



People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park,
Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Thursday, 16 June 2016.

Present:

David Walsh (Chairman)

Steve Butler, Ronald Coatsworth, Fred Drane, William Trite, Michael Turnbull and Kate Wheller.

Members Attending

Deborah Croney, Robert Gould, Jill Haynes under Standing Order 54(1)

Trevor Jones

Paul Kimber, County Councillor for Portland Tophill district – minute numbers 9 and 10.

Officer Attending: Helen Coombes (Interim Director for Adult and Community Services), Mike Harries (Director for Environment and the Economy), Steve Hedges (Group Finance Manager), Paul Leivers (Head of Early Help and Community Services), Mark Taylor (Group Manager - Governance and Assurance), Anne Salter (Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Performance) and Rebecca Guest (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

(Notes:(1) These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on **Tuesday, 11 October 2016.**)

Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the new overview and scrutiny committee and introduced the new Interim Director for Adult and Community Services. He advised members that the revised meetings were a more effective way of working and had been refocused to enable more discussion and debate. Success would be limited only by the members themselves. He encouraged all members to take ownership of agenda items and advised that while training had been given on 26 May 2016, there would be further opportunities for more. The new committee style was a tool for members to achieve their best for their communities.

Apologies for Absence

1 Apologies for absence were received from Barrie Cooper, Spencer Flower, Ros Kayes, Mary Khan and David Jones.

Code of Conduct

2 There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

With reference to minute 4, Fred Drane confirmed that he had no disclosable pecuniary interest to declare but that he was a carer for his wife and they used carer services.

Public Participation

3 Public Speaking

There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

A public statement from the Friends of Sturminster Newton Library was received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2). The Chairman advised that in the absence of members of the public at the meeting, this statement would be taken at the relevant agenda item (Mobile Library Service – minute 9). The statement is attached to these minutes as Annexure 1.

Petitions

There were no petitions received at the meeting in accordance with the County Council's Petition Scheme.

Terms of Reference

- 4 Members noted the terms of reference for the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Induction

- 5 The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance gave members a presentation, 'Making a Difference to People's Lives', which focused on how to effectively use the overview and scrutiny functions.

He highlighted the new committee structure and the importance of a member led approach, noting that training for members and senior officers had already been provided, but more may be needed. He also referred to an Overview and Scrutiny Guide that had been produced and circulated to support transition to the new arrangements. It was explained that this was a very new and different approach in order to help members and officers gain a holistic view of the outcome priorities of the County Council and to work closely together to improve the lives of residents and communities we served.

The use of Policy Development Panels and Task and Finish groups was highlighted in order to understand more about how members could make a difference and to allow work to progress in a timely manner outside of formal committee meetings. The overview and scrutiny committees were now cross cutting committees across the authority and a one council view had been taken.

The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance focussed members' attention on the delivery of outcomes and highlighted the 4 overarching principles which the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had established to guide the work of the new committee:-

- Doing less – but doing it more thoroughly
- When selecting topics there must be a clear link to the corporate plan outcomes, supported by a clear rationale and prioritised accordingly
- Topics must be clearly and concisely scoped to ensure a structured review process
- Reviews should deliver clear conclusions and recommendations for improvement that Executive can consider leading to robust outcomes

He briefly reviewed the Committee's broad terms of reference and the Chairman reaffirmed that the Committee shouldn't duplicate the work of other committees, but the opportunity was there to consider like subjects from different angles, such as housing for better health.

The Interim Director for Adult and Community Services also gave members a presentation to highlight the range of topics that they might consider to review and scrutinise. She reminded them of the wide ranging terms of reference and asked that the term "people of all ages" be used to more accurately describe the age range within the Committee's remit.

The Interim Director referred to the real opportunity to respond and develop plans for the future to ensure communities were safe, healthy, independent and prosperous. She commented on the increasing demand on health and care services and highlighted that issues such as unemployment could be masking other such as poor mental health.

