

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

20th March, 2013

Scrutiny Co-ordination

Committee Members Present: Councillor Mrs Bigham (Chair)
Councillor Blundell
Councillor Hetherton (Substitute for Councillor Welsh)
Councillor Mrs Fletcher
Councillor Foster
Councillor Howells
Councillor Lakha
Councillor Mrs M Mutton
Councillor Skipper (Deputy Chair)

Other Members Present:- Councillor Maton (For Minute 94 below)
Councillor Taylor (For Minute 94 below)
Councillor Welsh (For Minute 95 below)

Officers Present:- P. Barnett (Chief Executive's Directorate)
S. Bennett (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
V. Castree (Chief Executive's Directorate)
T. Darke (City Services and Development Directorate)
N. Hart (Chief Executive's Directorate)
C. Hickin (City Services and Development)
G. Holmes (Chief Executive's Directorate)
J. Newton (City Services and Development Directorate)
J. Nichols (City Services and Development Directorate)
A. West (Chief Executive's Directorate)

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Abbott
Councillor Welsh (For the main part of the meeting)

Public Business

92. Declarations of Interest

There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests declared.

93. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th February, 2013 were signed as a true record.

94. Houses in Multiple Occupation

The Committee considered a Briefing Note which clarified the current position in Coventry in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HIMO's) and which identified current and potential powers held by the Local Authority to address some of the concerns that have been raised about HIMO's.

Over the last six months, residents in some areas of the City have increasingly been raising concerns they have over HIMO's These issues have included anti-social behaviour,

noise, rubbish, parking and housing quality. The Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Maton, who attended the meeting, had requested that the Committee look at these issues in detail. Specifically, that the Committee looks at data to gain a view as to the numbers and locations of HIMO's and to identify what powers the Local Authority already has, and could have, to help address some of these concerns. Information contained in the Briefing Note had been gathered from a variety of sources, including the Census and consultation had taken place with a number of Council Teams including Public Safety and Housing, Planning and Community Safety. Information was also gathered on enforcement powers available through both public protection and planning legislation for local authorities.

The Committee also received representations from Kevin Noble and George Moore, members of the public who spoke on behalf of residents in Earlsdon and Gosford Park, both of which areas are affected by HIMO's. Councillor Taylor also attended and spoke on this issue.

The Committee discussed this issue and questioned officers on aspects of the Briefing Note, including:-

- Planning Enforcement available, including the use of an Article 4 Regulation, which would enable Planners to limit the number of HIMO's in a given area.
- Economic and political factors which were impacting on the increase in the number of HIMO's and whether this increase reflected a national trend.
- Housing needs in the City and how these needs were being addressed.
- The impact that HIMO's have on the local community and residents.

The Committee noted that a Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment was currently being undertaken which would be looking at housing needs across the region.

The Committee welcomed the contribution made to the meeting by Mr Noble and Mr Moore.

RESOLVED that a Task and Finish Working Group be established to consider this issue in more depth, the membership of that Working Group to be determined by the Chair, Councillor Mrs Bigham, and that appropriate invitees to that Working Group include local residents affected by this issue.

95. Comments from the Health, Social Care and Welfare Reform Scrutiny Board (5), Welfare Reform Sub-Group on the Advice Services Review Consultation

Further to Minute 96/12, the Committee considered a Briefing Note which provided feedback on the Advice Services Review from the Welfare Reform Sub-Group of the Health, Social Care and Welfare Reform Scrutiny Board (5). The Sub-Group held a wide ranging discussion around the current levels of advice service provision in the City, the consultation currently under way and the proposals contained within in.

In summary, the Sub-Group's conclusions and issues raised were as follows:-

- That broadly the Sub-Group welcomed the consultation and supported the

objectives of a model of service delivery which meets the needs of the wider community, and emphasises the needs of the priority neighbourhoods. Further that the emphasis on quality of service and on a new relationship based on the City Council being clearer in defining the objectives and outcomes from services with providers was welcomed.

