

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Board held on Monday, 9th March 2009 at Telford Library, Southwater Square, Telford Town Centre

PRESENT: Councillors D.R.W. White (Chairman), R. Aveley, J.A. Francis, A.A. Mackenzie, A.A. Meredith and H. Williams.

Councillor S. Bentley (Cabinet Member: Community Services)

ALSO PRESENT: Angie Astley (Interim Corporate Director: Community Services), Andrew Meredith (Customer Services Manager), Helen Ward (Customer Quality Manager), Sharon Smith (Borough Librarian), Lynn Brayne (Citizens Advice Bureau), Alison Smith (Scrutiny Manager), Stephanie Jones (Scrutiny Officer) and Phil Smith (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

SLB-16 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2009 be approved and signed as a correct record.

SLB-17 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

Councillor G.M. Green (Independent Group Co-optee)

SLB-18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

None.

SLB-19 THE CREDIT CRUNCH ADVICE CENTRE

The Chairman welcomed everyone to Telford Library, which was the location of “First Point Telford” – an Advice Centre that had been set up by the Council (with partner organisations) to provide help to residents and businesses in the Borough to access services that would assist them in the current economic recession. The principle to establish an advice centre in the Town Centre had been made by Cabinet on 12 January 2009 (a copy of that report was attached to the agenda for information). At the last meeting the Board had expressed concern at the proposed costs for locating the advice centre in the shopping centre, and sought a meeting to scrutinise the proposals. Since then, a decision had been made to locate the Centre in the Library, which allayed the previous concerns over likely costs. “First Point” had opened on 23 February 2009, and this meeting therefore allowed Members the opportunity to see how the facility was operating, and the type of assistance that was being provided.

The Interim Corporate Director: Community Services and Customer Quality Manager reported that over 300 people had visited the Centre during its first two weeks of opening. Details of the services provided were circulated, and it was emphasised that the biggest benefit of First Point was in bringing a number of services and agencies together in a “one stop shop” which could provide a co-

ordinated solution for the customer. The services represented at “First Point” included the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Benefits, Affordable Warmth, Community Training, Family Information Service, and Housing Advice. Examples were given of the type of enquiry that had been received, and how the Advice Centre had been able to assist them. In relation to the CAB, Lynn Brayne reported that 75% of the people seen had been new to the Bureau. 32% of enquiries so far had related to benefits, 29% were debt related and 17% around employment issues. The latter was higher than usual, and perhaps reflected the deteriorating economic situation. The Customer Quality Manager added that work was currently being done to standardise the performance management and information data that was collected by the different agencies operating in “First Point”.

Members then asked a number of questions, including:

- from the enquiries received so far, what evidence was there that the economic downturn and credit crunch were having an impact?

Response – many benefits enquiries were from people who had been made redundant or had been put on short-time working, and who were trying to find out what they were entitled to claim.

- had there been any complaints from customers about having to pay the Town Centre parking charges?

Response – this had not been an issue, and the Library was open for longer hours than other Council buildings.

- what hours was the Advice Centre operating?

Response – it was open 50+ hours a week, Monday to Saturday – including Thursday evening and all day Saturday.

- would the provision of advice on community learning and training duplicate similar work that was going on at local community centres?

Response – “First Point” was supplementing the work undertaken in this area and had led to an increase in residents accessing the service. “First Point” was not seeking to undermine the work taking place at community centres.

- how was the Advice Centre being advertised?

Response – A Communications Plan had been prepared, and copies were circulated. This set out the key messages to be communicated and the strategy that was being followed. The Launch had included adverts on local radio, printed information handed out in the Town Centre and placed in Council buildings, and articles in the Insight magazine and the local press. Radio Shropshire had covered the opening of the Centre, and there was a promotional video on the Shropshire Star website. It was also hoped that the video would be placed on the Council website.

