



Committee and Date

Item

**1**

Public

## **SOUTH WEST SHROPSHIRE LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE**

### **NOTE OF DECISIONS AND ACTIONS STEMMING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 7.00 PM – 9.00 PM**

**AT  
LYDHAM VILLAGE HALL, LYDHAM**

**Responsible Officer** Mathew Mead  
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#### **Committee Members Present:**

##### **Shropshire Council**

Heather Kidd	Chirbury & Worthen (Chair)
Charlotte Barnes	Bishop's Castle
Nigel Hartin	Clun

##### **Town/Parish Councils**

John Croxton	Clunbury Parish Council
Jonathan Roberts	Clungunford PC
Jane Carroll	Bishops Castle Town Council
Valerie Whately	Bettws-y-Crwyn Parish Council
Sandra Davies	Newcastle on Clun Parish Council
Ian Graves	Bedstone and Bucknell Parish Council
Andrew Craig	Chirbury Parish Council
Oliver Goode	Myndtown Parish Council
Godfrey May	Lydbury North Parish Council
Brian Ince	Worthen with Shelve Parish Council

#### **Officers Present:**

Mathew Mead, Community Enablement Officer, Shropshire Council  
George Candler, Shropshire Council, Director of Commissioning  
Councillor Steve Charmley, Portfolio Holder for Business, IP&E, Culture and Commissioning

28 members of the public were in attendance

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Mathew Mead welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Gordon Lewis (Mainstone); Andrew Beavan (Llanfairwaterdine Parish Council); James McVicar (Clun Town Council with Chapel Lawn)

#### **2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2015/16**

As this was the first public meeting of 2015/16 the positions of chair and vice chair for the year needed to be voted for by the Committee.

Charlotte Barnes was nominated and elected as Chair with Jonathan Roberts nominated and elected as Vice Chair for the coming year

**3. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

No declarations were declared

**4. Notes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the previous LJC on which was held on 12<sup>th</sup> March.

**5. Presentation – George Chandler and Steve Charmley**

**Future of services in the Local Joint Committee including SpArc Leisure Centre; Community College; and Library Services**

George thanked the Committee for their invitation to speak to the meeting.

Commissioning – where Shropshire Council commissioned organisations or groups to run services on their behalf – was not new in Shropshire and had been happening for some time. However it was now moving into new service areas, and different models of commissioning are emerging. There are two main reasons for this development. One is to reflect differences in localities where community groups maybe better placed to run services; and the second is external financial pressures the Council is facing

George explained that over the last few years Shropshire Council had made a range of savings, and were currently in the second year of a three year programme to save £80 million. Some service such as education, were ring-fenced from these savings which meant the pressure to reduce spending was falling more heavily on other service areas. The latest budget suggested that this period of austerity was likely to continue for at least the next three year's, and in all probability the Central Government Revenue Support Grant to local councils would effectively end during that period. The Council needed to become self-sustaining from the revenue it receives through Council tax and income in gains from running services. The Council needed to focus on the services it has a statutory duty to deliver, whilst looking for new ways of delivering other services which were important to the public. But the days of assuming the Council will always provide a service are coming to an end.

The demographics of Shropshire are also a big influence on Council spending. With an older than average population the county has extra care costs, which as the result of the Care Act the Council has a responsibility to meet. These costs are predicted to rise in the future.

At the same time changes to government legislation is allowing smaller town and parish councils to take on more services, and community groups can also ask to run services. These local delivery models can provide local solutions and often be run more efficiently at a local level.

Members of the Committee asked what percentage of the budget had the Council had to save over the last 6 years, and what impact this had on staff.

George responded that over a 6 year period the Council had seen its budget reduce by around 35%. However due to some service areas being ring-fenced from cuts these reductions had resulted in a bigger impact to some service areas than others. In that time period the Council staff levels had reduced by about 1000. They now employed 3,500 staff but some of these could well transfer to new service providers in the future.

The Council therefore faced a series of challenges and were looking at different models of delivery to be able to maintain services. Commissioning services through partnership working was one area to achieve this, and another was the Council generating more of its own income. This had seen the development of IP&E.

Steve Charmley explained that IP&E is a trading company run by the Council. By placing services such as communications, planning, environmental health and business design into this company it opened up the opportunities to bid for external contracts and earn income. It has taken 2-3 years to set up, but in 2015/16 is likely to have a turnover of £12 million. It is Council owned and should not be seen as privatisation by the back door. Further Councils services, such as Shire Services could move into IP&E in the future.

George then went on to speak about some more specific challenges at a local level. Sports and Leisure Centres were being looked at across Shropshire. Such centres were commissioned to groups such as Teme Leisure (in Bishop's Castle) to run. The Council is having to make savings from its leisure budget, so are working with leisure providers to look at new delivery models. This could see opening times at Leisure Centres reduced, or the range of services available – such as the swimming pool reviewed.

Members of the public stressed that having access to leisure service in Bishop's Castle, were really important to the physical and mental health of the community, and cuts to the services available would have a long term cost to public health.

Alan Doust from Bishop's Castle Community College also spoke and said the schools were also affected by changes to government funding. An example of this was Joint Use Funding where schools shared a site with a leisure centre. Changes to this funding by Central Government meant that the Community College would lose about £60,000 over the next three years. This together with other issues such as lower intake levels of new pupils was putting real pressure on school budgets. Alan acknowledged that the Council was in a difficult position with funding, but needed to consider that delivering all services in rural areas had a higher cost than in urban areas.

