

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board Wednesday, 6 January 2021, Online - 10.00 am

Minutes

Present:

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 B Clayton
Prof J W Raine
Mrs E B Tucker

Rebecca Wassell (Assistant Director - Commissioning),
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. Presentation handouts for xxxxxxxx (circulated at the Meeting)
- C. The Minutes of the Meeting held on xxxxxx (previously circulated).

(Copies of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes).

1173 Apologies and Welcome

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

1174 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

1175 Public Participation

None.

1176 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on the 19 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

1177 Update on the Recommendation

Members were provided with an update on the recommendations from the Care Work as a Career

ns from the Care Work as a Career Scrutiny Report

Scrutiny Report, which was approved by the Board on 22 June 2020 and considered by Cabinet on 25 June. Cabinet noted the Scrutiny Report findings and recommendations and adopted the response of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) as the way forward.

Following the CMR's adoption of the recommendations, a Project Team was established to develop an approach to delivery. Unfortunately, due to the demands of COVID-19 this was delayed and the Project Plan was finalised in November.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- Recommendation 10 (building links with Shropshire Council in relation to the Bridge Project) was being considered as part of the wider Council Digital Transformation programme, as it fitted directly with one of the priorities in the Digital Strategy due to be launched early this year.
- It was confirmed that there were no apparent issues with recruiting staff to the Council's care work roles. The Council was however, looking into how staff were supported and the wider promotion of care work as a career.
- The importance of the Council promoting and encouraging providers to adopt common care standards to ensure that residents received parity of care was stressed.
- The new lead provider framework arrangements for domiciliary care, which should have been introduced in summer 2020 had been delayed as a result of the demands of COVID-19. However, it was confirmed that the arrangements were now being consulted on.
- There wasn't any information available about whether Council staff in care roles were drifting to the NHS care roles.
- In order to assess the effectiveness of the Worcestershire Business Central care work promotional campaign, information was requested on the number of care workers taking up a care as a career.
- In response to a question about the split of university student placements available to University of Worcester students and out of County universities, the Board was advised that there was a good relationship with the University of Worcester and a number of students were

taken on placement by the Council. Detailed information would be provided on the Council's Policy for student placements after the meeting.

- Members were reminded that the Council monitored the standards of external providers through the contract specification. In addition, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), was the independent regulator of health and social care in England.

The following actions were agreed:

- The Interim Associate Director, Commissioning would be invited to a meeting with the Care Work as a Career Scrutiny Task Group to discuss the detail of the progress made (The Chairman of the Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel would also be invited to this meeting).
- A further update on progress against recommendations would be provided to the Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel in September 2021.
- Information would be provided on the number of people moving into care work in the Council, as a result of the Worcestershire Business Central promotional campaign.
- Information would be provided on the Council's Recruitment Policy on university student placements for the University of Worcester and other out of area universities.

1178 Draft Scrutiny Report: The Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements

The Board was asked to consider and approve the draft Scrutiny Report on Council's Energy Purchasing Arrangements.

Cllr Kent introduced the Report and in doing so thanked the Members of the Task Group and Officers for their support with what had been a challenging Scrutiny, which had arisen from a budget monitoring discussion at the Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 21 November 2019 about a cost pressure relating to street lighting.

Prior to forming the Task Group, it was apparent that little was known by Members about West Mercia Energy (WME), the Joint Committee and Worcestershire County Council's part in it. It had been a very interesting and informative journey for the Task Group dealing with the history of West Mercia Energy, the make-up of the Joint

Committee and understanding the Business Plan and goals of the organisation.

Although, it wasn't possible accurately to compare market positions to establish whether these arrangements provided the lowest price for the Council, Members were reassured by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility that she was confident that the energy purchasing arrangements through WME were fit for purpose, offered value for money and were legally compliant.

Despite this reassurance, some concerns remained, including the lack of knowledge and understanding of the Council's energy purchasing arrangements outside of those directly involved in the WME Joint Committee; the lack of Scrutiny, the reliance on key individuals and the lack of succession planning and long-term vision. The Group's recommendations tried to address this as well as fostering better communications and relationships.

The Task Group hoped that their recommendations would help to ensure that the Council's position was safeguarded and that risks were known, understood and kept at an acceptable level.

Cllr Kent concluded with thanks to all of the witnesses that had given evidence for their open and contrasting views.

The Board approved the report which would be discussed by Cabinet on 4 February 2021 and agreed that an update on the recommendations that affected Scrutiny would be discussed at the March meeting of the Board.

1179 Scrutiny Proposal: Developer-Funded Highways Infrastructure and Section 278 Technical Approval

The Board approved the Scrutiny proposal for Developer-funded Highways Infrastructure and Section 278 Technical Approval. It was agreed that it would be added to the Work Programme as a legacy for post-election Scrutiny.

Meanwhile, it was noted that the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel had requested an update for its February meeting on the Council's work on developer funded highways infrastructure, in particular the length of time taken for planning submissions from developers to meet the criteria for approval.

1180 Member Update, Work

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

Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan

At its meeting in November, 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.

Home to School Transport was forecast to budget. Additional costs and lost income was estimated at £3.5 million for 2020/21. The current forecast assumed that increased pressures on Home to School Transport expenditure would be met by the COVID-19 grant received by Government. This position was reviewed regularly.

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

On 10 December 2020, Panel members attended an informal Briefing which provided further insight on the Ringway reporting system.

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

At the next meeting, the Panel would be discussing the Budget and Apprenticeships.

Crime and Disorder (Cllr Becky Vale)

It was agreed that a report would be prepared for the March meeting on enhanced arrangements for crime and disorder scrutiny.

Work Programme

No changes were made.

Forward Plan

The Chairman of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel was asked to review the Cabinet Forward Plan entry - Adoption of the Worcestershire County Council Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Policy and Ways of Working with a view to adding it to the Work Programme if any Scrutiny was needed.

The meeting ended at 11.05 am

Chairman