

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.00 am on
Wednesday, 8 February 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor R Singh (Chair in Councillor Lancaster's absence)
Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor Blundell
Councillor G Crookes
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor M Mutton

Employees By Directorate:-

Place: J Norton

Resources S Bennett, G Holmes, L Read, S Taylor, A West

Apologies: Councillor D Gannon and R Lancaster

Public Business

53. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

54. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 11 and 18 January, 2017 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

55. Electoral Registration and Voter Engagement

The Committee considered a briefing note of the Executive Director of Resources which detailed the outcomes of the Annual Canvass 2016, the Canvass Pilot for 2017 and on all year round work which is conducted in relation to the register of elections.

The briefing note detailed the process for the Annual Canvas 2016, which is prescribed by legislation and which required all properties to be sent a Household Enquiry Form (HEF). The overall rate for the HEF was 86.5% which was a slight increase on last year. Most authorities saw a slight increase in response rates which has been attributed to the fact that the register was at its most accurate with people having registered for the EU Referendum. On publication of the Register on 1 December, 2016, there were 230,530 electors registered. Since then the electorate has changed to 231,244. People are continually registering or being removed from the register.

The Cabinet Office is undertaking a review of the annual canvass for electoral registration as currently it is labour and cost intensive. Coventry has been

successful in being selected for the 2017 Canvass Pilot, the aim of which is to test whether alternative approaches to the canvass can significantly lower the cost without reducing the volume and quality of information gathered.

The briefing note outlined the process for the pilot, which will see 15% of the households in each ward being randomly allocated to an “Intervention” group who will receive the new canvas model. Another 15% will be allocated to the control group which will be canvassed in the existing manner. This 30% of the households will be the pilot sample. Coventry has then opted to canvas the remaining 70% in each ward using the pilot method of canvass.

The intervention group will receive an email version of the HEF rather than a hard copy. An e mail will be sent to at least one of the residents of the property, more if known, and residents will be encouraged to complete the HEF online via a web address with security log on codes.

The new pilot process links into the Council’s current proposals for cost savings and also follows the Council “Do It Online” initiative as more residents will be encouraged to complete the HEF via the website. Legislative changes would be required to make any changes permanent.

The briefing note also indicated that registration is a continuous process and highlighted work being undertaken with Council Tax and Housing Benefits to improve communication and better facilities for data sharing and also with the Universities, where an agreement has been reached to include registering to vote on their online enrolment systems. The Committee noted that there is also a public engagement strategy to enhance work carried out by the Electoral Commission to encourage registration.

The Committee questioned officers on aspects of the briefing note including:-

- Councillor engagement
- Security arrangements regarding the on line pilot process
- