

Minutes of the Corporate and Communities Overview and

Scrutiny Panel

County Hall Worcester

Tuesday, 1 November 2022, 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Emma Stokes (Chairman), Cllr James Stanley (Vice Chairman),
Cllr Peter Griffiths and Cllr Emma Marshall

Also attended:

Cllr Marcus Hart, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities
Cllr Adam Kent, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services
and Communication
Andrew Spice, Strategic Director of Commercial and Change
Richard Taylor, Assistant Director for HR, OD and Engagement
Hannah Perrott, Assistant Director for Communities
Carol Brown, Head of Libraries, Archives and Archaeology
Phillipa Tinsley, Museums Manager
Rob Morris, Head of Business Intelligence
Dave Corbett, Lead Analyst (Performance)
Jonathan Fitzgerald-Guy, Assistant Director Transformation and Commercial
Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Deborah Dale, Community Engagement Officer

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September (previously circulated).

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

385 Apologies and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Natalie McVey, Richard Udall and Craig Warhurst. The Chairman commented that this was the third consecutive meeting where no opposition members were in attendance.

The Chairman updated the Panel on the following:

- On 25 October 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) had considered a report on the relocation of Redditch Library. Comments from the meeting had been provided to Cabinet on 27 October.
- On 20 October 2022 meeting of OSPB Meeting, an update on Community Speed Watch had been received.

386 Public Participation

None.

387 Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip

None

388 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

389 Update on the Council's Strategy for Museums, Arts and Culture

Attending for this item were the:

- Assistant Director for Communities
- Museums Manager
- Head of Libraries, Archives and Archaeology
- Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Severn Arts
- Arts Director, Severn Arts
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility (CMR) for Communities

The Panel had requested an update on Worcestershire County Council's Strategy for Museums, Arts and Culture as part of its Work Programme.

Members were provided with an overview of each service area, the main points highlighted were:

- The County Museum based at Hartlebury Castle had half a million artefacts which included the world's best collection of Gypsy caravans.
- Research showed that visits and participation in the museum services contributed to people living longer, improved communication and reduced isolation.
- The education programme focussed on Key Stage 2 children and included children and young people who were home educated, looked after children (LACs) and refugee families and provided a less formal learning environment.
- The priorities of the Joint Museums 5-year Strategic Plan included a priority to grow and diversify funding and resilience. Currently, the Service was funded via Worcester City Council as well as earned income and external funding. Further work was being done to reduce reliance on contributions and increase self-funding.
- Hartlebury Museum and the Collections Centre storage unit both come to the end of their leases in the near future and an options appraisal and business model would go to Cabinet in 2023.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- In terms of attracting visitors to the Hartlebury Museum, the Panel was informed that surveys were undertaken to identify the audience of the museum to help increase the user numbers of this service. However, it was acknowledged that there were some barriers to Hartlebury Castle given its location and lack of public transport, as well as admission charges being in place. Work was being done to enable some discounts to be introduced to encourage visitors who would not normally go to museums. Outreach work was also be undertaken to encourage visitors.
- A Member suggested that transport was an issue in the County for getting to the Hive in Worcester. Officers acknowledged the transport difficulties and were working more with partners and Worcestershire Children First to organise school trips and community visits.
- Partnership working was key to accessing an audience the service would not normally reach, and it was acknowledged that despite a dramatic fall in national museum attendance, data showed that within Worcestershire, visitor numbers had increased, with actual visitors almost 100% of pre-Covid-19 figures.
- The Arts Director referred the Arches Project in Worcester which had impacted positively on the footfall in Worcester City town centre.
- In response to a question regarding taking the service out into town centres, high streets, implementing roadshows etc. it was confirmed that Worcestershire's computer bus had been purchased and was now the Music Box. Redditch Creative People and Places provided workshops at various workplaces as well as the Rural Touring Programme which went out to village halls. The Assistant Director for Communities confirmed that there was more to be done but all needed to be costed and budgets considered.

In summarising the discussion, the Chairman made the following main points:

- It was acknowledged that this report was an update and that the footfall figures for September were pleasing. It was important however, to measure success.
- It was agreed that a schedule of events for the Hive would be provided to the Panel.
- The Panel would receive a further update in November 2023 which would include more data on the services provided, success measures and details about the impact of the service.