George agreed with the points the public and Alan made. However the Council was in a very difficult position as they want to maintain services but have to meet the costs savings needed over the next few years. Some difficult decisions have to be taken.

Steve Charmley agreed and said that Shropshire Council would soon be undertaking a countywide consultation with the public to ask their opinions on what services the Council needed to focus on in the future and where cost savings could be made. However these were difficult decisions with no easy answers. They were also

encouraging community groups to speak to them if they were interested in delivering services, and gave the example of some libraries which are now being run by Community Groups such as at Craven Arms. Consultations were about to start on a similar model for Bishop's Castle library

Committee members and the public asked whether reducing costs of running leisure centres was being looked at. A lot of the cost of a leisure centre, particularly a pool, was through energy costs.

George responded that this was being looked at in Bishop's Castle and other sites. Energy efficiency was important and sites might also be able to generate energy to sell back to the national grid and generate some income. Investing in renewable energy was something the Council was looking at where it produced long term savings.

Members of the public felt that whilst commissioning of services did offer the Council opportunities to improve services, they needed to have very good contracting skills and knowledge. Many providers are multi-national companies with big legal teams who can challenge contracts if things are not working well. Oliver Goode stated that outcomes associated with adult social care are very complex and a wide range of data needs to be collected to monitor these services.

George agreed with this and said the Council had to get the right contract for commissioning to work correctly. They were investing in staff skills to support the new commissioning process and were also investigating developing a diploma course with the new university in Shrewsbury. As part of the commissioning process the Council was also encouraging providers of services to say how they themselves would monitor the work, and what outcomes they would achieve. It is a new process for both parties and definitely something Shropshire Council needs to consider carefully.

Committee members gave the example of BT delivering the Broadband Rollout in Shropshire of how a big company can heavily influence a delivery programme.

Steve commented that the BT programme was a large funding programme, so had to comply with EU tendering rules. In phases 1 and 2 the aim had been to deliver the fast broadband speeds to as many properties as possible and get best value for the contract. Phase three will focus on getting the broadband speeds in hard to reach areas up to speed, local solutions will be the way forward for this. Finance isn't always the main issue and technological reasons are also an issue. Shropshire Council was also working with other local authorities to find out how best to work with contractors and get the best value for money.

Committee members suggested that the volunteer and community sector would need to play a big role in this new Commissioning model. What support was available to them to help them deliver services.

George responded that the Community and Volunteer sector was receiving support through Shropshire Council, and also national organisations to help them develop new working models to deliver services. He gave the examples of Craven Arms and Bishop's Castle Libraries where community based organisations are looking to run

the libraries. Funding would still come from Shropshire Council, who would be the responsible body for the funding. But by working in partnership with these organisations cost savings can be made whilst also maintaining important local services.

However there were important issues around staffing, building maintenance and legal responsibilities that community and volunteer groups needed to consider, and it was important Shropshire Council gave support around these areas.

## **6. South West Shropshire Grants Scheme**

The Committee received a report on the status of the grant scheme. £1,500 had now been donated to the scheme, and some further donations were expected.

Since the last meeting two new applications had been received.

The Everest Hall in Llanfairwaterdine had requested a grant of £119.92 to help install new insulation in the hall

Rectory Gardens Lunch Club in Worthen had requested a grant of £150 towards the cost of establishing a computer club to help local residents get online and be able to access financial and benefit services. As part of this application they had also requested that a previous grant of £500 from the LJC for a gardening project, be reallocated to this project.

Both applications were approved by the Committee.

Mathew Mead asked that members of the Committee circulate details of the South West Shropshire Grants scheme to community groups who might be interested in applying.

## **7. Youth Commissioning in South West Shropshire**

A report on the progress of Youth Commissioning was presented to the Committee.

The LJC had £3,000 to allocate to Youth Activities in the area and the LJC would ideally like to support the following activity

- A one night a week youth club in Bishop's Castle
- Outreach work to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour
- Work with Police and Fire Service to reduce accident rates amongst young drivers
- Support volunteer youth clubs in the LJC area

Mathew reported that a tender had been issued to potential providers to quote for the youth club in Bishop's Castle. Interested parties had until 3<sup>rd</sup> August to submit applications which could then be reviewed by the Committee.

It was likely that the costs of running a club in Bishop's Castle would exceed £3,000 so some matched funding maybe required. Jane Carroll said Bishop's Castle Town Council might consider providing some matched funding as long as it could be demonstrated that Bishop's Castle youngsters would benefit from the project.

John Croxton suggested that there was little youth provision in the Clun Valley area, and this work didn't really address that. Mathew said this was a concern as the LJC area was so large. However the funding was limited and so the Committee would have to consider where best to allocate the limited resources they had.

## **8. Public Question Time**

No questions were received from the public

## **9. Future Agenda Items**

The Committee requested that Future Fit should be discussed at a future meeting, as decisions on the future of health care in Shropshire, particularly the location of A&E units was likely to be taken later in the year.

A number of Committee members also expressed a need for an update on Planning in Shropshire. This should cover the wider policy issues, and also issues around Enforcement.

The Community Enablement Officer would look to arrange speakers on these topics for future meetings

## **10. Date of next meetings**

Full public meetings were scheduled for

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October and Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February

Planning meetings for the Committee only were set for 24<sup>th</sup> September and 21<sup>st</sup> January

There may also be the need to hold additional planning meetings to review the results of the Youth Commissioning tenders.

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: