

**Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination
Committee held at 10.00 a.m. on 22nd January, 2014**

Present:

Committee Members: Councillor Fletcher (Chair)
 Councillor Clifford (Deputy Chair)
 Councillor Abbott
 Councillor Blundell
 Councillor T Khan
 Councillor Sandy
 Councillor Skipper
 Councillor Taylor
 Councillor Thomas

Employees (by Directorate):

Chief Executive's: K. Larsen, B. Lee, H. Shankster, R. Tennant
People: S. Brake, H. Simmonds
Place: P. Singh, R. Young
Resources: S. Bennett, A. West

Public Business

55. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

56. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th December, 2013 were signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 51 headed 'Welfare Reform', the Committee noted that their recommendations in relation to this matter had been considered by the Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources) at his meeting on 20th January, 2014 (His Minute 47/13 refers)

57. Overview and Scrutiny Management

**Cabinet Member (Education) Item of Urgent Public Business – Proposed
Expansion of Edgewick Primary School 2015/16**

The Committee received a copy of a report of the Director of Education and Inclusion that had been considered by the Acting Cabinet Member (Education) at his meeting on 19th December 2013 relating to the proposed expansion of Edgewick Primary School. The Committee noted that Councillor Clifford, the nominee of the Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, had attended the Cabinet Member meeting and agreed that the decision was urgent and that call-in should not apply. In accordance with paragraph

4.5.3.1 of the Council's Constitution, the report was presented to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee to inform them of the reasons for urgency. The reason for urgency was that in order to meet commitments towards the grant conditions for targeted basic need, the statutory consultation needed to be completed by the end of May 2014 and to meet this deadline, formal consultation had needed to begin on 6th January, 2014 for recommendation to Cabinet in March 2014.

58. Public Safety – Pilot Risk Assessment to Manage Service Demand

The Committee considered a Briefing Note of the Executive Director, Place which indicated that Regulatory Services receives over 6,000 complaints and incidents each year covering the areas of Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Environmental Protection and Licensing. With resources in the service area having reduced by 21% since 2010, it was no longer possible to respond to every issue. Service demands needed to be prioritised, intelligence led and supported by signposting or self-help mechanism so that expectations can be properly managed in the future.

A risk assessment tool to assess and prioritise reactive work was developed initially in the Trading Standards teams and it was now proposed to trial the model across all of Regulatory Services. After the trial, approval would be sought to use it in future to formally manage the level and types of response to reactive casework in all teams.

The Briefing Note detailed the trial draft model across Regulatory Services in areas where there is currently no recognised guidance. Where reactive work is determined as low risk or medium low risk, then officers will identify how service demand could be met in other ways, such as through website information, standard guidance, referral or recording as intelligence only. An appendix to the Briefing Note detailed examples of potentially low risk complaints and how they could be dealt with.

The Committee questioned officers on aspects of the proposed trial including:-

- The degree of subjectivity used by officers and how consistency in the way similar cases are treated can be ensured.
- How records are kept and monitored to enable “patterns” to be identified rather than treating all cases in isolation.
- Ensuring consistency in the way that smaller and larger retailers are treated.
- How the change in the public’s expectations of the service will be communicated and managed. The Committee noted that following the trial it was intended that there would be a proactive public campaign to provide advice and support for members of the public.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee notes that a risk based analysis of reactive casework is to be trialled across Regulatory Services for two months.**
- (2) That the Committee supports a report back on the outcome of the trial and, based on the evidence, considers a proposal for future**

implementation of a wide risk based assessment of reactive casework in Regulatory Services.

59. Effectiveness and Quality of Recent Consultation Exercises Carried Out by Coventry City Council

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive, which had previously been considered by the Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities) (His Minute 60/13 refers), and which addressed the effectiveness and quality of recent consultation exercises conducted by Coventry City Council. A Briefing Note attached to the report outlined the Cabinet Member's consideration of this issue, including an additional recommendation requiring officers to consult broadly with Trade Unions, faith groups and residents groups with a view to promoting policies that will develop good consultation practices.

The report provided examples of consultation methods used for a sample of high profile recent consultations and demonstrated that a range of ways to take part had been offered. The report emphasised that in order to maximise participation of those most interested or affected, consultations should be designed to: use the engagement methods preferred by those most affected; remove barriers to participation; be meaningfully written or explained; and be carefully promoted. Guidelines and good practice already existed within the Council, along with mechanisms to help officers leading consultations. It was important that these continued to be provided and promoted across the Council to ensure that future consultations were fit for purpose and offered the most appropriate consultation methods to encourage participation by those most affected.

The Committee considered what role elected Members could play in promoting good formal consultation and community engagement practice and questioned officers on aspects of the report, including:-

- Different types of consultation undertaken by the City Council, such as statutory and non-statutory and prescribed and non-prescribed consultations
- Action taken to ensure views expressed on behalf of a group of people are representative of that group and not reflective of just the lead spokesperson
- What efforts are made to engage with the more "difficult to reach" groups
- How feedback from consultations is used to shape council services
- The cost of consultations and whether business opportunities had been explored for the Council's Insight Team (who undertake consultations) in relation to the use of their knowledge and expertise by outside organisations

RESOLVED that the following recommendations be submitted to the Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities):-

- (1) That, in order to monitor budget implications, the Cabinet Member considers requiring the inclusion of consultation cost details in future reports**

- (2) That further work be carried out to monitor and measure the effectiveness and success of work undertaken to target the more “hard to reach” groups and engage the members, as well as the leaders, of groups and communities**
- (3) That whilst endorsing the principles of current consultation practise, support be given to moving on from “consultation” to a more “engagement” approach, with an emphasis on co-design, using feedback to shape future services and building on the assets in communities, particularly in the light of increasing budgetary pressure on public services**
- (4) That the Cabinet Member recognises that successful engagement has an important role to play in strengthening democracy**
- (5) That consideration be given to exploring all business opportunities for the Council’s Insight Team in relation to the use of their knowledge and expertise by outside organisations**

60. Fact-Finding and Civic Visit to Jinan, China

The Committee considered a report of the Lord Mayor and the Executive Director, Place, which detailed a fact-finding and civic visit to one of Coventry’s twin cities, Jinan, China between 21st and 28th October, 2013. The visit was facilitated by the China Britain Business Council, a membership organisation which specialises in UK China trade activity, effectively acting as the arm of UK Trade and Investment in China. The itinerary included both high level civic events and business meetings in Jinan and Beijing. This provided an excellent insight into future trade and investment opportunities with China and emphasised the importance of retaining and building on relationships with key decision makers from both the Chinese Government and the Chinese business community.

The Committee questioned officers on aspects of the visit and the detailed Action Plan currently being developed by the Business Investment Team to facilitate further trade and investment opportunities with selected overseas destinations, the ultimate objective of such a plan being to stimulate trade, increase business investment and create new jobs.

RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- (1) Endorses the report of the fact-finding and civic visit to Jinan and Beijing and the positive outcomes achieved**
- (2) Agrees that the Leadership’s initiative to more closely engage the Lord Mayor’s Office in economic development matters is beneficial**
- (3) Supports the development of a detailed Action Plan to facilitate further trade and investment opportunities with selected overseas destinations**

61. **Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2013/14**

The Committee considered and noted the Work Programme for 2013-2014.

62. **Outstanding Issues**

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

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

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed: 12.10 p.m.)