Members made a number of suggestions for publicising/advertising “First Point”, including parish magazines, doctors’ surgeries, children’s centres/nurseries and MPs surgeries. It was also suggested that letters being sent to people in arrears with council tax could include information about the Advice Centre and the help it could provide.

- what were the costs in setting-up the Advice Centre?

Response – the one-off cost for fitting-out the new facility in the Library (including the cost of relocating New College Learning Point) was £38,000. There were revenue costs of £66,000 to operate the Centre for a 12 month period, with an additional cost of £50,000 to open for longer hours.

In considering the information that had been provided, and the responses to questions, Members were impressed by the numbers of people accessing First Point within the first two weeks of it's operation; a total of 300 people. They were further impressed with the wide array of advice services on offer, and noted with approval the co-operation between the organisations participating in the scheme.

The Scrutiny Leadership Board felt that the general ambience of the Library setting presented a far more friendly and welcoming environment than either Civic or Darby offices could, and that this had probably contributed to the numbers of people accessing the service so far. Questions were asked about possible expansion of the role that libraries throughout the Borough could play in providing links to other Council services.

RESOLVED – that Cabinet be recommended to:

- (a) provide continual monitoring of the First Point advice centre to ensure that the appropriate range of services are provided to the public;**
- (b) consider providing a permanent point of contact for council services in the town centre vicinity;**
- (c) consider the use of library buildings to offer a first point of contact for Council services throughout the Borough; especially in areas where the library building is used on a part time basis.**

SLB-20 SCRUTINY REVIEW SUGGESTIONS

Members considered a suggestion that had been submitted by a member of the public relating to the process used by Plans Board when considering planning applications. The resident had attended a recent Plans Board meeting, and was of the view that the current procedures led to a situation that was potentially unjust because there was not an opportunity for all parties to speak or respond to questions.

After some discussion, Members felt that this particular suggestion constituted an individual complaint about the plans process and that it wasn't appropriate for scrutiny to consider it. However, Members did acknowledge that on the general point, many other local authorities allow public representation at Council meetings and that there should be a reconsideration of this policy by the Council. It was reported that a paper looking at wider issues of public involvement in

decision-making was being prepared, and that the Board's views could be incorporated into that document.

RESOLVED - that this issue be referred to the Council Constitution Committee for further consideration.

SLB-21 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

None

SLB-22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board was on 26th March 2009.

The meeting ended at 7.23 p.m.

Chairman:

Date:

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD **26th March 2009**

Scheduling of Special Interest Meetings

The table below shows the Special Interest Meetings included in the scrutiny work programme. The Special Interest topics are listed in priority order, based on the scoring criteria and number of votes gained at the Scrutiny Workshop in January. It is proposed that the Special Interest Meetings are set up in order of priority but the Scrutiny Leadership Board may want to consider:

- Whether the order of reviews is right and if any should be re-prioritised
- The distribution of topics across the scrutiny leads
- The new scrutiny suggestion – domestic violence
- Suggestion 35. The suggestion is to review whether issues other than cost are considered as part of the council's procurement processes. This has effectively been covered as part of the current Procurement review.

	Issue	Scrutiny Lead and Members
13	Bus station/Park and Ride in redevelopment of the Town Centre	Roger Aveley
14	Supporting local business	Alan Mackenzie
15	Customer Contact Centre	Adrian Meredith Ute Sambrook
16	External investment in development	Alan Mackenzie
17	Crime BVPIs – 126, 127a and b, 128	Helen Williams
18	Transport for Tourism	Alan Mackenzie
19	Supply and drainage of water to T&W	Roger Aveley
20	City Region – T&W role, benefits	Alan Mackenzie
21	Mental health in young people	Derek White
22	Sustainable & balanced development	Roger Aveley
23	Looked after children in the criminal justice system	Joy Francis
24	Planning applications & Parish/Town Councils	Roger Aveley Hilda Rhodes Ute Sambrook
25	Signage – advertising & road signs	Roger Aveley
26	Transition of disabled children into adult services	Joy Francis
27	Car parking enforcement	Roger Aveley
28	Equality & Diversity Policy	Adrian Meredith
29	Council employment of people with disabilities	Adrian Meredith Ute Sambrook
30	Music Lessons/specialist provision in schools	Joy Francis
31	Co-ordination of CCTV across T&W	Helen Williams
32	Council complaints procedure	Adrian Meredith

