

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board

County Hall, Worcester

Wednesday, 23 March 2022, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Tom Wells (Chairman), Cllr Richard Morris (Vice Chairman),
Cllr Kyle Daisley and Cllr Mike Rouse

Also attended:

Cllr Simon Geraghty, Leader of the Council
Cllr Mel Allcott, Unity Group Leader
Cllr Matt Jenkins, Green and Independant Alliance Group Leader
Cllr Karen Hanks, Vice-Chairman - Economy and Environment Overview and
Scrutiny Panel
Cllr Dan Boatright
Cllr Lynn Denham

Paul Robinson, Chief Executive
Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager
Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 January 2022 (previously circulated).

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

1234 Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillors Alastair Adams, Brandon Clayton, Richard Udall, Shirley Webb, Tim Reid (Church Representative) and Mark Hughes (Parent Governor Representative).

1235 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board Wednesday, 23 March 2022
Date of Issue: 19 May 2022

Item 5 - Worcestershire Response to Invasion of Ukraine.

Cllr Rouse declared that he was a trustee of Support Redditch Emergency Network which was a charity involved with providing support to Ukraine.

1236 Public Participation

None.

1237 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1238 Worcestershire Response to Invasion of Ukraine

The Board was asked to consider the 24 March 2022 Cabinet report in respect of Worcestershire's Response to the invasion of Ukraine and provide comments to the Leader for consideration at Cabinet and determine whether it would wish to carry out any further Scrutiny.

The Leader introduced the Cabinet Report and made the following main points:

- The situation in Ukraine was devastating, a situation not seen in Europe for many decades. In Worcestershire, it had been agreed that there would be a 'One Worcestershire' approach to providing support to Ukraine with the County Council and the six District Councils working together to provide a co-ordinated response (including communication and signposting to the Councils' website).
- There were 2 Government Schemes which Worcestershire would participate in – the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Local Sponsorship Scheme.
- 130 families in Worcestershire had been identified as part of the Ukraine Family Scheme (allowing applicants to join their families in the UK). No applicants had yet been identified for the Local Sponsorship Scheme.
- The Here2Help Scheme would become the conduit to co-ordinate the County Council's approach to providing support.

- Any communications issued would be agreed in a 'One Worcestershire' format with the County and District Councils using the same wording to give a consistent message.
- How best to provide support for language, skills and employment were areas currently being considered.
- Regular meetings were taking place between the Council and District Leaders and Chief Executives to discuss the progress of the One Worcestershire response.

The Chief Executive explained that:

- The situation was constantly evolving and detailed guidance was awaited from Government. Councils were expected to provide Ukrainian refugees accepted on both schemes with access to all services. Initially, it was expected that the refugees would be mainly, women, children and older men arriving in the UK (as men between 18-60 years of age were expected to stay in Ukraine to support the war effort).
- Any sponsors that came forward must be able to provide suitable accommodation for 6 months and people arriving under the schemes would be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education, and English language tuition.
- The Government would provide £10,500 per person per local authority to help with costs. For One Worcestershire this money would be pooled into a central budget.
- Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks were needed for prospective sponsors which may cause delays, however quickening up the process was currently being reviewed.

During the opportunity for questions, the following main points were noted from Members of the Board:

- The capacity of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) was currently being identified by contacting known organisations to check what support could be provided and this would be combined with any new VCS organisations coming forward to offer support.
- In response to a Member suggestion that the information on the Council's website should be prominent, so that it

can be quickly found by search engines, the Chief Executive provided reassurance that the Council's support offer for Ukraine would have dedicated pages, but the way in which it was signposted had not yet been decided.

- The role of County Councillors in communicating with residents was viewed as critical and the Board recommended that regular updates were provided to all Councillors in a format for easy onward dissemination. The Leader explained that the Council had stepped up its Bronze and Silver command arrangements and regular updates would be provided to Councillors as a result. It was noted that Gold Command would be instigated when needed.
- A Councillor reiterated the need for communication updates for all councillors as soon as possible. Residents were in regular contact with Councillors and were asking for advice as well as offering support.
- A Councillor expressed concern about how the £10,500 funding allocated as part of the Local Sponsorship Scheme (and added to a pooled budget) would be monitored to ensure that the money was spent on individuals.
- The Chief Executive agreed to check how long the £350 provided to sponsors for housing Ukrainian refugees would be available for.
- It was difficult to predict how refugee children would settle into schools in Worcestershire without knowing the numbers of the children involved.
- It was suggested that One Worcestershire should develop a Strategy based on its aims and objectives.
- A Member suggested that if there was a shortage of sponsors available that proposed foster carers could be targeted to ask if they were prepared to be sponsors.
- It was noted that libraries would act as information hubs to signpost refugees to Council services.