The CMR for Communities acknowledged the fantastic increase in visitor numbers for April to September but was concerned about the impact of the cost of living crisis on these numbers continuing to increase. The CMR confirmed that entrance fees would be reviewed to ensure that they were affordable and would hope to see visitor numbers continuing to increase. In addition, there would be a drive on the marketing offer to showcase the County's assets such as the Commandery, Worcester.

390 Performance Monitoring

The Panel was provided with Quarter 2 (July – September 2022) performance information for services relating to Commercial and Change.

The Chairman introduced the report referring to a Power-Bi and the web link which had been provided to the Panel as part of a trial. There were a number of technical issues to be resolved before the Power-Bi could be used in a public meeting but the Chairman was keen that these issues were resolved as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the format of the information provided in the Agenda Pack before the Panel was in a better format and easier to understand.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- Future reports would include information relating to Bikeability.
- A Member referred to a previous suggestion relating to the registration of deaths made within 5 days and whether it had been possible to share with all GP's, performance information relating to this target. The Assistant Director for Communities agreed to consider this request.
- It was confirmed that the sickness data provided in the report was cumulative and would be labelled as such for future reports.
- With regard to the Countryside Service, it was confirmed that an asset review would be undertaken to assess the wear and tear on countryside centres and parks since lockdown. Some work such as repairing fences had been done by volunteers but more details on the equipment review was requested for the Panel.

The Strategic Director for Commercial and Change confirmed that the next report presented to the Panel was likely to still be in a written form (rather than

Power-Bi). It was however, confirmed that the technical issues relating to Power-Bi were being investigated.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication was pushing to make data more accessible and the development of the County Council website was an example of this.

The Chairman thanked the CMR for Corporate Services and Communication for his support and reiterated the importance of resolving the technical issues around Power-Bi as soon as possible.

391 Corporate Procurement Strategy Overview

The Panel was provided with an overview of the Corporate Procurement Strategy for the Council.

The Strategic Director for Commercial and Change introduced the Report and the Assistant Director for Transformation and Commercial highlighted some of the key areas.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- In response to a question about paragraph 1.2.3 (Financial Benefits and Return on Investment) and how this encouraged a competitive market to provide value for money. The Panel was informed that the Strategy was about rationalising the supply base and a competitive process was in place to identify the supplier that would be the best from a commercial perspective, from that a relationship could be developed over the length of the contract.
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication (CMR Corporate Services) explained that it was vital to ensure value for money for residents through sound commercial procurement decisions, especially given the current inflationary pressures. The CMR Corporate Services was confident that the Council was working at the right level.
- With regard to paragraph 1.2.4 (Level Up and Sustainability), a Member suggested that all of the Council's contracts should contain environmental targets and a Climate Strategy demonstrating the aim to get to net zero by 2050. The CMR Corporate Services acknowledged the importance and priority of achieving the net zero target, which needed to be balanced against achieving value for money. Work was also being undertaken to look at the carbon footprint for the supply chain.
- With regard to social value, it was confirmed this was part of the Plan, which would be considered by the Panel in January 2023. The existing social value policy was in need of reinvigorating and work would continue to ensure that social value was part of the core work over the next 3 years.
- A Member suggested that KPIs around environmental targets should be added to the Performance Dashboard. It was agreed that this would be

considered outside of the meeting to agree which was the most appropriate Scrutiny Panel for this information to be provided to.

- The CMR Corporate Services advised there were plans in place for mandatory training for all staff on commercial awareness.
- Small and micro businesses could engage in the procurement system through the dynamic purchasing system which allowed any suppliers who satisfied the criteria, the opportunity to bid on the smaller value items or activities. This process invited greater competition and engagement with smaller businesses and also enabled money to be spent locally.
- The Panel was advised there were measurable KPIs within the Procurement Strategy.

A further update would be provided to the Panel in November 2023 and the Procurement Service Strategy Delivery action plan would be provided at the January 2023 meeting.

392 Work Programme

The Panel considered its work programme and agreed to add the following items:

- Corporate Procurement Action Plan for January 2023 meeting
- Review of Museums, Arts and Culture Strategy 2022/23 to November 2023 meeting.
- Update on the Procurement Service Strategy Delivery Plan for November

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm

Chairman