		Ute Sambrook
33	Employee travel to work	Adrian Meredith
34	Differences in young people paying adult prices	Joy Francis
35	Procurement Criteria	Adrian Meredith
36	PACT meetings – support and feedback	Helen Williams
37	Bringing together age groups and cultural backgrounds	Helen Williams
38	Accommodation for tourism	Alan Mackenzie
39	Providing reassurance through positive media	Helen Williams
	Equality Impact Assessment	Louise Lomax Shaukat Ali

Adrian Meredith	6
Alan Mackenzie	5
Derek White	1
Helen Williams	5
Joy Francis	4
Roger Aveley	6

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD

26th March 2009

Proposed structure for the Scrutiny Assembly Meeting on 19th May

Purpose of meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to enable members of the Scrutiny Assembly to hold their Cabinet colleagues to account for the Council's performance for 2008/09 and to feed into the target setting in the draft priority plans. The meeting will need to accommodate up to a maximum of 54 members making up the Scrutiny Assembly – 34 members and 16 co-optees.

Proposed structure of meeting

The meeting will last for 2 hours from 6 – 8pm and the proposed structure for the meeting is as follows:

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|----|---|--------------------|---------|
| 1) | Welcome and purpose | Cllr. Derek White | |
| 2 | Introduction – overall performance of the Council | Steve Wellings | 5 mins |
| 3) | Quiz - on red sub priority level (Voting handsets to be given out) | Richard Partington | 10 mins |
| 4) | Questions | Cllr. Derek White | 15 mins |
| 5) | The room will have 7 breakout tables for each priority. Scrutiny Assembly members will be asked to move to the priority of their choice where the Cabinet Member and Lead Scrutiny Member will be seated. On each table there will be information showing the sub priorities and an overview of what this priority includes. The Cabinet Member will present for 10 minutes on what their targets are for 2009/10, which will be followed by 35 minutes of questions. | | |

Each table will be given a list of questions to work through which the Lead Scrutiny Member will facilitate. Each table will have a note taker to note down the questions and answers and they will also act as time keeper.

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| 6) | Following this first session members will be asked to move to another priority plan table of their choice and another 45 minutes will be taken for a presentation by the Cabinet Member and questions. | | |
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Venue

VIP Suite plus Scrutiny meeting room and Committee Room 3

Which Scrutiny Lead Member and Cabinet Member will represent each priority?

Scrutiny Lead	Cabinet Member	Director
Priority 2: Giving Children & Young People the Best Possible Start in their lives		
Joy Francis	Stephen Burrell	Julia Almond
Priority 3: Maintaining a High Quality, Attractive and Sustainable Environment:		
Roger Aveley	Miles Hosken	Meredith Evans (Dave Hanley?)
Priority 4: Creating a Safe, Strong and Cohesive Community:		
Helen Williams	Stephen Bentley	Richard Webb
Priority 5: Promoting Healthy Communities and Improving the Quality of Life of Vulnerable and Older People:		
Derek White	Jacqui Seymour	Richard Webb (Paul Donohue?)
Priority 6: Strengthening the Local Economy & the Skills of Local People:		
Alan MacKenzie	Eric Carter	Meredith Evans (Peter Smith?)
Priority 7: An Efficient, Effective and Customer-Focused Council that delivers Value-For-Money for the Community:		
Adrian Meredith	Adrian Lawrence	Victor Brownlees
Priority 8: Securing sustainable housing development and regenerating the borough.		
		Meredith Evans