The Head of Strategy, Partnerships and Performance in Children's Services commented on the number of children in care and the associated costs of this. She confirmed this subject overlapped with the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but stated that they may not have the capacity to consider a review of the care homes. Members may therefore wish to consider life-long outcomes and what officers were doing to support vulnerable children. It was very clear that in order to prevent high costs, early intervention and prevention was key.

In response to a question regarding the budget available to the Committee and supporting officers to carry out their overview and scrutiny role, the Group Manager for Governance and Assurance pointed to the scrutiny scoping and planning document template that included an initial assessment of the level of potential resources and any specific budget requirement associated with proposed scrutiny or overview work. Whilst it was agreed that any budget requirements must be proportionate in terms of the anticipated return on investment, it was important that the committees have the ability to commission the work it feels necessary to deliver against its terms of reference. Equally the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would discuss and seek to ensure that an appropriate level of resources were available to support the committees in their work and are allocated and channelled effectively across the various committees.

Noted

The Corporate Plan - Priorities for the Committee

- 6 The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance highlighted the Corporate Plan and suggested that members used this as an important background document and focus for discussion when populating the Committee's work programme.

Noted

Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) Context Report

- 7 Members considered a report which provided background and context in relation to Outcomes Based Accountability which was a key methodology that the Authority had adopted.

Also included within the report was a sample scoping document and report which had been prepared, for illustrative purposes only, in order for members to see how a planning and scoping document could look in relation to helping support the future overview and scrutiny review work of the committee.

The Committee highlighted the importance of taking a holistic review of outcomes against the various services when making decisions and working within defined and constrained financial limits. It was vital that an informed view be taken on the resultant impacts when considering competing priorities and necessary funding cuts. Agreement was shared that the Committee should look more carefully at the causes and forces associated with issues to ensure a recommended resolution did not simply move a problem to another service area. The Group Manager for Governance and Assurance confirmed the methodology outlined within the report would help with this process.

Members commented on the complexity of young people's concerns and the impact these could have on services and financial resources long term, if early intervention was ineffective.

A member suggested that the Committee look at the quality of care, in conjunction with the NHS, with particular relevance to the different service providers, pay and bidding process for contracts. It was noted that the Authority was not good at resilience for care services. Services had to be developed, not just within the Authority's control, but the whole community needed to be encouraged to play its part.

The Cabinet member for Adult Health, Care and Independence stated she believed that the Committee could help build and promote communities to have their own resilience.

Noted

Work Programme

8 The Committee were provided with the opportunity to develop the Committee's draft work programme and to influence proceedings. The Committee suggested the following topics (listed in no particular order):

- Demographic pressures on services – impacts of an increasing population
- Dorset Partnership for Older People Programme – both role & remit; and Community capacity building (community enablement and resilience)
- Social isolation – all ages
- Community Capacity Building

Other issues discussed during the course of the meeting included:

- Community Offer for Living and Learning – Working Group
- Budget Cuts – Prioritisation and Impact Assessment to Corporate Plan Outcomes
- Early Help and Prevention - Children and Young People
- Cost of Care
- The Quality of Care Provided - in conjunction with NHS
- Adoption and Fostering
- Housing – working along-side the Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Special Educational Needs - accessibility and transport
- Support for Carers
- Technology - connectivity to reduce the impacts of loneliness and isolation
- Community groups – maximisation and development of, better advertisement of

Noted

Mobile Library Service

9 The Chairman informed the Committee that written statements had been received from the following parties and he read these out in full:

- Ian Gardner, County Councillor for Chickerell and Chesil Bank division,
- Pauline Batstone, County Councillor for Blackmore Vale division,
- Ros Kayes, County Councillor for Bridport division; and
- Friends of Sturminster Newton Library.

A copy of the statements were distributed at meeting and are attached to these minutes as Annexure 1.

The Committee considered a report by the Interim Director for Adult and Community Services that asked members to consider how mobile library services would be

provided in the future. The County Council's Medium Term Financial Plan included savings for the library service and changes to the service were therefore necessary. The report focussed on proposed change for the mobile library service and considered the impact of any change on members of the public.

