

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board

County Hall, Worcester

Thursday, 29 September 2022, 10.00 am

Present:

Cllr Tom Wells (Chairman), Cllr Alan Amos (Vice Chairman),
Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Brandon Clayton, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Emma Stokes,
Cllr Shirley Webb and Cllr Richard Udall

Also attended:

Cllr Simon Geraghty, Leader of the Council and Vice-Chairman, WLEP
Cllr David Chambers, Vice-Chairman, Children and Families Overview and
Scrutiny Panel

Julie Snell, Chairman, Worcestershire Local Economic Partnership
Gary Woodman, Executive Director, Worcestershire Local Enterprise
Partnership (WLEP)
Luke Willetts, Director of Operations, Worcestershire Local Enterprise
Partnership

Steph Simcox, Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Hannah Perrott, Assistant Director for Communities
Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 July 2022 (previously circulated).

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

1271 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies were received from Cllr Steve Mackay, Tim Reid (Church Representative) and Mark Hughes (Parent Governor Representative).

1272 Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip

None.

Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board Thursday, 29 September 2022
Date of Issue: 28 November 2022

1273 Public Participation

None.

1274 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 July 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1275 Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) Annual Report (2022/23)

In attendance for this discussion:

Julie Snell, Interim Chairman, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP)

Gary Woodman, Chief Executive Officer, WLEP

Luke Willetts, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, WLEP

Steph Simcox, S151 Officer

Simon Geraghty, Vice-Chairman, WLEP

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the annual update report on the achievements of the WLEP over the last 12 months and outlined the strategic objectives for 2022/23. In addition, an update on the WLEP Energy Strategy had been provided.

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

Energy Strategy:

- In response to a question about how the refresh of the Energy Strategy would impact on District Councils, the Board was advised that there were no plans to revise the 2030 Strategy but to wait for the outcome of Governments National Review.
- A Member referred to the Burcot Lane housing scheme, which had delivered 61 energy efficient housing units in Bromsgrove and questioned whether there were more plans for North Worcestershire. It was confirmed that there were decarbonisation plans and opportunities to be explored via the Salix Scheme.
- Paragraph 39 of the Agenda Report was referred to and a Member queried whether there would be any support for landowners to change land use eg to solar or wind farms. In response the Board was advised that a number of options were being investigated and that the WLEP was technology-agnostic and was not wedded to promoting one energy source or solution above others. Locally, significant progress had been made eg Worcester Bosch had produced renewable boilers and Redditch was using a hydrogen waste vehicle.
- A Member referred to Offenham Geo-thermal Survey and questioned whether there had been any commercial interest. It was confirmed that

the Survey had been used to apply for Government feasibility funding. Worcester City and Kidderminster had the most potential, Offenham less so as the extraction costs and risks were very high. At the current time Offenham didn't have a live project associated with it.

- Paragraph 35 and 36 of the Agenda Report was referred to which referred FAUN Zoeller, a German-owned Refuse Collection Vehicle (RCV) manufacturer based in Redditch which had been explored to understand the potential for a Hydrogen Economy in Worcestershire. The Hydrogen Consortium had a proposal to develop hydrogen fuel-cell and EV Refuse Collection vehicles to decarbonise the County's Waste Services. Unfortunately, the proposal had not been adopted to date, primarily due to lack of investment. However, the WLEP were having further discussions with conversations with FAUN Zoeller at the end of October.

Other Discussion Points:

- A Member questioned the progress made with dualling the North Cotswold Line. The Vice-Chairman of the WLEP (and Leader of the Council) confirmed that the County Council were hosting a 5 counties partnership (including Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire) and that this was a key project that was still moving forward but there would come a point at which it would be for the rail industry and Government to deliver on.
- Reference was made to a recent announcement that there would be funding of £43m for the Oxford railway line, it was questioned whether this funding would be used to complete the dual lining. The Vice-Chairman of the WLEP explained that the funding was not for complete dualling but for sections of the line.
- A Member highlighted that the footfall at Worcester Parkway had exceeded expectations and asked whether the WLEP could provide support to persuade the train companies whose trains passed through Worcester Parkway to provide a service. It was confirmed that discussions with various train companies were taking place however, it would take time to progress.
- In terms of the initiatives using the co-operative model, it was confirmed that the WLEP had been involved in the food and drink network which had unfortunately come to an end. 3 community energy groups had also been supported and other opportunities were now being sought.
- It was confirmed that Worcestershire had not been identified on the initial list from Government as an Investment Zone. Further details were expected from Government in the next few days following which Worcestershire would make a pitch to become an Investment Zone. Discussions would take place between all Worcestershire local authorities and some commercially viable sites would be put forward.
- A Member suggested that the Shrub Hill site could be considered as a possible Investment Zone.
- The Vice-Chairman of the WLEP suggested that Worcestershire was in a position of strength and had a number of gamechanger sites already identified and Shrub Hill was the main site for which investment was being sought. Consideration needed to be given as to whether Shrub

Hill would be put forward as an Investment Zone. A joint letter from the County and District Council's to central Government was being drafted expressing Worcestershire's interest in becoming an Investment Zone.

- A Member highlighted that the Joy Mining Site, Bromyard Road, Worcester which was a large industrial area due to be marketed and may be a possibility for the Growth Hub.
- The Worcester Youth Hub was discussed and it was confirmed that further options for other Youth Hubs were being considered including Redditch.
- It was confirmed that career resources were now available in all schools for ages 11+. Worcestershire was now in the top 3 authorities for its approach to careers advice (having previously been in the bottom 3).
- In terms of the future of the WLEP, the Chief Executive of the WLEP believed that the WLEP would survive on the basis of its good partnership working. Despite funding routes changing it could still be a neutral convenor and business voice. The WLEP had a track record of having a clear strategy and the ability to deliver.
- The Interim Chairman added that the WLEP could add experience, expertise and independence but the importantly was the delivery vehicle of the partnership. It was suggested that the WLEP should get together with other LEP's to write to the Minister to prove their economic value.

The Chairman thanked colleagues from the WLEP for attending the meeting.

1276 Update on the Worcestershire Response to the Invasion of Ukraine

The Assistant Director for Communities introduced the Report and recapped on the Family Visa and Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Schemes and talked through the data and detail provided in the Report.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- Modern slavery/exploitation of Ukrainian guests was a concern but a number of checks were carried out on hosts and accommodation to mitigate the opportunity for this happen and for any issues identified to be dealt with quickly. There were very few issues in Worcestershire but if identified, District Councils were acting quickly.
- It was confirmed that the Council was working with District Councils to ensure Ukrainian guests had access to sport and leisure facilities.
- A Member expressed concern about the already very long waiting lists for social housing in district areas and the impact this would have on those guests who may wish to remain in the County long term. The Assistant Director acknowledged that this was one of the biggest challenges. A Member suggested that it was important to lobby central Government to support local authorities to address these big issues.
- There were 130 guests in the Family Scheme in Worcestershire.
- It was confirmed that the £10,500 per person provided to Local Authorities was pooled to ensure that it could be allocated as needed.

- Payment of the funding to the Council was done in arrears. Quarter 1 had been received and Quarter 2 was expected soon.
- In response to a Member question about the number of Ukrainian guests available to work in Worcestershire, the Assistant Director explained that the exact figure was unknown as the skills sets of the guests was an unknown, although in time the District Council Support Workers would be able to identify work age adults.
- A concern was expressed about other nationals who fearing wars had fled to Ukraine and were now displaced again.

A further update on the situation would be provided in 6 months' time.

1277 Scrutiny Chairmen and Lead Member Update

The Scrutiny Panel Chairmen/Lead Members provided an update on recent Scrutiny meetings and activities.

Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Shirley Webb)

The Panels last meeting had included updates on:

- Performance and 2022-23 In-Year Budget Monitoring
- Compliments and Complaints for Adult Services.

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr David Chambers, Vice-Chairman of the Panel)

The Panel's last meeting had included updates on:

- Supporting Families First which was working well to support families on the edge of care.
- Performance and 2022-23 In-Year Budget Monitoring - the full-year Worcestershire Children First (WCF) budget was currently £136m of which over half was the 'demand led' budgets of Placements and Home to School Transport. There was a risk on placements which could exceed the budget for 2022/23 of around £2m - £3m and this would be mitigated by the £1.9m risk reserve. Close monitoring would be required during the year.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Scrutiny Task Group – the evidence gathering for this work had concluded and a draft report was being worked upon with the aim of reporting to the December meeting of OSPB.

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Cllr Emma Stokes)

The Chairman provided feedback from the Panel's recent meeting and commented on the lack of availability of some Panel members for meetings. It was suggested that consideration should be given to amending the Constitution to allow substitution of members on Scrutiny bodies.

The Panel planned had to meet informally at Redditch Library in September, ahead of a formal meeting to discuss proposals for the library, however this was being rearranged due to the timescale for Cabinet Reporting and would take place in October instead.

The Panel received a report on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Services.

With reference to performance information, the Panel was planning to trial Power-BI to review its performance information.

Crime and Disorder (Cllr Richard Udall)

The next meeting of the Board (20 October) was the Annual Crime and Disorder meeting and in addition to the update on Community Safety matters in the County, there would also be an update on the Community Speed Watch Scheme.

S278 Scrutiny Task Group

The work of this Task Group was ongoing.

Due to the period of mourning following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the September meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been cancelled and the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel had been rearranged.

Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan

It was noted that Worcestershire Streetscape Design Guide Approval was on the Cabinet Forward Plan for December 2022. Concern was expressed that Cabinet Member briefings were not taking place and if they had been, this issue would have been on Members' radar and allowed for pre-scrutiny by the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Chairman of this Panel requested that the briefings were reinstated as soon as possible. The Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager agreed to look into this matter.

In response to a Member request, it was agreed that a letter would be sent to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways to check on the progress of the development of charging policy for closing roads.

The meeting ended at 1.00 pm

Chairman