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD **26th March 2009**

Position Statement on Scrutiny Reviews

2008-09 Programme						
Review	Progress update	Target date for completion of evidence gathering	Target date for presenting report to Cabinet	Revised completion date for evidence gathering	Revised date for presenting report to Cabinet	Reason for delay
Bus Services	<p>Evidence gathered/underway: Bus Users Group, Senior Citizens, YPF, Disability Forum, Arriva, Community Panel Survey, Parish Councils.</p> <p>Still to do: Travel West Midlands, Chamber of Commerce, officers re future growth points, town centre development, Twister, network management duty, bus stations in other towns.</p> <p>Transport Service Review due to report 18th March to Review Board. The recommendations will be considered as part of the review.</p>	March 09	May 09	April 09	To be agreed	<p>Results of Community Panel survey not available until mid-late April.</p> <p>Slow down due to staffing changes and shortage in Jan/Feb.</p>

Procurement	Completed: meetings with central procurement, E&R, ICT, Property & Assets, Staffordshire CC, Warwickshire CC, Mike Phillips. To do: meetings with CYP, ACC arranged. Almost complete.	February 09	To be agreed	March 09	To be agreed	
Housing & Homelessness	Meetings as in scope underway. Housing Associations, YMCA done. To do: Meetings with Bromford and the Private Landlords Association still to be arranged. Group have also asked for meetings with planning officers.	Early April 09	June 09			
2009-10 Programme						
Review	Scrutiny members	Officers		Date of scoping meeting and comments		Scope agreed/draft attached
Child Protection & Child Protection Plans	Joy Francis Louise Lomax Lynda Baker Annette Cox Shauket Ali Sue Harris	Julia Almond Anne Cole Tina Knight		To be confirmed. Dates proposed dates were too late (April-June) so immediate dates have been requested.		
Cluster arrangements and	Helen Williams	Richard Partington		24 th March (tbc)		

locality working	Jayne Greenaway George Ashcroft Louise Lomax Keith Austin Dennis Allen	Rachel Jones Laura Johnson Julia Almond		
Developing future skills for business	Alan Mackenzie Shaukat Ali Keith Austin Mel Ward Kuldip Sahota	Peter Smith Corin Crane	28 th March	
End of life choices	Derek White Angela Clements Clive Mason Lynda Baker Annette Cox Dilys Davis Val Lindley	Paul Taylor Christine Harrison Jacqui Seymour Helen Swindlehurst (PCT) Jo Banks (PCT) Fran Beck (PCT)	18 th March	
Helping residents access benefits	Adrian Meredith Keith Austin Ute Sambrook	Lee Higgins Jan Evans Andrew Meredith	12 th March	
Waste Management	Roger Aveley Louise Lomax Clive Mason Adrian Williams Annette Cox Terry Kiernan Maurice Viney Mel Ward	Dave Hanley Sally Hall		

SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP BOARD

26th MARCH 2009

Update on Legislation

This briefing note provides an update on the progress of legislation that will impact upon the scrutiny function at Telford & Wrekin Council.

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

Legislation: a) Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
Commencement: 1st April 2009 for relevant sections
Guidance was released in February 2009

b) Police & Justice Act 2006
Commencement: 1st April 2009 for relevant sections
Guidance likely to be released on 30th April 2009

Councillor Call for Action has been introduced to support elected members in achieving improvements for their local areas. It is envisaged that it would help those ward councillors who have been unable to resolve problems in their particular wards by talking to the local authority and its partners, by allowing the ward councillor to refer the matter to the Scrutiny Leadership Board for consideration. CCfA covers both issues of community safety (under the Police & Justice Act) and all matters of the Council, including where services are delivered with partners (Local Government and Public Involvement in health Act)

- CCfA will be a means of “last resort”; with issues being raised with the Scrutiny Leadership Board after all other avenues have been exhausted.
- CCfA can only be used in matters affecting a particular ward area.
- It is a technique for helping to resolve issues, but it is not a panacea. Simply bringing issues to scrutiny through the CCfA process will not automatically produce a solution.

