

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 16 July 2014

Present:

Members: Councillor T Skipper (Chair)
Councillor J Clifford (Deputy Chair)
Councillor G Crookes (substitute for Councillor Blundell)
Councillor G Duggins
Councillor R Sandy
Councillor B Singh
Councillor S Thomas

Employees (by Directorate):

P Hibberd, People Directorate
C Hickin, People Directorate
L Knight, Resources Directorate
S C Lam, People Directorate
J Venn, Chief Executive's Directorate
A West, Resources Directorate

Apologies: Councillor J Blundell, J Innes and K Taylor and Councillors
Lucas and Townshend (Cabinet Members)

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th April, 2014 were signed as a true record.
There were no matters arising.

3. Council Plan - Performance Report 2013-14

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director, Policy, Partnership and Performance on the Council Plan end of year performance report for 2013/14. The Committee also considered a report of the Chief Executive on the Council Plan which had been considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 8th July, 2014.

The new Council Plan set out the strategic direction and priorities for the next ten years and was approved by the Council in January, 2014. Through its plans for growth, the Council wanted the City to become more prosperous and to meet the needs of its citizens.

Progress against the priorities and objectives of the Plan were reported on a half-yearly basis and the report submitted summarised progress during 2013/14 in relation to the plan priorities and a set of key headline indicators. Where

applicable, contextual information was provided to describe what was happening in Coventry and how this compared with elsewhere.

The Council's equality objectives had also been revised in light of the new Council Plan and some of the headline indicators included within the report were already equality indicators. It was noted that a more detailed report would be submitted to the Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities) in September 2014.

The presentation set out the vision and priorities for the next ten years, as detailed under the following areas:

- Globally connected – promoting the growth of a sustainable Coventry economy
- Locally committed – improving the quality of life for Coventry people
- Delivering our priorities – maximising use of assets and strong and involved communities.

The Committee questioned the officers on the key messages from the performance report, matters raised included:

- Coventry's average employment rate for working age residents which was lower than the national average in light of the high number of students in the city. Whether it was possible to have employment information without the inclusion of student details.
- How to increase footfall in the City. It was suggested that more needed to be done to promote Coventry, for example other areas didn't have leaflets promoting the city as a tourist venue.
- A request that the tourism/heritage item scheduled for the meeting of the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) on 28th January, 2015 be brought forward to an earlier meeting.
- A concern about the increase in the number of NEETs aged 16-19 which had increased from 5.2% the previous year to 7.4%. Attention was drawn to the proposal for a joint meeting of Scrutiny Boards (2) and (3) on 18th September to look at the approaches being taken to tackle NEETs.
- Information about the collection of data using the figures for job seekers allowance and the implications of the recent changes in the benefits system
- Responsibility for reporting crime statistics which showed that overall crime had reduced by 1%
- The very high number of children known to social care and the increasing number of referrals
- The potential to have targets for broadband connectivity
- The city's focus for working with certain twin cities for business links
- Concerns about the lack of progress in some areas for improved educational standards and in particular the decrease in the number of good or outstanding secondary schools.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The end of year performance report be noted and the Committee place on record their thanks to the Corporate Performance Team for all their work in producing this accessible and informative report.

(2) Arrangements be put in place for a Member's seminar to consider the Council Plan Performance Report for 2014-15.

(3) For future reports consideration be given to the inclusion of the following:

- a) Unemployment figures excluding students;**
- b) Targets for broadband connectivity.**

4. Dog Control Orders

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, People indicating that the City Council could adopt Dog Control Orders (DCOs) to help manage the problems associated with dogs in public places. The various Orders available were detailed and it was proposed that the Council conducted a public consultation exercise to determine which Orders should be adopted and over which areas of land. The report was also to be considered by the Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities) at his meeting on 4th September, 2014.

In 2007, the Council adopted the Fouling of Land by Dogs Order which allowed authorised officers to issue fixed penalty notices to dog foul offenders in certain circumstances. In recent times the Council had received complaints concerning anti-social behaviour of a minority of irresponsible dog owners. The Council had the option to create the additional following orders, which were currently in force in a number of neighbouring authorities:

- The Dogs on Leads Order
- The Dogs on Leads by Direction Order
- The Dogs Exclusion Order
- The Dogs (Specified Maximum) Order.

It was proposed that the amount of fixed penalty in relation to any offence to the above proposed orders be £80 to be paid within 14 days, reduced to £50 if paid within 10 days.

