

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board

Thursday, 19 November 2020, County Hall, Worcester - 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 J A Potter, Mr P A Tuthill, Mrs R Vale and Mr T A L Wells

Also attended:

Mr P Denham
Mr M E Jenkins
Mr J H Smith, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Health and Wellbeing

Tim Rice (Senior Public Health Practitioner), Rosie Winyard (Senior Public Health Practitioner , Shaping Prevention Services, People), 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 23 September 2020 (previously circulated).

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

1165 Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Tom Wells, who had been appointed to the Board in place of Cllr Fran Oborski. The Chairman wished to put on record his thanks to Councillor Oborski both for her contribution to the Board and for all her work in leading the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the last 3½ years.

Apologies were received from Bryan Allbut (Co-opted Church of England Representative for education matters).

1166 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

1167 Public

None.

Participation

1168 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

1169 Worcestershire County Council's Preparedness for the Domestic Abuse Bill 2021

At its meeting on 22 July 2020, the Board received an Interim report on the Council's response to COVID-19 in respect of Community Safety. During that discussion, it was noted that the Domestic Abuse Bill currently going through the House of Commons would place new duties on the Council. Accordingly, the Council's preparedness for the Domestic Abuse Bill was added to the Board's Work Programme.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Health and Wellbeing introduced the Report and explained that the Domestic Abuse Bill was currently passing through the House of Lords. The first reading was on 7 July 2020 and the second reading was yet to be scheduled. The expectation was that Royal Assent would be given later in 2020 for the Bill to become Law in April 2021 and statutory duties to commence.

The duties required Tier 1 local authorities to take leadership responsibilities for delivering the duties in partnership with Tier 2 local authorities to ensure safety and support for the whole family affected by domestic abuse. This included provision of accommodation and support for survivors of domestic abuse, work with perpetrators to help prevent domestic abuse and establishment of community champions to ensure that support is maintained in the community.

The Senior Practitioner for Public Health guided the Board through the presentation which had been included as part of the Agenda, this covered:

- An overview of Domestic Abuse Bill
- The local implementation guidance
- The Local Partnership Board and governance
- Current contracts
- Needs Assessment
- Commissioning strategy
- Next steps

During the opportunity for questions, the following main points were made:

- The legislation was long overdue but was welcomed
- It would be important to ensure that there was joined up working between partners to ensure effective communication at all levels and the best outcomes for families
- In response to a concern expressed about the appropriateness of emergency accommodation when it was needed, it was confirmed that funding was available for all adults over 16 years of age and was allocated on a population basis and was not linked to areas of deprivation
- The Board heard about the Drive Project which, was a national pilot scheme aimed at reducing the number of child and adult victims of domestic abuse by deterring perpetrator behaviour. It focused on priority (high-risk or serial) perpetrators, as this group carried the greatest risk of serious harm and engaged poorly in available services. West Mercia (Worcestershire specifically) were a pilot area for this scheme
- It was confirmed that the Domestic Abuse Bill would be a pathway for all types of domestic abuse
- The importance of providing specific domestic abuse training to safeguarding leads in schools was discussed. The Board also heard about Operation Encompass which, was a process whereby the police and county council would inform a member of school staff if a child or young person had experienced any domestic incident
- A Member asked about how the drug, alcohol and substance misuse service was aligned with the domestic abuse services and it was confirmed that Cranstoun (the service provided for drugs, alcohol and substance misuse) also provided services for the Drive Project
- In response to a question about what support was available for perpetrators and their families when they returned home following a prison sentence, it was agreed that the Board would be provided with further information
- It was questioned how the demand for emergency accommodation affected the levels of demand for social housing.

The action agreed was:

- The presentation would be shared with all district council colleagues

**1170 Performance,
In-Year Budget
Monitoring and
2021/22 Budget
Scrutiny**

- Information would be provided to the Board on the support available to families of perpetrators when they returned home following a prison sentence
- A further report would be provided to the Board when funding streams were confirmed by government
- A briefing on the Domestic Abuse Bill would be provided as part of the new Councillor Induction Programme following the May 2021 Elections.

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 2 2020/21 (June to September). In addition, feedback was also provided about the emerging challenges facing Directorates for the 2021/22 Budget.

Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Jane Potter)

Performance – the planned admission rate of people admitted to care homes was an improving picture, although significantly impacted by COVID-19. A knock on effect of this was the increase in the number of people living independently and staying at home, which was an improving picture too.

The number of annual care packages reviewed had dipped, but plans were in place to improve performance.

Budget Monitoring – overall the current forecasted overspend was £260k, with learning disability and mental health services being the main areas of overspend due to increases in average unit costs.

The main reasons for the improvement in the forecast was tighter control on overall spend, the changed entry pathway into residential and nursing care and the decrease in the projected numbers of people coming into the care system, although the costs of those being placed were, on average, higher.

At the current time, the impact of the spend due to COVID-19 was covered by government grants.

2021/22 Emerging Pressures and Challenges – the key areas being reviewed by the Directorate were:

- Nature of support (which was changing)
- Unit costs for care provision including impact of inflation and National Minimum Wage
- Market availability and ability to provide types of care needed by clients
- “one system approach” to intermediate care and learning from the positive lessons of shared working with NHS, independent and voluntary and community sectors
- Delivering the 2020/21 savings relating to organisational redesign which had been delayed due to COVID
- Implementing a single “front door” for access to Council services
- Working with key partners to develop integrated community offer Here 2 Help
- Development of a strong digital offer for customers and clients
- Moving towards a more “reablement” and “enabling” social care offer
- Development a new “All Age Disability Offer”
- Medium to long term impact of COVID-19.

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Adam Kent)

Budget Monitoring – The overall forecast was for an underspend of £559k for COACH and £113k for Chief Executives Unit. The Key variances were:

- Underspend within Property Services due to reduced contract expenditure and reduction in planned works for administration buildings
- Underspend on Financial Services due to vacant posts and income generation

2021/22 Emerging Pressures and Challenges – The key areas being reviewed by the Directorates were:

- Front door
- Development of an asset management strategy
- Review of the property portfolio including libraries and corporate accommodation
- Refresh and implementation of revised digital strategy
- Delivering the 2020/21 savings relating to organisational redesign which have been delayed due to COVID
- Maintaining and improving the quality of our digital network
- Implementing a single “front door” for access to

Council services

- Medium to long term impact of COVID-19
- Brexit.

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Alastair Adams)

Performance – Quarter 2 performance on the whole was good, points of note were:

- Performance was improving in respect of outstanding Public Enquiries (PEMs). In September 2020, there were 882 outstanding compared to 1615 in 2019.
- % of Potholes fixed on time data - the Panel would be provided with some enhanced data for this area in future.
- S278 technical approval data for Q4 – a couple of queries were outstanding.

Budget Monitoring – Overall, the current forecast position was for an underspend of £23k.

2021/22 Emerging Pressures and Challenges:

- Waste Management Contract which was due to be re-negotiated at the end of 2023
- Development of a strong digital offer for our customers and staff.

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Tom Wells)

Performance – The Panel received an update on the assessment and diagnostic pathway for children and young people who it was considered were, or may be, on the autistic spectrum (the umbrella pathway). Although the Panel acknowledged the significant progress made, they were still very concerned about the length of waiting times from referral to diagnosis, and the impact on families.

Budget - At period 6, the forecast expenditure on the Dedicated Schools Grant was £224m, a forecast overspend of £1.96m. The key pressures remained as previously reported to Panel – specifically Out of County provision and Post-16 provision in the High Needs block.

Crime and Disorder (Cllr Becky Vale)

The community safety work carried out through the Public Health Directorate was strategic, enabling and part of a wide partnership network and not a service as such. Partnerships and a range of working groups were

supported through an officer presence and with advice and assistance where appropriate. The Council and Worcestershire Children First carried out community safety related work through their service teams such as GET SAFE, Safeguarding or Trading Standards, who operated in their own right and had their own budgets and any relevant performance information.

There was a high level strategic oversight through the Safer Communities Board, and the two Community Safety Partnerships (CSP's) (which had Council representatives) which had a local, more operational focus and the legal duties. There was also a range of partnership groups for which support and oversight was provided as required. Therefore, there wasn't a performance framework to which the team operated, but the work was picked up through team business plans and the plans of groups which they managed and supported.

