

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 4 March 2015

Present:

Members: Councillor T Skipper (Chair)
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor J Clifford
Councillor G Duggins
Councillor R Sandy
Councillor B Singh
Councillor K Taylor
Councillor S Thomas

Other Members: Councillors P Hetherton, A Lucas and P Townshend

Other representatives: Claire Bell, West Midlands Police
Ronnie Duggan, Aquarius
Claire Thomas, Recovery Champion

Employees:
G Holmes, Resources Directorate
H Kelly, Chief Executive's Directorate
L Knight, Resources Directorate
I Lahel, People Directorate
T Richardson, Chief Executives Directorate
M Watson, People Directorate

Apologies: Councillors C Fletcher, A Gingell and J Innes

Public Business

50. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared.

51. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th February, 2015 were signed as a true record.

With reference to Minute 44/14 headed 'Welfare Reform' the Committee were informed:

i) Adrian West, Members and Elections Team Manager, had attended the latest meeting of the Working Together on Welfare Group providing an update from the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee meeting informing of the Committee's recommendations. The Group had highlighted their willingness to attend future Committee meetings in the new municipal year.

ii) Letters from the Chair, Councillor Skipper had been drafted for circulation to the city's three MPs and to Martin Buxcey, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) informing of issues which had arisen as a result of benefit sanctions which require national solutions and requesting that consideration be given to making the DWP accountable locally for benefit sanction issues. The Committee's disappointment at the lack of representation from DWP had been highlighted.

iii) A report on the Independent Living Fund was to be submitted to Cabinet in June. Officers in the People Directorate were still awaiting guidance regarding the funding implications.

iv) Briefing notes had been sent to Councillor Gingell, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services and Councillor Thomas, Chair of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) concerning the Marmot link between social care and welfare reform.

v) The Executive Director for People and the Assistant Directors had been contacted regarding welfare benefits training for appropriate employees.

With reference to Minute 46 headed 'Equality Strategy – Half Year Progress Report 2014/15', the Committee were reminded that additional information on equality issues had been circulated to Members and further information on figures for Early Year's Foundation Stage for Asian (Bangladeshi) would be included in the end of year report.

52. **Coventry Drugs Strategy (2015 - 2017)**

The Committee considered a briefing note of Councillor Gingell, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services concerning the Coventry Drug Strategy for 2015-2017 which aimed to guide the partnership work currently being undertaken to tackle and address drug misuse in the city. A copy of the strategy was set out at an appendix to the note. Councillor Hetherington, the Council's lead champion for drugs, alcohol and mental health attended the meeting for the consideration of this item along with Commander Claire Bell, West Midlands Police. Ronnie Duggan, a volunteer with Aquarius and Claire Thomas, a recovery champion also attended for the consideration of this issue. Councillors Lucas and Townshend were also in attendance.

The strategy was not a statutory requirement however partners felt that a partnership strategy was the best way to steer the multi-agency response that was needed to deal with this cross-cutting issue. As the commissioners and funders of local treatment services, the City Council had taken the lead in producing the strategy. The two year strategy was relevant to both young people and adults and covered a wide range of issues including prevention, education, housing, social care, treatment, crime and rehabilitation.

The Committee were informed that the drug strategy sat alongside the local alcohol strategy which was established in 2013. Reference was made to the consultation exercise undertaken with partners whose views, along with the views of service users, had been incorporated into the strategy. It would be reviewed on an annual basis and an annual Implementation Plan would detail specific actions detailing responsibilities and target times.

The three key themes of the strategy were:

- (i) Providing effective prevention and recovery-focused treatment
- (ii) Changing and challenging attitudes and behaviour
- (iii) Controlling the supply of drugs and promoting drug-free environments.

The governance arrangements for the strategy were highlighted.

Claire Thomas addressed the Committee informing of her personal experiences which had led to her becoming a recovery champion.

