

## Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board Monday, 22 June 2020, Online only - 1.30 pm

### Minutes

#### Present:

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

#### Also attended:

Mr S E Geraghty, Leader of the Council and Cabinet  
Member for Finance  
Mr R C Lunn, Group Leader, Labour Group  
Mrs F Smith, Vice-Chairman of Health Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee (Wychavon District Council)  
Mrs E B Tucker, Group Leader 2017 Group

Paul Robinson (Chief Executive)  
Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny  
Manager)  
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 29 January  
2020 (previously circulated).

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

#### 1141 Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone and confirmed the  
arrangements for the Board's first remote meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Paul Tuthill and Bryan  
Allbut (Co-opted Church Representative).

#### 1142 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

#### 1143 Public Participation

None.

#### 1144 Confirmation of the Minutes of

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 January 2020  
were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by  
the Chairman.

## the Previous Meeting

### 1145 Update on the County Council's Response to COVID-19

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive were invited to the meeting to provide an update on the County Council's response to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). In addition, the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels were invited to feedback on their recent Panels'/Committee's discussions on how services had been affected by COVID-19.

#### Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

The Vice-Chairman of HOSC explained how in just a few weeks the NHS had changed the way that local hospitals and GP practices were run to ensure that it was able to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Integration and system working had also moved on significantly. Some examples of the temporary service changes included:

- Most face-to-face outpatient appointments suspended
- Community hospital bed usage changed
- Older adult mental health ward (Athelon) decanted
- Child development centres moved to virtual
- Planned respite for adults and children suspended
- Elective surgery moved to independent sector or cancelled
- Kidderminster Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) closed overnight; Tenbury and Evesham MIUs temporarily closed
- Garden Suite (chemo) and Women's Health Unit both moved from the Alexandra Hospital to Kidderminster Treatment Centre
- Maternity moved to Princess of Wales Community Hospital
- Screening for breast, bowel and Aortic Aneurysms suspended
- GP Out of Hours restricted to two sites (Worcester Royal Hospital and Alexandra Hospital)

Proposals to make any temporary service changes into permanent changes would be subject to appropriate engagement and consultation to ensure patients and stakeholders had the opportunity to be involved before any decisions were made.

The Restoration Phase was the next step in the process (May–2020) and would be looking at:

- Critical service switch on
- Understanding need and demand
- Agreeing local priorities
- Understand what worked/didn't work
- Agree key transformational activities and 'what we will keep'.

#### Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel (E&E Panel)

The Chairman of the E&E Panel explained that at the recent Panel meeting, there had been 14 public participants who had expressed their views about the COVID-19 Emergency Active Travel Fund and asked questions.

Reduced numbers of cars on the road had been positive for the environment and post COVID-19, it would good if the Council could look at encouraging more cycling and walking.

The Panel also received an update from BT Openreach about Broadband, which was critical for the County moving forward especially, if working at home continued and became the norm for residents.

The regular briefing notes sent to all Councillors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic had been a useful source of information.

#### Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Children's Panel)

The Chairman of the Panel highlighted some of the discussion points from the Panel meeting, arising from different ways of working due to pandemic including:

- keeping in touch calls, whilst community visits were restricted, a method welcomed by a number of young people,
- the positive way in which Worcestershire Children First (WCF) had reacted to COVID-19 and its current good budgetary position.
- the concern about next year's exams for Year 11 and Year 13 including the preparedness of the pupils and how the exams would be run.
- In relation to the Family Front Door, after an initial reduction in the number of contacts, levels soon returned to normal averages.
- the concern about children's emotional and mental

health and well-being arising from COVID-19 and the knock-on impact on the Child and Adolescent mental Health Service (CAMHS).

The Panel had also received a briefing on Green Hill Lodge following its closure earlier in June.

#### Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (C&C Panel)

The Panel received a detailed report which, provided an update on areas within its remit including:

- IT and digital services,
- Communities and libraries
- The Organisation, its employees and the Organisational Change programme.

The Chairman highlighted from the discussion:

- That it was important to look at the lessons learnt from COVID-19 in terms of a whole County response (including all partners). It was suggested that in due course a County wide Seminar takes place ensuring that both the opportunities, challenges and best practice from other Councils are considered.
- The Panel's thanks and appreciation be conveyed to staff for their tremendous efforts during lockdown. The Cabinet Members were also praised for all their work.
- That when procuring goods, wherever possible, consideration should be given to local sourcing e.g. PPE as this would help to boost the local economy.
- The Panel would like a report on how the Here2Help Service will operate in future and also an update on the Council's continued response to COVID-19 to outline the lessons learnt and the implications for the Council moving forward.

#### Adult Care and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The Panel received a report about how the People Directorate had responded to the COVID 19 pandemic in respect of Adult Services, including meeting the needs of those in receipt of care and support, Care Act easements, safeguarding. In addition, a report was also provided on the COVID-19 Care Home Support Plan.