In normal times the community safety function was a very small staff team resource, reflecting its strategic role. The size of the budget highlighted this and only covered staffing costs. The Team had now been significantly impacted by the need for the Public Health Team as a unit to respond to the COVID-19 emergency. At present the Principal Public Health Practitioner was the lead officer but covered other management roles including emergency planning and other non-community safety partnership public health work.

The Public Health Practitioner was the Council's representative on the CSP's and other groups and workstreams and led on specific areas such as Prevent. 2/3 of the time was spent on frontline public health COVID outbreak control duties in response to the emergency.

The third Public health Practitioner, who had 50% of their time dedicated to strategic domestic abuse and related work, had since March been moved to COVID-19 response only as part of their role was health protection. That post was now vacant.

The 20/21 budget for this area of work was £137,679.

Performance - There was a range of complex data, produced in various formats, on many relevant crime and community safety topics that was available across Worcestershire, much of it from the Police, but also other agencies and groups. As previously discussed at the Board, the team had started to look at creating a

headline Dashboard that might draw some of this information into an overview of key topics that didn't duplicate what was already available. Work was underway on this but unfortunately, was paused due to COVID-19.

1171 Scrutiny Proposal: Developer-Funded Highways Infrastructure and Section 278 Technical Approval

This item was withdrawn.

1172 Member Update, Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan

Member Update

In addition to the Performance, In-Year Budget Monitoring and 2021/22 Budget Scrutiny updates provided earlier in the meeting, Scrutiny Chairmen provided updates on other work areas within their remits.

Cllr Potter advised that at the recent Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the Strategy for People and Communities (a strategic plan for change for the Directorate of People, to a strengths-based model) and the vision and plans being introduced to continue to promote people's independence and sustain their independence for as long as possible, at home were discussed.

At the Economy and Environment (E&E) Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Cllr Adams advised that the Panel had discussed diversionary routes, including how they were identified and reviewed, and how the public were kept informed and suggested that members downloaded the One.Network traffic management software to keep informed of the up to date position of the road network. The Panel also heard about the county-wide work to enable and promote cycling in Worcestershire. After the County Council elections, Cllr Adams would also like to carry out a task group to look at S278 technical approvals.

Cllr Kent explained that the Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel had looked at the Councils Here2Help Service response as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic and how it would continue beyond

the COVID pandemic. This was an area of interest to the Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel who had also been invited to the meeting. In addition, the Panel discussed the developments relating to the Corporate Redesign Programme.

In addition, Cllr Kent was leading a task group looking at the County Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements which would be reporting to the January Board.

Cllr Tuthill updated the Board on the recent meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee where the Committee looked at restoration of health services and improvements arising from new ways of working during COVID-19 and were addressed by the Chief Executive of the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, Managing Director, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust.

Work Programme

Cllr Vale stressed the importance of keeping gateway drugs on the Board's radar even though it wasn't possible at the moment due to the pandemic to actively scrutinise this area of concern.

The Chairman referred to a letter that he had received from Cllr Denham and a briefing note that had been requested from the Director of Economy and Infrastructure (circulated to the Board) about service changes to the Transport Planning Team. Cllr Denham and Cllr Jenkins were in attendance for this part of the meeting and were concerned about the loss of staff expertise and implication on Council services resulting from this proposal.

The Chairman reminded the Board that it wasn't appropriate to scrutinise matters of an operational nature and the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager added that the Strategic Director had the authority to manage his service as appropriate in accordance with the policy framework of the Council. If there were concerns about the way in which a service was delivered from a strategic perspective, this could legitimately be scrutinised but day to day management decisions were not appropriate for Scrutiny.

The Chairman of the E&E Overview and Scrutiny Panel was disappointed that this had not been mentioned in the

recent November Panel meeting but advised that there was ongoing Budget Scrutiny which would as part of that process consider the savings proposals for the Directorate and a task group was being set up for that purpose which Cllrs Denham and Jenkins could join and contribute to. There would also be an opportunity to review the implications of the service changes as part of ongoing Scrutiny.

Following the discussion, it was agreed that the mechanisms were in place for appropriate Scrutiny and that there would be an opportunity for members to ask questions as part of the Budget Scrutiny process of the Economy and Infrastructure Directorate. Active Travel would be added to the E&E Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme for monitoring of the impact of service changes.

The meeting ended at 3.55 pm

Chairman