing all offenders, he preferred a pragmatic approach which sought solutions to the increase in road use/car ownership. For instance, this might involve encouraging use of park and ride facilities or making different forms of transport available. The current business case made provision for four officers, with Newport, Wellington, Oakengates and Dawley seeking a dedicated officer in those areas.

*Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee had been looking at the Council's progress following the last Ofsted inspection. Did the Leader agree that the Council was on track to achieve a good rating?*

The Leader was confident that a good rating could be achieved. The Council had provided additional resource/investment into the areas which had previously received critique. He noted that the Council's work on adoption had recently received praise from the Government Minister.

The Managing Director echoed these sentiments, noting that the Council had only narrowly missed out on a good rating previously. However, he was conscious that the Ofsted framework was not static and despite the considerable progress that had been made, the standard required would still be high. Any capacity bids which had been made by the Service area had all been funded including training and systems. Issues around caseloads and supervision had also been addressed. Taking this into account, he felt that there was reason to believe the Council was on track to receive a good rating.

*Is there an update on the Grounds and Cleansing Contract Procurement?*

The current contractor had been unsuccessful in their bid and a new contractor would take over in April 2019. This was an important stage in the process as the Council entered into a competitive dialogue with four bidders. No conversations had yet taken place with Town and Parish Councils to understand their needs but the Leader appreciated there was concern about the future of the Parish Environmental Teams (PETs). The Leader was proud of the PETs success: PETs now covered 80% of the borough and environmental complaints had fall by 80% since June 2011. The concept and benefit of the PETs had been explained to bidders and the learning from PETs had been incorporated into the core contract. Whilst it was not possible at this stage to say whether or not PETs would remain in the current form, a robust procurement process would be taking place.

*What are your three greatest achievements and what your three greatest disappointments?*

The Leader stated that he was proud of:-

- The Council's resilience and ability to respond to issues. However, there were clear funding issues in Adult Social Care and for children on the edge of care as a result of families struggling to make ends meet.

- The Council continued to secure business investment in the borough and he particularly cited the examples of Magna and Polytech. He noted the positive impact that this had on local unemployment rates and in particular the improvement that had been seen in the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs).
- The level of local civic pride which resulted in a high level of environmental cleanliness. He also noted that this was supported by the Council's robust approach to enforcement.

In terms of improvements, the Leader stated that:-

- The Council had not been quick enough to understand concerns relating to the number of housing development in the borough but he was pleased that the Local Plan had reduced housing numbers to more manageable levels and, supported by the green guarantee, embraced the importance of local green space. He noted that there was a balance to be struck between retaining green space and young people needing somewhere to live.
- With regard to the commissioning of a local inquiry into CSE, the Leader regretted that he had not accepted quickly enough that the Home Office would not commission an inquiry and that the Council would have to commission an independent inquiry itself. He still believed that a Council commissioned inquiry had limitations that would not provide the answers victims and survivors needed. With hindsight, he considered that the inquiry should have been commissioned earlier with an explanation of what the significant limitations would be. He welcomed the arrival of The Truth Project to the borough.
- The Council could do more to raise awareness of its achievements.

*Are you happy with the progress of Telford@50 celebrations and that the spending is justified?*

The Leader was delighted to report that these events had attracted significant levels of attendance. In particular, the previous three weekends had seen successful events including the Spring into St Georges Day, Branches in the Park and the Balloon and Kite Fiesta taking place and he had been heartened to see Members endorsing applications for legacy funding for community buildings. He also commented on the lighting of the Ironbridge and the high number of volunteers (GEMs) which had been recruited and received training as a result.

*Concern was expressed over personal interpretations of planning policy and the Leader was asked for thoughts on whether clear definitions existed for Members, Officers and developers to understand and apply.*

The Local Plan had recently been passed through Full Council and it was believed that this would help the situation. Developers were free to appeal when their applications were rejected but the Leader lamented that Inspectors did not take rejections in the context of the proximity of other approvals for development. He felt that there were issues around viability which needed more robust action to be taken to bring derelict land forward for development.

*Could the Council be more robust with Developers seeking to amend Section 106 Agreements on the basis of viability?*

The Leader pointed out that the Council had to apply government policy but he also noted that Tower Hamlets Council were piloting a new system of deferred viability checks which he considered may offer a solution unless and until independent people/bodies were appointed to provide viability assessments.

*Could the process of commissioning an independent inquiry into CSE be accelerated?*  
The Leader had no involvement in the commissioning process. However, he felt it was important that it was thorough and not rushed. He stated that the Council would not wait for the Inquiry's report before making improvements and work was ongoing in several areas: NWG was looking at current services, the Council had considered best practice and had implemented all the recommendations of the Rotherham report and was currently considering the learning from the recently published Rochdale report. A number of meetings had also taken place between officers and stakeholders.

*What benefits have there been to the Council's membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)?*  
WMCA had made grants worth £3.6m which equated to around 150 years' worth of membership. WMCA Mayor Andy Street had also created a Homelessness Task Force with a funding pot available to constituent members and it was hoped that as a non-constituent member the Council could work creatively to receive some benefit from the scheme. Similarly, with regard to LEP membership, the Council had benefited from grant funding ahead of its neighbours. The Leader saw an issue in the future as to where the government directed its funding (ie to the CA or the LEP) but he felt that the Council was well positioned due to its links with both the Black Country through the WMCA and the more rural areas of Shropshire and Herefordshire through the LEP.

**SMB-16      2017/18 Scrutiny Work Programme – End of Year Report**

Members reflected on the work that had taken place during the 2017/18 municipal year as set out in the report.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for engaging with Scrutiny and noted that the Senior Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer, Jessica Tangye, would shortly be taking up an internal secondment within Organisational Delivery & Development – expressions of congratulations were made.

The meeting ended at 7.04pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** .....