Members questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- A recognition of the concerns raised and support for the proposal to adopt the additional four DCOs and the planned consultation exercise
- Issues relating to the national framework, the options open to the authority on how this could be applied locally and the problems faced by Coventry
- The extent of the flexibility available to local authorities in relation to the maximum level of fixed penalty notice and any reductions for early payments
- Members were disappointed that the maximum level of the fine was fixed by Government at £80 which they felt did not recognise the relative severity of dog fouling compare to, for example, paper littering
- The suggestion that Councils be given more scope to increase the level of fine with a recommendation that the Cabinet Member lobby the government to this effect
- The advantages and disadvantages of applying a reduction for early payment and whether this undermines the message that the Council took the issue very seriously

- Support for the retention of the early payment, although they also asked for the Cabinet Member to consider the minority view expressed that the early payment reduction be removed for fixed penalty notices specifically in relation to dog fouling
- Details about the application of Dog Control Orders by other neighbouring Councils
- Concerns about dog walkers living outside the boundary who travelled into Coventry's parks to avoid restrictions and recognition of the benefits of a common approach
- The benefits of the Police adopting enforcement powers
- The variations and restrictions that could be applied in introducing in introducing the Orders, including types of locations, numbers of dogs and lengths of leads
- How complaints were dealt with, deployment of enforcement officers and the challenges associated with enforcement
- The suggestion that Friends of Parks groups were included in the consultation.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The report be welcomed and the recommendations on the approach to consultation on the adoption of the four additional Dog Control Orders and the increase in the level of the fixed penalty to £80 for breach of any of the Dog Control Orders, with the provision that this be reduced to £50 if paid within 10 days of issue, be supported.

(2) The Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities) be recommended to:

a) Lobby the Government to seek an increase in the maximum level of the fixed penalty notice for dog fouling, considering that it is a biohazard;

b) Encourage local authorities to adopt the same policies in relation to dealing with irresponsible dog owners to ensure consistency of approach.

5. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies

The Committee considered five reports outlining the work of the following organisations over the preceding twelve months, together with details of attendance by the City Council representatives on those organisations:-

- Coventry Older People's Partnership 2013
- Coventry Learning Disabilities Partnership Board 2013
- West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority 2013-14
- Birmingham Airport Holdings Limited
- West Midlands Employers 2013-2014.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The City Council at their Annual General Meeting continue to nominate representatives to the following Outside Bodies:-

- a) Coventry Older People's Partnership
- b) Coventry Learning Disabilities Partnership Board
- c) West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
- d) Birmingham Airport Holdings Limited
- e) West Midlands Employers.

(2) For all future Report Backs on the Work of Outside Bodies, information be included on the attendance at meetings and all remunerations associated with the appointments.

6. Civic Delegation to the City of Volgograd

The Committee considered a report of the former Lord Mayor, Councillor Crookes which reported back on the civic visit to Volgograd, Russia from 7th to 10th May, 2014. The Coventry delegation had been invited to attend Volgograd's commemorations of the ending of war in Europe in the Second World War. The visit also formed part of the Coventry Volgograd Twin 70 Programme which included projects to promote cultural activity and engagement between both cities with a focus on young people to mark the 70th anniversary of the twinning link in 2014.

The former Lord Mayor reported that Councillors in Volgograd had expressed an interest in having more interaction with Councillors from Coventry. A question was raised as to whether there had been the opportunity to seek to bring about change to the Russian state's current policy towards homosexuality.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The report of the delegation to the City of Volgograd as part of the 70th anniversary celebrations of the twinning link between the cities of Coventry and Volgograd be endorsed.

(2) The recommendation that officers from the Place Directorate should determine what would be required from Coventry to support the Volgograd Twin Cities Park initiative, including any financial implications for the Council, so that this can be considered further by Council, be endorsed.

7. Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted that all outstanding issues had been included in the work programme for the new municipal year, Minute 7 below refers.

8. Scrutiny Work Programme 2014/2015

The Committee considered a briefing note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator appended to which was the 2014/15 work programme for all the Scrutiny Boards and the Committee itself. The issues included had been identified at the first informal meetings of the current municipal year and were subsequently reviewed and amended at an informal meeting of Scrutiny Members on 2nd July, 2014.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The work programme for all the Scrutiny Boards and the Committee itself be noted.

(2) The Tourism/Heritage item scheduled for the meeting of the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) on 28th January, 2015 be brought forward to an earlier meeting.

9. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.50 am)