

**Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination
Committee held at 10.00 a.m. on 19th March, 2014**

Present:

Committee Members: Councillor Mrs Fletcher (Chair)
Councillor Clifford (Deputy Chair)

Councillor Abbott
Councillor Blundell
Councillor Sandy
Councillor Skipper
Councillor Thomas

Other Members: Councillor Mrs Gingell (Cabinet Member (Health and Adult Services)) (For item contained in Minute 74 below)

Councillor Lakha (For item contained in Minute 75 below)

Employees (by Directorate):

Chief Executive's: K. Bichbiche, H. Shankster

Resources: S. Bennett, T. Savill, A. West

Apologies: Councillors T. Khan, Taylor and Lucas

Others present: M. Buxcey (District Operations Manager, Department for Work and Pensions)
J. Fraser (Universal Credit Implementation Lead, Department for Work and Pensions)

Public Business

72. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

73. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th February, 2014 were signed as a true record.

74. Welfare Reform

Further to Minute 51/13, the Committee considered a Briefing Note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator, together with comprehensive presentations on the following issues relating to the Government's Welfare Reform agenda, which had introduced an unprecedented level of change in welfare reform to which the City Council and partners were responding:-

- An update on progress relating to the introduction of Universal Credit and any implications
- A review of progress towards the implementation of Local Support Services Framework to help people with the transition onto Universal Credit
- The implications of changes to Welfare Reform on disabled people: and
- The implications of some of the wider non-financial impacts of the economic downturn and welfare reforms, particularly relating to health

Background information to support the presentations, questions and discussions at the meeting was appended to the Briefing Note. Working with local partners, the Council's Corporate Research Team had produced a detailed analysis of the impacts of the Welfare Reform changes on individuals, communities and the City, which was also appended to the Briefing Note.

In addition, a further appendix to the Briefing Note provided an overview of the possible health impacts on Coventry's population, which had been provided by the Institute of Health Equity, University College London, commissioned on behalf of the City Council. The results of this research would be considered by the Marmot Steering Group on 14th May, 2014, who would be responsible for reviewing recommendations arising from the findings and overseeing implementation.

The Committee noted that work was still being undertaken by the Coventry Law Centre and local partners in relation to a detailed analysis of appeals against benefits sanctions in Coventry and that the outcomes of this work would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

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

- The Universal Credit pilot currently being operated in Rugby and how this and the Local Support Services Framework would be operated in Coventry
- Issues relating to a single payment per household and the implications of this on vulnerable people.
- In relation to disabled people, the assessment criteria and processes in place, evidence that these were being applied fairly and up to date data on the impact on Coventry residents.
- The application of and current spend on the Discretionary Housing Payment in Coventry.
- The short term health impacts of the welfare reforms and how data was being collected
- The "Making Every Contact Count" programme for frontline staff and how this initiative was being evaluated

RESOLVED:-

1. **That in relation to single payments per household:-**
 - a) **The views of those organisations providing support to the victims of domestic violence be sought**
 - b) **That information and assurances be sought from the Department for Work and Pensions in relation to how decisions are made regarding which member of the household will receive the payment**
2. **That in relation to the impact on disabled people, the Department for Work and Pensions be requested to provide:-**
 - a) **Information on the details of the assessment criteria and process**
 - b) **Evidence and assurances in relation to the fair application of the assessment criteria and process**
 - c) **Up to date data on the real position in relation to the impact on people in Coventry**
3. **That a further report on the impact of the welfare reforms on health be submitted to the Committee after consideration of this issue by the Marmot Steering Group**
4. **That the Committee be provided with the outcomes of the evaluation currently being undertaken in relation to the “Making Every Contact Count” initiative**

75. Reports Back on the Work of Outside Bodies

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

- a) **Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau**
- b) **Coventry Association for International Friendship**

(Councillor Lakha, the City Council’s representative on this body, attended the meeting and provided the Committee with further details in relation to the work of this association, for which the Committee thanked him)

RESOLVED that the City Council at their Annual General Meeting continue to nominate representatives to the following Outside Bodies:-

- a) **Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau**
- b) **Coventry Association for International Friendship**

76. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2013/14

The Committee considered the Work Programme for 2013-2014.

77. Outstanding Issues

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

78. Any Other Items of Public Business – Meeting Evaluated

The Committee evaluated the meeting and gave guidance to officers in relation to information provided by external speakers.

(Meeting closed: 12.30 p.m.)