The Head of Early Help and Community Services advised that the proposal within the report would allow the County Council to provide access to library services to those who could not access the service in any other way, within the financial resources available. Through the Dorset Partnership for Older People Programme (POPP) people who were isolated in rural villages had been identified and it was proposed that POPPs would be greater mobilised to help deliver services to these people. The use of Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) volunteers would also be extended.

Consultation with the public and communities had been carried out during April and May 2016 and the Chairman congratulated officers on the way in which this had been carried out. The Head of Early Help and Community Services reviewed the highlights of the consultation responses and advised that the unusual timescale (December 2016 to March 2017) was to ensure that no service was withdrawn until an alternative via communities themselves, was available. A phased approach was therefore proposed.

The County Councillor for Portland Tophill district, Paul Kimber, was invited to address the Committee. He advised that although he had concerns regarding the proposed closures he acknowledged the need for the proposals. He then commented on the work undertaken by friends groups and he asked whether every library had one. He asked members to consider how they could encourage libraries to set one up and reach isolated people, both in rural and urban areas.

Members sought further clarification as to how services to the most vulnerable and isolated would continue, and they were satisfied that steps would be in place via the use of community groups, RVS, POPP or friends and neighbours before any withdrawal of services were made. They asked officers to speak to existing staff to identify vulnerable people to ensure that no one slipped through the cracks.

Some members gave examples where community volunteers in their local areas had enriched both the library service and community living. There was a general acknowledgement that communities had to reclaim responsibility for their services and members were asked to encourage community schemes. The Head of Early Help and Community Services asked members to note that the required level of assistance by the voluntary sector and the pace at which services could be out in place was unknown at this early stage, hence the longer lead in time for withdrawal of services.

Recommended

That the Cabinet be recommended to:

1. note the consultation responses about the proposed changes to the mobile library service;
2. maintain the mobile library service provided by the County Council to residential homes and sheltered accommodation units; and
3. approve the closure of the public mobile library service by end of December 2016 (earliest) and by end of March 2017 (latest) and the development of alternative access to library services where required within the resources available.

Reason for recommendations

To meet the council's Medium Term Financial Plan, ensuring that the County Council achieves a balanced budget.

Community Offer for Living and Learning

- 10 The Chairman informed the Committee that a written statement had been received from the County Councillor for Chickerell and Chesil Bank division, Ian Gardner, which he read out in full to the Committee. A copy of the statement was distributed at meeting and is attached to these minutes as Annexure 1.

The Committee considered a report by the Director for Children's Services that sought members' comments and contribution to the further development of the Community Offer for Living and Learning. The report contained a draft outline business case for the proposals that reviewed how and where service users and local communities could access services in future. The approach required working with community organisations and other public services, with pilot areas to explore and develop the approach suggested in Weymouth, Portland, Beaminster, Blandford, and possibly Ferndown.

The Head of Early Help and Community Services reviewed the ambitious proposals and emphasised that it was not a property programme. He acknowledged that one size would not fit all and work would be undertaken with local people to enable the Authority to respond appropriately and to enable local communities to help themselves. The future direction is for more multi-functional buildings and fewer single purpose buildings. Further details would be informed by engaging with councillors and partners in pilot areas, helping to identify opportunities for action and further developing the business case and what was affordable.

Member engagement and contributions to the approach was envisaged in a number of other ways, including The Way We Work Board and engagement with Cabinet Members on specific areas as appropriate. A further report would be presented to the Committee in October 2016 following the pilot period to detail the final outline business case.

The County Councillor for Portland Tophill district, Paul Kimber, was invited to address the Committee. He spoke to the Committee as the Member Champion for promotion of learning through life and advised that he fully endorsed the proposals and recommended the Committee approve the report's recommendations.

Members discussed the report, commenting positively on the efficient use of the Authority's resources, both people and buildings. They asked officers to ensure that the final business plan was forward thinking, particularly in regards to potential building availability within a future unitary authority. Members agreed that the proposals, if managed appropriately, would serve the community well and reduce expenditure.

