

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on**  
**Wednesday, 6 November 2013**

Present:

Members: Councillor C Fletcher (Chair)  
Councillor J Clifford (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor T Khan  
Councillor R Sandy  
Councillor T Sawdon  
Councillor D Skinner  
Councillor T Skipper  
Councillor S Thomas

Other Members: Councillors G Duggins and A Lucas

Employees (by Directorate):

D Carter, People Directorate  
S Giles, People Directorate  
C Hickin, People Directorate  
L Hughes, Resources Directorate  
P Kay, People Directorate  
L Knight, Resources Directorate  
K Larsen, Resources Directorate  
S Roach, People Directorate  
M Watson, People Directorate  
A West, Resources Directorate

Other Representatives: J Hancox, Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group  
DC K Madill, West Midlands Police

Apologies: Councillors F Abbott, J Blundell and K Taylor  
Councillor Gingell, Cabinet Member (Health and Adult Services)  
Margaret Greer, University Hospitals, Coventry and Warwickshire

## **Public Business**

### **39. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **40. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2013 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

### **41. Strategic Built Environment Group**

The Committee considered a briefing note and received a presentation from the Head of Environmental Services concerning the Strategic Built Environment Group which was set up following a decision of the Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities). The terms of reference including membership was set out at an appendix.

The Group was established to facilitate closer working of the Council's various regulatory activities and was chaired by Sara Roach, Deputy Director, Strategy and Communities. The Group had been meeting on a monthly basis since March, 2013 and their work focused on 'problem properties' or issues which, in most cases, had previously proved difficult to resolve by one department working alone, and cut across professional disciplines. A second appendix detailed the past and current work of the Group.

The presentation provided details of two case studies and the actions undertaken by the Group. The first involved a block of flats. The company owning the freehold went into liquidation whereupon title to the land passed to the Crown, who has legal immunity so enforcement action could not be taken. The external fabric of the flats, the common parts, and the external yard and garages were in a poor state of repair and suffered from fly-tipping and dog foul. The second case related to an empty semi-detached property which was fire damaged and derelict and suffered from fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour complaints. The previous owner died intestate and potential beneficiaries of the estate were not interested.

Members questioned the officers on a number of issues including:-

- The potential to take action against the Crown and was this an issue affecting other Local Authorities
- The potential for tenants who owned the leases to the flats to establish a management company
- The suggestion to raise concerns regarding crown owned land with the local MPs and the Local Government Association
- Details about the number of enforcement officers at the City Council
- The numbers of and options for dealing with empty properties in the city including compulsory purchase
- How issues were picked up by the Group and their impact on improved working relationships across the Council.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (i) Officers work with other Local Authorities to identify common concerns in relation to crown owned properties and how this can be pursued nationally through the Local Government Association and the local MPs.**
- (ii) Officers review best practice to understand how other Local Authorities deal quickly and successfully with problem properties.**
- (iii) Officers review the number of Council owned properties that are causing nuisance.**

- (iv) Officers review the opportunities and costs of using Compulsory Purchase Orders to deal with problem properties when other options have been exhausted, included the costs of not taking action.**

#### **42. Commissioning of Domestic Violence and Abuse Services**

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the Executive Director, People on the new service model for the commissioning of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) Services. The report was also to be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 19th November, 2013. Councillor Duggins, Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) and Councillor Lucas, Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership) attended the meeting for the consideration of this item. Juliet Hancox, Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group and DC Kim Madill, West Midlands Police also attended for this matter.

The report provided an update on the outcome of the extensive review of the statutory and commissioned services involved with DVA and detailed the steps needed to progress the new proposed service model. The proposed new service had been created as part of an integrated multi-agency model which would provide DVA services seeking to ensure a clear first point of contact, prevent duplication and strengthen information sharing. This would include a helpline and interactive website, a single point of access to victim services, a range of accommodation for victims, an aftercare service for victims, a new solution focused programme to work with perpetrators and a children's support service.

The Council currently commissioned nine separate services across five providers and existing contracts had been extended to enable time to design the new model/service. A number of research projects, consultation events and focus groups were undertaken between 2011 and 2013 with providers, referring agencies and service users, in order to assess need and identify gaps in current provision. The findings had been used to develop the specifications for the proposed service to be commissioned within the model, however the final consultation phase for the children's element was still to be concluded.

The Committee questioned the officers and representatives on a number of issues including:-

- the processes undertaken and the timescales involved to date in developing the proposed new service model
- how effectively partner agencies were working together to tackle domestic violence and abuse
- the robustness of information sharing arrangements between organisations
- resources and capacity to meet needs
- how risk would be managed in the new service model to help prioritise activity
- assurance that the voice of the child would be heard in all cases where children were involved
- how service users were involved in the development of services.

The Committee recognised that domestic violence and abuse had wide ranging implications including crime, community safety, protection, safeguarding, health and well-being. A range of organisations and partnerships had responsibilities for action and managing performance and the Committee were keen to understand

how these organisations worked together to ensure an overview of all related issues was taken and how responsibility and accountability was managed effectively. In the light of their discussions they suggested that the Health and Well-being Board could adopt Domestic Violence and Abuse as a key priority and hold partners to account for the response of statutory services.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet be asked to consider and decide whether to agree the following recommendation: ‘That the Health and Well-being Board be requested to adopt Domestic Violence and Abuse as a key priority and hold partners to account for the response of statutory services both in terms of early identification/intervention and response’.**

**43. Outstanding Issues**

The Committee noted that all outstanding issues had been included in the Work Programme for the current year, minute 44 below refers.

**44. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2013/2014**

The Committee noted the Work Programme for the current municipal year.

**45. Any Other Items of Public Business**

There were no additional items of public business.

**Private Business**

**46. Commissioning of Domestic Violence and Adult Services**

Further to Minute 42 above, the Committee noted a report of the Executive Director, People on the new service model for the commissioning of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) Services. The report was also to be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 19th November, 2013. Councillor Duggins, Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) and Councillor Lucas, Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership) attended the meeting for the consideration of this item. The report included financial information relating to the contract and the Committee questioned the officers on a number of issues.

**47. Any Other Items of Private Business**

There were no additional items of private business.

(Meeting closed at 12.20 pm)