- There were some concerns about whether the risk to neighbourhood advice services' other external funding streams, which may be used for match funding, has been considered.
- The Sub-Group requested that further consideration be given for the final model of delivery to include a limited capacity for vulnerable individuals to be seen in their own homes.
- There was a request for further assurance around how need had been determined in local areas in the neighbourhood advice services model.
- The indicative model of neighbourhood presence in the consultation was queried – particularly around how much reach a service that was not present in localities more than once or twice per week would have.
- Members questioned whether the cost of hiring venues for the delivery of neighbourhood advice services had been factored into the new neighbourhood model of working.
- There was concern about the possibility of overlap or duplication with the Neighbourhood Service Provision Grant and the Prevention, Volunteering and Marketing Grant. The Sub-group wanted assurance that there would be flexibility so that the benefits can be made from joint working across delivery areas.
- The Sub-Group queried if consideration had been made in the costs assessment of the fact that the management posts in neighbourhood advice centres often undertake a much wider reaching and multi-tasking role than just advice centre management, and therefore may not be quite so straightforward in predicting savings.
- The risk of private sector sponsored national charities bidding for the Neighbourhood Service Provision Grant was raised and the Sub-group was reassured that officers were focused on securing local provision of this service. Members stressed the importance of support being made available to encourage and facilitate local organisations to apply for any grants or funding.
- A number of Members questioned the ring-fenced, grant funding model which is being proposed. Members want to be confident that funding is shared equitably and efficiently across the City and without bias to particular organisations. It was suggested an alternative funding mechanism could be to identify the cost of each type of advice across the city which could be used as an average unit of funding that could then be allocated against agreed plans to deliver a specific number and type of sessions.
- Members with a detailed knowledge of their locality advice services were minded to submit a separate response to the consultation and the Sub-Group supported this response being made.

- There was concern that additional services within neighbourhood advice centres, which may provide complementary activities i.e. credit union, training courses, employment services, that may be impacted or cease, due to the removal of advice funding.
- A general concern was expressed that in the light of impending welfare reforms, the current proposals may result in a reduction in capacity for advice services in the City. The Sub-Group was particularly mindful of the short timescale for some of these changes and wished to ensure that the appropriate capacity was addressed as the Review progresses.

RESOLVED:-

- 1) That the content of the briefing Note be noted.**
- 2) That the comments detailed in the Briefing Note be forwarded onto the relevant officers and Cabinet Member as part of the consultation process.**
- 3) That the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee receive the report to be considered by the Cabinet Member on this issue in due course and that further information be received on the outcome of the consultation.**

96. Charities Information

The Committee considered a Briefing Note which identified recommendations for the Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities) to enable residents of the City in financial need and those organisations that support them, to easily find information about charitable organisations that can offer goods as well as direct financial support. This followed on from a piece of work on Outside Bodies by a Scrutiny Co-Ordination Committee Task and Finish Group where Members were concerned that there were charities within the City that have monies to support vulnerable people, but that information on what was available was patchy and piecemeal. A short Task and Finish Group had been established to identify how best to gather and disseminate information on the various grant giving charities within the City.

The Task and Finish Group were clear that access to the information needed to be “self-service” in line with current Council policy and that the information should be provided on line. However, the Task and Finish Group were also aware that not everyone, especially those in financial difficulty, has access to an internet connection, which is why they considered it important that organisations who may have face to face contact with people in need, also had access to the Council web page address via a small leaflet or postcard. The Task and Finish Group also suggested that on the web page there should be information for how charities could get their link onto the site and also information for people to be able to donate goods or money to the charity.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee support the following recommendations for the Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities):-

- 1) That a page is created on the Council website providing links to other organisations that can provide goods and direct financial support to**

those who are in financial need.

- 2) That in developing the page, any opportunities for partnership working should be taken advantage of, such as those with the Community Support Grant, the DWP and Voluntary Action Coventry.
- 3) That resources are identified for the on-going management of the web-page and the production of a small leaflet/postcard providing information about the web page and;
- 4) That the leaflet/postcard is distributed to organisations that will come into contact with those people who are experiencing financial hardship and elected Members.

97. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Coventry Learning Disabilities Partnership Board 2012

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Mrs Lucas, (Cabinet Member Health and Community Services) informing of the work of the Coventry Learning Disabilities Partnership Board over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the City Council representatives. The Board's terms of reference were appended to the report. The report also highlighted the benefits to the Council of this appointment.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) The Cabinet Member (Health and Community Services) and Shadow Cabinet Member (Health and Community Services) provide their support of the work of the Coventry Learning Disabilities Partnership Board through their continued appointment to the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board.
- 2) The Cabinet Member (Health and Community Services) and Shadow Cabinet Member (Health and Community Services) attend Partnership Board meetings in person/through a substitute or receive a briefing on content and actions decided upon, where attendance is not possible.

98. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Coventry Older People's Partnership

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Mrs Lucas, (Cabinet Member Health and Community Services) informing of the work of the Coventry Older People's Partnership Board over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the City Council representatives. The Partnership's terms of reference were appended to the report. The report also highlighted the benefits to the Council of this appointment.

RESOLVED that:-

- 1) The Cabinet Member (Health and Community Services) and Shadow

Cabinet Member (Health and Community Services) provide their support of the work of the Coventry's Older People's Partnership through their continued appointment to the Older People's Partnership.

- 2) The Cabinet Member (Health and Community Services) and Shadow Cabinet Member (Health and Community Services) attend Partnership meetings in person/through a substitute or receive a briefing on content and actions decided upon, where attendance is not possible.**

99. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Coventry Partnership 2011- 2012

The Committee considered a report of Councillor J Mutton, informing of the work of the Coventry Partnership over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the City Council representatives. The report also highlighted the benefits to the Council of this appointment.

RESOLVED that the Council continues its membership of the Coventry Partnership.

100. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Coventry Association for International Friendship

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Lakha informing of the work of the Coventry Association for International Friendship over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the City Council representative. The report also highlighted the benefits to the Council of this appointment.

RESOLVED that the City Council continues to work with the Coventry Association for International Friendship to promote community links as part of the policy of the City Council for Peace and Reconciliation by continuing the appointment of a Council Member.

101. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – The Coventry Law Centre

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Mrs Bigham, informing of the work of the Coventry Law Centre over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the City Council representatives. The report also highlighted the benefits to the Council of this appointment.

RESOLVED that the City Council continue to nominate two elected Members to the Coventry Law Centre due to the nature of its work and the level of financial support that the Council supplies.

102. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Museum of British Road Transport Trust (Coventry) Limited

The Committee considered a report of Councillor McNicholas, Lead Member, Transportation, informing of the work of the Museum of British Road Transport Museum over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the City Council representatives. The report also highlighted the benefits to the Council of this appointment.

RESOLVED:-

- 1) **That the report and the work undertaken by the Coventry Transport Museum be noted.**
- 2) **That the City Council continue to appoint Members to the Museum of British Road Transport Trust (Coventry) Limited on an annual basis.**

103. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Coventry Venture Capital Ltd

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Duggins, informing of the work of the Coventry Venture Capital Ltd over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the City Council representatives. The report also highlighted the benefits to the Council of this appointment.

RESOLVED that the City Council continues to appoint a Director to the Board of Coventry Venture Capital Ltd and also authorises that same person to exercise the Council's vote at Company Member meetings.

104. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2012/2013

The Committee considered their Work Programme for the current municipal year.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted

105. Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted that all outstanding issues had been included in the Work Programme for the current year.

106. Meeting Evaluation

The Committee evaluated the meeting which was viewed as successful and particularly welcomed the contribution made to the meeting by members of the public in relation to Minute 94 above "Houses in Multiple Occupation".

107. Any Other Items of Public Business.

There were no other items of public business.

Private Business

Nil

Note: The meeting closed at 12.10 p.m.