A member commented on the importance of a 'one stop shop' to certain individuals who needed to access a range of information in a short period of time. He asked whether this could be extended in order to offer some form of resettlement support for prisoners recently released and whether information could be given to prisoners before their release date.

The Head of Early Help and Community Services advised officers were already working closely with a number of Cabinet Members and also with a number of local members. He welcomed the additional input of Committee members to ensure both a local and strategic balance of views were received. When considering how members could be engaged in the process, it was agreed that a members' working group would be appropriate.

Resolved

That a member working group be set up to engage in the development of the Community Offer. That group to consist of Councillors Fred Drane, Steve Butler, David Walsh and Kate Wheller.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet be recommended to:

1. approve the development of the Community Offer for Living and Learning, enabling officers to prepare the business case as well as engage both locally and on a countywide level;
2. approve progress in the pilot areas;
3. delegate powers to the Director for Children's Services to proceed with action in the pilot areas, if appropriate, after consultation with the Cabinet member for Organisational Development and Transformation, other Cabinet members as appropriate and the local County Councillor(s), subject to the Section 151 Officer being satisfied that there was a sound financial basis; and
4. delegate powers to the Director for Environment and the Economy after consultation with the Cabinet member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways and the local County Councillor(s) to enter into such property transactions (whether by acquisition or disposal), as necessary, to make appropriate progress with the introduction of living and learning centres.

Reason for Recommendations

The approach was in line with the Council's vision of working together for a strong and successful Dorset. Was part of the action required as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and contributed to the four corporate outcomes of Safe, Healthy, Independent and Prosperous.

Questions from County Councillors

11 No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 12.15 pm

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Written statements from County Councillors

Agenda Item Number 9 : Mobile Library Service

Ian Gardner (08.06.16; 10:02)

The mobile Library service will be missed by a few in Chesil villages but many can access the Chickerell Library.

Pauline Batstone (14.06.16; 20:35)

I write to support the concerns expressed by the Secretary of the Friends of Sturminster Library in her statement on behalf of the Friends to your committee. Rural isolation is increasing for older people as facilities are withdrawn. If the Mobile Library service ceases, I hope that the Council will look at how the gaps in provision can be filled, in particular by working with the community transport schemes to bring people to books or books to people.

Ros Kayes (15.06.16; 15:11)

I have grave concerns about proposed changes to the mobile library service.

The savings to be made here are small in respect of the overall divisional budget but the impact of the changes would be significant for those unable to access libraries by car. These include our most vulnerable residents. Mostly the elderly living alone but also young families without transport.

Transport is the issue. With cuts to bus subsidies those living in villages will be even more isolated. Were buses to be available it would only be the chronically disabled who would be unable to access books. The cuts add two extra groups of the disadvantaged. Both in terms of early years education and mental wellbeing for the elderly and disabled, access to reading material is essential. I think these proposals will have knock on effects on a number of other services and we should be thinking in a more joined up way. We should continue the service as it currently operates.

Agenda Item Number 10 : Community Offer for Living and Learning

Ian Gardner (08.06.16; 10:02)

Not sure why Portland is considered and Chickerell not which is a growing Town and houses the largest employment area outside of Bournemouth & Poole. Having said that I am not that sold on the concept in any case.

Written statement from members of the public

Agenda Item Number 9 : Mobile Library Service

Friends of Sturminster Newton Library (Michaela Knowles, Secretary) (14.06.16; 20:07)

We oppose the cessation of North Dorset's public mobile service for the following reasons:

- Lack of public transport means those without cars lose their independence, making them unnecessarily reliant on others;
- The mobile library is one of the few facilities left in many villages which brings people together socially, thus reducing isolation;
- Consideration needs to be given instead to the alternative option of rationalising library provision in urban areas, where there are good transport links to take users to central libraries and far shorter distances involved (see clusters on map below).