A number of Councillors (who were not Members of the Board) were in attendance and were given the opportunity to ask questions. The main points made were:

- It would be important to have the use of translation services to provide information about the Council's services and to respond to requests for help. The Chief

Executive explained that the Council used Language Line UK and was able to provide a translation service in various languages.

- In response to a Member question about whether the Council could lobby Government so that Worcestershire could receive refugees more quickly, the Leader explained that One Worcestershire was working within the criteria of the Schemes in a positive and proactive way and would provide help and support when needed. The Chief Executive also added that clarity from Government was also awaited.
- At the current time, it was unknown how many volunteers there were in Worcestershire.
- In terms of the capacity of Here2Help to provide the help that would be required, the Chief Executive reassured the Board that it would be up to the challenge.
- It was noted that the £10,500 per person was allocated to the Council and that the sponsors were paid the £350 per month.
- It was acknowledged that One Worcestershire may need to provide support to sponsors but at the moment it was unclear as to what support was needed until the number of refugees arriving in Worcestershire was confirmed.
- It was confirmed that the names of the 130 people identified as part of the Ukraine Family Scheme were not yet known to Worcestershire and therefore it was not clear how many people would be arriving as part of that Scheme.
- A Member suggested that the Council should work with military organisations and charities which were likely to have experience of supporting relatives of those serving as soldiers. The Vice Chairman of the Board agreed to raise this with the Armed Forces Covenant Group, and the Board suggested this should be taken up by those working on support for Ukrainians who come to Worcestershire.

The Chairman thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for attending the meeting.

It was agreed that the comments from the discussion would be distilled and the Chairman would attend Cabinet on 24 March to present them.

The comments to Cabinet would cover:

- The request for communication/updates to be provided to Councillors to disseminate to their communities
- Ensuring that the links to access support/guidance about the One Worcestershire approach to supporting the Ukraine situation was prominent on the Council's website
- Enlisting support from military organisations and charities which are likely to have experience of supporting relatives of those serving as soldiers
- Consideration of the development of a One Worcestershire Strategy
- The capacity for Here2Help with the right support when needed
- Consideration of how to help the harder to reach groups
- Ensuring that the pooled budget was monitored and was person centred.

A further update would be requested for the Board's next meeting in April.

1239 Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny Task Group Report on Ambulance Hospital Handover Delays

The Report was deferred to the next meeting.

1240 Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring Feedback

Noted.

1241 Webcasting of Public Scrutiny Meetings

The Democratic, Governance and Scrutiny Manager reported that all Scrutiny meetings could be webcast with effect from 1 May 2022.

The Board unanimously agreed that all public Scrutiny Meetings would be webcast with effect from 1 May 2022 and that a press release to that effect would be requested.

1242 Member Update, Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Kyle Daisley)

At its February meeting, the Children's Panel discussed the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Joint Area Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Revisit in Worcestershire and the Worcestershire Children First Independent Fostering Service Ofsted Inspection. There were a number of public speakers at the meeting as well as public and media attendance. The Panel had concerns about both areas discussed as detailed in the minutes of that meeting.

Arising from the Ofsted/CQC discussion about the Special Education Needs, it was agreed by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel that given the public concern around Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) including the backlog, timeliness and quality, the EHCP process would be a priority for further scrutiny. Accordingly, a draft proposal was tabled for consideration, comment and approval by OSPB.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that a Scrutiny Task Group would be set up to scrutinise the process for issuing an Educational, Health and Care Plan in Worcestershire (to include timeliness, quality assurance and lawfulness). The Task Group would be led by Cllr Daisley.

The Board then discussed how the Task Group could be resourced given that Scrutiny support for Task Groups was at full capacity. It was agreed that the alternative options available to Scrutiny to resource the EHCP Task Group would be considered and agreed between the Lead Members of the Developer-funded Highways Infrastructure & Section 278 Technical Approval and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Mike Rouse)

At its March meeting, the Panel considered the Customer Experience which included an explanation about the range of

customers, the Council's customer touch points, headlines from the Viewpoint Survey, corporate complaints, and the Customer Experience Programme. The Panel would look at further detail at future meetings.

The Panel Chairman advised at the next few meetings there would be more of a communities focus.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH's) Task Group

Cllr Daisley updated the Board on the Task Group's progress.

Work Programme

Noted.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm

Chairman