Scrutiny Services are currently working on guidance to members on how CCfA will work at Telford & Wrekin. We are also creating a process for dealing with CCfA at Scrutiny Leadership Board which has been identified in the Constitution, as the Scrutiny body which will hear CCfA.

Scrutiny of Local Area Agreements (LAA)

Legislation: Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
Commencement: 1st April 2009 for relevant sections
There is no date for issuing of guidance yet.

Scrutiny of Local Area Agreements introduces an extension of scrutiny the remit to cover the following service providers:

Upper tier or unitary councils	District councils
Health and Safety Executive	Chief Officer of the Police
Police Authorities	Fire and Rescue Authorities
Metropolitan Passenger Transport Authorities	The Highways Agency
The Environment Agency	Natural England
Regional Development Agencies	National Park Authorities
The Broads Authority	Local Probation Boards
Youth offending teams	Primary Care Trusts
NHS Foundation Trusts	NHS Health Trusts
The Learning and Skills Council in England	Jobcentre Plus
Joint Waste Disposal Authorities	Social care

Each of these service providers apart from the Police who will be subject to requirements in the Police and Justice Act 2006, will have a duty to co-operate on issues that relate to service delivery connected with the authority; they can be required either to appear before the committee or provide information to the committee within 20 working days (corresponding to the Freedom of Information Act deadline). These organisations must also “have regard to” scrutiny reports and recommendations.

This is a function of the Scrutiny Leadership Board, part of which has been delegated to the Value for Money Group to scrutinise performance of the Local Area Agreement.

Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters

Legislation: Police & Justice Act 2006
Commencement: 30th April 2009
There is no date for issuing of guidance yet as the Regulations have not been produced.

The Act inserts a new section 21A into the Local Government Act 2000 to extend the remit of scrutiny committees to incorporate the scrutiny of their local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).

The Act includes:

- Crime & Disorder (C&D) scrutiny committee may co-opt additional members, although this should not be more than the number of permanent members;
- C&D scrutiny committee to review Police Authority (PA) decisions/performance at least twice a year.
- C&D scrutiny committee may request information, and the responsible partners must provide information no later than the date requested unless it is unreasonable to do so. The PA/other bodies are able to edit the information where it relates to an individual or ongoing operational police matter.

- C&D scrutiny committee can require attendees from partner organisations at a meeting and must give at least two weeks notice (unless they agree it can be shorter). Partners must send someone to committee unless they have a "reasonable excuse".
- PA/other bodies must respond to C&D scrutiny committee recommendations made within 1 month after they are made, in writing.

Under the new scrutiny structure this was agreed as a function of the Scrutiny Leadership Board, however the Constitution will need to be changed to designate SLB as the Scrutiny Committee that will scrutinise the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership under this legislation.

Recommendation: Scrutiny Leadership Board is asked to agree that the Constitution is amended to designate the Scrutiny Leadership Board as the Scrutiny Committee for Crime and Disorder issues.

Petitions

Legislation: Local Democracy, Economic Regeneration and Construction Bill
Possibly commencement in "Summer 2009", however this may slip beyond Parliament's summer recess.
Guidance unlikely to be available before October 2009

The Act requires:

- Council must make, comply with and publish a scheme for handling petitions
- The subject of the petition must relate to the functions of the authority or other public services for which the authority has shared delivery responsibilities (the subject matter excludes planning which is covered by existing processes)
- Council will decide who to recognise as signatories, but at a minimum would be to respond to petitions for those who live, study or work within the boundary
- It will not be necessary to respond to frivolous, vexatious or discriminatory petitions, nor to one that is the same or substantially similar to one that has been made to the authority within a period of six months
- If requested by the petitioner, the authority must review the adequacy of the steps taken in response and publish the results its website
- Petitioners will be able to appeal to an overview and scrutiny panel if not satisfied with the response they receive to their petition to review the adequacy of the steps taken by the authority in response to a petition.

Democratic Services is currently looking at options for dealing with petitions.