The Panel at its July meeting would be discussing Peer

Review Feedback, Performance (Q4 January – March 2020) and In-Year Finance Outturn Monitoring and keeping a watching brief on Care Act easements.

### Crime and Disorder

The Lead Member for Crime and Disorder was keen to understand how crime trends had changed during the COVID-19 pandemic and it was agreed that an email would be sent out to all Members to find out what was happening in local divisions. One area which seemed to be escalating was in relation to inhalation of nitrous oxide which, it was suggested needed regulation. Speeding was also suggested as a problem area.

The Leader thanked the Board for the updates and highlighted that:

- Government had issued two grants to local authorities both totalling £1.6 billion. From this the County Council had received £25.5 million in allocation to contribute towards its cost of response and recovery to COVID-19.
- In addition, the Council was working with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS England to recover additional costs in ensuring prompt and safe discharges from hospital to enable effective care and treatment through the whole system. It was understood that all such costs would be funded 100% from the NHS £1.3 billion allocation.
- To date the Council anticipated it would spend at least £15 million by the end of the first quarter and more thereafter. As such the full extent of the additional grant was expected to be spent by the end of the second quarter.
- The NHS response had been very good and there had been good partnership working with the Council. Sufficient beds were made available to meet demand.
- Funding for the Emergency Active Travel Fund Funding would be allocated in two phases and indicative allocations for Worcestershire included Phase 1 of £271 000 and Phase 2 of £1,082 000. Phase 1 was for the immediate response as part of recovery, whilst Phase 2 was to support long term actions based on the established transport policy.
- The keeping in touch calls for children's social care was welcomed and may be continued.
- Whilst acknowledging that there hadn't been a

massive increase in demand for children's social care. the Leader was mindful that there may be issues which had not been detected.

- It was important to be cognisant of mental health issues resulting from COVID-19.
- The importance of schools returning to normal.
- The impact on apprenticeships which, needed to be picked up as things moved forward.
- IT had in the main coped with the demands placed on it.
- Here2Help was regarded highly.
- Sourcing of PPE was considered to be very successful.

The Chief Executive welcomed the feedback from Panels and wished to place on record his thanks to all staff who had retained their complete focus on the needs of the Services and had adapted well to new ways of working. There had been approximately five years' worth of transformation in one month. It was important moving forward to create a new normal, keeping the positives that had worked well.

During the discussion and opportunity for questions the following main points were made:

- The Council had shown agility and resilience in responding to COVID-19. It was essential moving forward that this momentum was maintained in conjunction with the positive changes made such as more staff working at home, reduced travel, holding more meetings online.
- The Chief Executive was clear that whatever model of working was adopted by the Council in the future, it would need to be a balanced approach, taking many factors into account including the importance of social contact.
- It was important that ensure that staff welfare was considered and that appropriate risk assessments were carried out and equipment provided where needed.
- The economic restart would be an important focus for the County, including the importance of schools to returning fully by September, the job market for 16-25 year olds and apprenticeship schemes. The Leader drew the Board's attention to the Cabinet Report on the economic restart being discussed on 25 June. He suggested that the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) also had a wider role in helping to

regenerate the economy.

- The Chief Executive explained how well the gold, silver and bronze approach had worked in managing services and allowed the right people to make decisions at the right level.
- Other concerns mentioned by the Board and acknowledged by the Leader were: the impact of COVID-19 on future budgets/finances, the flexible use of property and the impact on the Pension Fund and the viability of public and school transport.
- A Member mentioned the important of acknowledging, congratulating and supporting the self-help groups of the communities in Worcestershire, who had played such a key role during COVID-19 and were continuing to so.

The Chairman thanked everyone for participating in the discussion.

The Leader placed on record his thanks to Scrutiny for its ongoing work.

**1146 Draft Scrutiny Report: Care Work as a Career**

The Board was asked to consider and approve the draft Scrutiny Report on Care Work as a Career.

Cllr Liz Tucker, Lead Member of the Task Group introduced the report and in doing so explained how special and poignant this work had proved to be and how vital care workers were. The Task group had concluded its work in January, however, the situation in relation to COVID-19, had meant a delay in being able to present the report to OSPB for consideration.

Following a brief discussion, the Board commended the Report to Cabinet for discussion on 25 June and thanked the Task Group for a clear report.

**1147 Member Update, Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan**

Other than the issues discussed earlier relating to COVID-19, the Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel during its June meeting discussed a Member Query Case Management System which, was due to be implemented from September 2020.

The Chairman advised that its next meeting, the Board would be looking to confirm Scrutiny Work Programmes for the forthcoming year and passport to the September meeting of Council for approval.

It was suggested that post-traumatic stress (relating to children and adults) should be added to the HOSC Work

| Programme.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm

Chairman .....