

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Monday, 23 July 2018, County Hall Worcester - 10.30 am

Minutes

Present:

Mr C B Taylor (Chairman), Mrs M A Rayner (Vice Chairman), Mr A D Kent, Mr R J Morris, Prof J W Raine, Mr A Stafford and Mr R P Tomlinson

Also attended:

Ms K J May, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning
Mr R C Lunn, Group Leader
Mrs E B Tucker, Group Leader 2017 Group

Simon Mallinson (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and Samantha Morris (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

223 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Udall.

224 Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

225 Public Participation

None.

226 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 May 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

227 Divisional Fund

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services were invited to the meeting to discuss the Worcestershire Councillors' Divisional Fund (WCDF) Scheme.

The WCDF was launched on 1 August 2011, following agreement by Council and the Leader and it was agreed that regular updates about the Scheme would be considered by Scrutiny.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reminded

the Panel that:

- each Member of the Council was allocated £10,000 each year, which they could then allocate in a way that would promote or improve economic, social and/or environmental well-being for the benefit of the whole or any part of their Division or those within it
- Local Member decisions under the Scheme were formal decisions on behalf of the Council
- the WCDF was established in such a way that it was intended to be, as much as possible, a self-regulating scheme with support and guidance provided by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and day to day administration provided by Legal and Democratic Services
- a record of each submission to the Scheme, detailing the amount, payee and brief rationale for each submission was maintained by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and was published regularly on the Council's website
- records of expenditure under the Scheme (i.e. the request form and background documents) were held for public inspection on request for 6 years at County Hall.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made:

- the Scheme for which there was cross party support, was very much welcomed by all Councillors. It was confirmed that the Scheme hadn't been subject to any budget reductions and in fact Members suggested that they would welcome an increase in the funds allocated as it was an excellent mechanism for devolving power to the local Member to make a difference in the local community
- one member suggested that it was one of the best initiatives of the Council and in fact saved the Council money, cut out the bureaucracy and let the local member focus attention where it was needed
- in response to the suggestion that there was a flurry of spend in March as the end of the financial year approached, the CMR confirmed that Members were encouraged to use the funds allocated to them over the 12 month period rather than holding funds in reserve. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported that there was often a 'bulge' in applications towards the end of

- the financial year which was not unworkable
- in order to avoid an excessive administrative burden, it was suggested that there ought to be a minimum and maximum spend on each allocation. The CMR confirmed that in practice, the amounts applied for to date had been within sensible spending limits
 - additional training should be provided to Councillors joining the Council mid-term as a result of an bi-election, as they automatically inherited their predecessor's funding
 - it would be helpful if some analysis of the spend could be carried out to see how far reaching the Scheme was. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that there wasn't routine analysis carried out but that the spend was mainly for social benefit
 - another idea put forward was that, the Scheme could be weighted according to need. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services believed that it would be difficult to define 'need' if the Scheme was weighted. The existing Scheme was one size fitted all.

The meeting ended at 11.15 am

Chairman