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

- The importance of using a holistic approach with services looking at individuals and their families
- The role of the local police in relation to enforcement, prevention and intervention
- The work of the police concerning the night time economy including their partnership work with the Council's Licensing Team and their involvement with local club owners
- Meeting the public's expectations in relation to enforcement
- The importance of passing on information to the Police to allow them to include all details in their intelligence systems and determine the most appropriate course of action
- How the strategy would help to tackle the issue of child sexual exploitation
- Dealing with cannabis factories in the city
- The contact with Coventry and Warwick universities and the work undertaken to identify and prevent substance use and misuse by students
- The significant impact that drug misuse has on people with mental health issues
- What was being done to tackle the issue of legal highs
- Whether it would ever be appropriate to legalise drugs.

RESOLVED that:

(1) Having reviewed the strategy, the vision for Coventry and the three priority themes identified be endorsed.

(2) Councillor Gingell, the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Services be recommended to adopt the strategy to guide Coventry's work for the next two years.

(3) An update on the Implementation Plan be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee to include:

a) Additional performance indicators on other projected benefits such as the links with domestic violence and abuse and how referrals have reduced the prevalence of illegal drugs

b) Information on the use and effects of legal highs which are not covered by current misuse of drug laws but can have serious health risks, with legal highs being included in the strategy

c) Details of the sharing of information between the partner organisations.

53. Progress Update on the Implementation of the New Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) Commissioned Services for Coventry

Further to Minute 42/13, the Committee considered a briefing note of the Executive Director of People which provided an update on the implementation and performance of the new commissioned Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) Services in the city which commenced on 29th September, 2014. An update on key areas of development in relation to the city's overall approach to DVA was also detailed. Councillor Lucas, Chair of the Local Government Association Safer and Stronger Communities Board and Councillor Townshend, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities attended the meeting for the consideration of this item.

The new services included the Single Point of Access (SPA) services for Coventry which aimed to provide a one-stop contact point for victims of domestic violence. There were four key providers, each providing a specific element of the service model as follows:

- Refuge - helpline/single point of access and victim community based support
- Safe and Supported Partnership - victim supported accommodation
- Barnardo's Defuze - children and young people's service
- Fry Housing Trust - perpetrator service.

Fundamental to all services was the focus on the safety of children who could be subject to domestic violence. All services ensured that information was shared across providers and statutory agencies to ensure that no child was missed and services were linked appropriately to support affected children.

The Committee were informed that the implementation of the services had been overseen by an Implementation Group comprising all partner organisations and the providers themselves. All issues had been raised and resolved through this group.

As part of the contract, providers were subject to a range of contract monitoring/management processes which included a requirement for providers to show key outcomes achieved for people accessing the service.

The briefing note detailed key performance data from the first quarter of the contract. All services had met the targets and key performance indicators required by the service specifications. The improvements provided by the new services were highlighted along with the key areas to progress.

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

- An acknowledgement of the complexities often involved with cases of domestic violence
- Further details about performance data including the numbers of women and children moved out of their homes; the number of social care cases which

had been concluded due to the removal of abuse; if any cases had not been supported; and the help available for same sex relationships where abuse was occurring

- If providers were aware of victims who needed support but hadn't sought help and the reasons for this
- The potential for victims to be able to make free phone calls to the helpline when using a mobile phone and the option to be able to make contact via text messages
- When a phone call was received, who was responsible for determining the advice to be given and the level of support required
- The emergency out of hours support
- The support available for cases of domestic violence and abuse linked to forced marriages.

Councillor Lucas placed on record her appreciation of all the work undertaken by Councillor Fletcher which included attending the Implementation Group meetings and also supporting the staff induction events.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The progress of the new commissioned services against key performance indicators be welcomed.

(2) The strong support and leadership from the Council and the success of the partnership be welcomed.

(3) Consideration to be given to enable victims to be able to make free calls to the helpline while using a mobile phone and to be able to make contact via text messages.

54. Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted that all outstanding issues had been included in the Work Programme for the current year, Minute 55 below refers.

55. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2014/2015

The Committee considered the Work Programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The Work Programme be noted.

(2) Items included in the programme and not covered during the current year to be included in the Committee's Work Programme for the new municipal year.

56. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.00 pm)