

## Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board

### Wednesday, 23 September 2020, Online only - 2.00 pm

**Present:****Minutes**

Mr R M Udall (Chairman), Mrs E A Eyre (Vice Chairman),  
Mr A A J Adams, Mr A D Kent, Mrs F M Oborski,  
Mrs J A Potter and Mrs R Vale

**Also attended:**

Mr S E Geraghty, Leader of the Council and Cabinet  
Member for Finance

Paul Robinson (Chief Executive), Sheena Jones  
(Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and  
Samantha Morris (Scrutiny Co-ordinator)

**Available Papers**

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2020  
(previously circulated).

(A copy of documents A will be attached to the signed  
Minutes).

**1157 Apologies and  
Welcome**

Apologies were received from Mr P A Tuthill and Mr B  
Allbut (Co-opted Church Representative for education  
matters).

**1158 Declaration of  
Interest and of  
any Party Whip**

None.

**1159 Public  
Participation**

None.

**1160 Confirmation of  
the Minutes of  
the Previous  
Meeting**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2020 were  
agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the  
Chairman.

**1161 Update on the  
County  
Council's  
COVID-19  
Recovery**

Further to the update on 7 July 2020, the Leader and the  
Chief Executive of the Council were invited to provide a  
further update on the County Council's response to and  
recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

The Leader introduced the report advising that since the  
report was written there had been developments

nationally and locally around COVID. It was highlighted that:

- COVID infection rates had started to increase
- The Council had reverted to the internal Gold (led by John Hobbs, Director of Economy & Infrastructure) and Silver Command (led by Rachel Hill, Strategic Commissioner, Major Projects) emergency response with twice weekly meetings
- The Local resilience Forum had not stood up its arrangements yet but was ready to react when needed
- The return to Worcestershire schools had gone well with overall attendance levels at 90% (96% for vulnerable learners)
- There were some challenges around testing and additional tests had been sought for key workers.

The Chief Executive added that it would be key for the Council moving forward to ensure staff resilience especially for key individuals and that the Council was working with and providing mutual support to nearest neighbour authorities in this regard.

During the discussion, the following main points were discussed:

- In response to various questions about the problems associated with COVID testing, the Board was advised there were 3 pillars of testing:
  1. NHS Testing where there was a medical need eg prior to an operation
  2. Community Testing for the wider population eg if symptomatic
  3. Research Testing for statistical purposes
- There should be sufficient tests available for those people who were symptomatic as they were prioritised over those who were asymptomatic
- Staff and residents in care homes were being regularly tested
- It was agreed that the process for testing would be circulated to all Councillors so that they could respond to residents as necessary
- Initially some schools had year group bubbles which had meant if there was an outbreak a whole year group would need to self-isolate, the latest guidance was smaller bubbles ie classes was a

better approach

- A Member expressed concern about false negative test results, which could result in the spread of COVID and suggested that the guidance should signpost anyone with symptoms to isolate irrespective of the test result
- In order to ensure Members were kept up to date with the number of cases in local schools, it was suggested that the detail should be added to the members regular COVID update bulletins
- In response to a Members question about the guidance available to schools, the Chief Executive reassured Members that schools had various standard operating procedures and guidance available to them and all had carried out risk assessments
- In response to a Members point about the importance of ensuring that the Council's website was updated regularly and quickly with accurate information and with various types of communication to reach all residents, the Leader advised that there would be an increased focus on resourcing the Communications Department to ensure that this happened
- Signposting about how to access the walk-in test centres were needed, there was a misconception in the community that an appointment was not needed to access this facility
- A Member referred to the £3m funding for the Here2Help Business Programme set up in response to COVID to assist local businesses to recover, adapt, develop and support future resilience and it was agreed that the Board would be provided with information about the type of support that was available.

**1162 Budget Scrutiny  
Process 2021-  
22**

The Board was asked to discuss and agree the Budget Scrutiny process for 2021/22.

The Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager reminded the Board that the Scrutiny Panels had been carrying out regular budget and performance monitoring throughout the year, with the opportunity to review how resources were allocated, monitor how they were used, examine their impact and if needed carry out additional Scrutiny as required. The outcomes of this monitoring had been fed back regularly to the Board.

The Chairman suggested that Cabinet Members and

**1163 Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring**

Directors should be invited to attend the November Panel meeting to discuss the emerging challenges and issues for services and that Panels should report back to OPSB in December from those discussions.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that the Scrutiny Panels and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) should (when the information was available):

- Review the 2020/21 Quarter 1 forecast (Cabinet Report)
- familiarise themselves with the Cabinet budget papers
- request an update from the Chief Finance Officer around funding streams including Collection Fund and grants.

In addition, Panels/HOSC needed to identify quickly what detailed information was required in order to carry out the Scrutiny.

The Board went on to discuss the possibility of examining alternative budget proposals and alternative budgets which a Member suggested was successful in some District Councils. The Board was reminded that Scrutiny could consider alternative budget proposals (as appropriate) and that Budget and Policy Framework Rules provided for political groups' alternative budgets.

It was agreed that the Scrutiny Panels/HOSC would:

- invite the Cabinet Members and Directors to attend the November meetings to discuss the emerging challenges and issues for services and report back from those discussion to OPSB in December
- review the December and January 2021 Budget Cabinet reports
- report back to OSPB in January 2021 and agree final budget comments for January 2021 Cabinet.

In addition, Group Leaders would be invited to submit budget proposals for Scrutiny to examine.

The Board was asked to consider the feedback provided by Scrutiny Panel Chairmen following the discussion of performance information and in-year budget monitoring information relating to Quarter 1 2020/21 (April to June).

Written updates had been provided as part of the Agenda for the Corporate and Communities Overview and

**1164 Member Update,  
Work  
Programme and  
Cabinet  
Forward Plan**

Scrutiny Panel by Cllr Kent and for the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel by Cllr Adams. Both reports were noted.

Cllr Oborski advised that the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel had received a very thorough report and welcomed the detailed information provided by Worcestershire Children First.

Cllr Potter advised that the Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel had met the day before and had been advised that at the end of Quarter 1, Period 3 (June 2020) there had been a forecasted year-end overspend of around £2m in Adult Care, however, senior leaders had been working to reduce that figure and the end of Period 5 position showed that the forecasted overspend had reduced significantly.

Member Update

The Member update reports provided for Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel by Cllr Kent and for Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel by Cllr Adams circulated with the Agenda were noted.

Cllr Oborski advised that at the recent meeting of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel, an update on COVID-19 had been received. The Panel had commented on the variation in contact with pupils that had been made by different schools. There was also some concern as to whether or not more parents would choose to permanently home educate and it was agreed that this would be monitored. The Panel was concerned about home to school transport and the likelihood that more parents would choose to drive their children to school. The "Catch Up Premium" which was to be paid in 3 tranches was widely welcomed. Changes to bus services doing Home to School Transport were noted.

The Lead Member for crime and disorder, Cllr Vale expressed concern about the need to carry out some Scrutiny to look into gateway drugs and it was agreed that some information outlining the issues in this area would be gathered and reported back to the Board. It would then be decided what Scrutiny was needed.

Cllr Potter updated the Board on the Adult Care and Well Being Panel meeting the previous day and highlighted:

- Update on Residential and Nursing Care Provision

– the Panel expressed concerns about the process for hospital discharges to care homes and whether all residents were routinely tested for COVID-19. The Panel was advised that 69 out of 170 of care homes in Worcestershire had experienced outbreaks and that all care homes in Worcestershire were currently closed to visitors and some to new admissions. Furthermore, the Panel was assured that there was a sufficient supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at the current time.

- The Panel was concerned about the increasing number of high needs dementia beds provision and a copy of the outline business case was requested.
- Reablement Service – this service was generally provided in the person’s own home or care home, was a goal-focused intervention that involved intensive, time-limited assessment and therapeutic work over a period of up to six weeks (but possibly for a shorter period). It was due to be launched in April but due to COVID-19 had been deferred and was being launched in October

Cabinet Forward Plan

The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel was asked to look at the Cabinet Report for 22 October meeting on the County Council Net Zero Carbon Plan and report back to the Board whether it was necessary to carry out any Scrutiny of this, bearing in mind that at its August meeting the Panel had scrutinised the Council’s work and role in tackling climate change.

The meeting ended at 3.35 pm

Chairman .....