

Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

7 September 2015

ACT LOCAL IN WORCESTERSHIRE - PROGRESS

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member for Localism and Communities, and the Head of Community and Environment are invited to provide an update on progress on Act Local.

Background

Scrutiny

2. The OSPB considered Act Local in November 2013. Subsequently, 'Strengthening Act Local' was included on the scrutiny work programme 2014.
3. A scrutiny of Volunteering and Community, to look at how the Council can enable formal volunteering and good citizenship in support of greater community resilience, was also proposed. Some scrutiny has already been done on this in relation to food banks and libraries, and volunteering is also an aspect of the digital inclusion scrutiny. Volunteering issues were considered by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel as part of its discussions on Act Local on 3 September 2014. The Panel (now the Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel) agreed to monitor progress in 12 months time.

Act Local

4. Act Local in Worcestershire really means people coming together to do things for themselves. To work it needs people to use their time, ideas and skills to make things better for themselves and their local community. The Council aims to inspire people to get involved by sharing examples of the great work already happening across Worcestershire, and by sign posting people to sources of help, information and advice.
5. In September last year the Panel was advised that The Act Local in Worcestershire framework identified four key areas which are crucial to delivering this vision:
 - Community Leadership (role of local members)
 - Community Offer (new ways of delivering services)
 - Community Rights to challenge to deliver services and bid for assets
 - Communication (working with partners, engagement and feedback)
6. As the Council's budgets continue to reduce, the Act Local Framework provides a methodology by which local communities – in partnership with the County Council –

can sustain services. The Act Local Framework (Communities), is attached at Appendix 1.

Purpose of the meeting

7. The Panel is asked to consider the Act Local update on progress and in doing so may wish to explore the following areas:

- Progress on the Volunteering Strategy (in partnership with the third sector). How the Act Local approach continues to be embedded across services and how the Council facilitates volunteering and good citizenship?
- Progress on how the Act Local approach is being publicised and how communities are engaged in it? What are the risks to the Council if the approach is not fully implemented and how are these being mitigated?
- Progress on Project Optimise (working together with districts to reduce unnecessary overlap and spend on non-personal services)
- Progress on the community right to challenge bid to deliver Emergency Planning Services. Have there been other bids and if so how are these progressing?
- Members had asked to see lists of buildings in each district for which the community has a right to bid. These are accessible from this link:
http://www.actlocalworcestershire.org/actlocal/info/18/your_community_rights/18/comcommun_right_to_bid
- The development of Community Transport contracts.
- How relationships with Parish & Town Councils are developing and how the Council supports the County Association of Local Council's (CALC)
- How Parishes might benefit from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), a mechanism for developer contributions to contribute towards infrastructure needed to support the development of an area.
- Last September, it was understood that the benefits system discouraged the unemployed from volunteering as an unemployed person who would like to volunteer for more than 16 hours per week would not be able to claim job seekers allowance, as they would not be available for work. Has there been any progress on changing the rules so that claimants volunteering for more than 16 hours might still get their allowance?
- Also on 3 September last year, Members discussed Governance arrangements and asked about further details of the Membership of various groups and how these fed into and related to each other.

8. The Panel is asked to determine:

- (a) whether there are any issues which should be the subject of future scrutiny
- (b) whether it wishes to make any comments to the Cabinet Member.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Act Local in Worcestershire – Communities

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and Minutes of

- Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board - 13 November 2013, 9 April 2014
- Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 3 September 2014

All of which are available on the Council's website at

<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/democratic-services/minutes-and-agendas.aspx>