



Communities
Overview Committee

22 January 2018

2.00 pm

Item

Public

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
27 NOVEMBER 2017
2.00 - 3.15 PM**

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak

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Present

Councillor Cecilia Motley (Chairman)

Councillors Nick Hignett (Vice Chairman), Andy Boddington, Ted Clarke, Rob Gittins, Roger Hughes, Vivienne Parry and Leslie Winwood

10 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors Tina Woodward and Keith Roberts. Councillor Roy Aldcroft substituted for Councillor Woodward.

11 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

12 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2017 were confirmed as a correct record.

13 Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public.

14 Member Question Time

There were no questions from members.

15 Update on Police and Crime Commissioners' Proposal To Take on Collective Governance of Fire and Rescue Services in West Mercia

The Performance Manager reported that the Police and Crime Commissioner had now submitted a Final Business Case on his proposal to take on the governance of the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Service. The PCC's website contained the Final Business Case and a series of documents including the results of the consultation. (available from <https://www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk/>)

Members were reminded that in addition to a formal response to the consultation, Shropshire Council and other Councils in West Mercia had also written to the Home Office Minister expressing concerns about the proposal. This meant that it would now have to go to an independent review before progressing to a decision.

During discussion, concerns raised by members included:

- the Final Business Case was very different to the one previously presented to the Committee by the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- The new document combined all the savings for the police service and the two fire services and stated that £30million would be saved over 10 years, £3m a year from all services.
- In the Business Case the PCC stated that he was confident that he had addressed the principal concerns of the local authorities.
- The document did not acknowledge savings that were already planned and new savings would be accomplished through amalgamation, including through having only one control room at Hindlip
- The intention was for Police and Fire Services to share premises throughout the three counties but the proposals did not say where there would be closures, or how much would be saved in Shropshire.
- The proposals did not set out how the precept would be worked out for each of the three areas.
- The PCC claimed overwhelming support for his original proposals and did not reference the views of Parish and Town Councils or the results of a survey conducted by Shropshire Star in which 70% had said they did not support them.

The Committee hoped that it would be possible for the Independent Person to be informed of these concerns.

The Chairman suggested that all members of the Committee look at what had been submitted to the Home Office by the PCC. She also asked the Performance Manager to identify the timetable to in order to understand whether further Scrutiny input would be helpful. It was agreed that consideration be given as to whether it would be helpful to include this in the Committee's future work programme.

16 Environmental Maintenance Grant Task and Finish Group Report

In introducing the report of the Environmental Maintenance Grant Task and Finish Group, the Chair reported that the Group had taken a new approach to Task and Finish work. During the course of a one day session it had considered reports and evidence, heard from witnesses and formulated its recommendations. This had been very successful but

had only been possible due to the hard work of officers in preparing briefing materials ahead of the day. All members of the group commented that they had been extremely well briefed, and particularly thanked Steve Brown, Ffion Horton and Kate Garner for their hard work.

The Group had considered the financial implications of making Environmental Maintenance Grants available. The Programme was funded from the Highways Revenue budget and the Group had been particularly anxious to establish that the work undertaken through the Grant was adding value to the work of the highways team. The Group established that it generally was but that the grant had not always been used in the right way and had sometimes been used to top up Core Budgets rather than used for a discrete area of operation.

The Group also noted its appreciation of the honesty of officer views provided on the day and the value in hearing opposing views and evidence supporting both sides. Witnesses had said that the Grant Programme sometimes resulted in a speedier response than was available from the highways team and felt that it saved them from coming out to deal with a relatively minor problem. Officers had pointed out that where grants could increase local responsiveness this was only by top slicing the highways revenue budget and the implications of this should be understood. If this amount was retained in the highways revenue budget then there would be more ability to carry out reactive works.

The Highways, Transport and Environment Commissioning Manager acknowledged the amount was a relatively small percentage of the highways operational budget but drew attention to the difficulties of staff under pressure to reduce services to fit the budget available, which meant that some very difficult decisions would be needed.

The Committee commented positively on the recommendations and agreed that the Grant had other value as it helped to encourage generation of other money, gave Parishes a sense of authority and helped them feel connected to Shropshire Council.

At the conclusion of its work, the Group had decided to recommend that the Environmental Maintenance Support Programme be continued but that changes be made to its design and deliverability. Recommendations included a maximum of £1500 per parish, that criteria should be tightened and that the amount should always be matched

RESOLVED

That the Committee endorse the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group set out in the report on page 6.

That the recommendations be presented to Cabinet with a request for approval, subject to consultation.

17 Task and Finish Group - Local Joint Committees

RESOLVED:

To establish a Task and Finish Group on Local Joint Committees and agree the proposed terms of reference.

18 Future Work Programme

The Committee considered the Strategic Scrutiny Work Programme which had been drawn up following work programme discussions with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the summer. Discussion particularly covered when to consider the following items:

Crime and Disorder Strategy – this had recently been updated and it was agreed timely for the Committee to receive a briefing with a view to identifying one or more priorities from the strategy to track. It was agreed that initial consideration be given to this at the 22 January 2017 meeting

Resilient Communities and Healthy Lives – this also came under the remit of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a decision would be needed on how to take this work forward. It would be important to ensure all relevant strategies were aligned. It was agreed to give initial consideration to this at the 12 March 2017 meeting

Members discussed the role of the Committee in adding value, as a critical friend and in holding the executive to account. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer emphasised that although there was a strategic scrutiny work programme which would help inform decision making, there was nothing to stop any other issues needing scrutiny attention being raised, any member could make a suggestion for a work programme addition.

Members were informed that there would be another work programme session in the Spring and were encouraged to attend the Scrutiny Training Session running the next day.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: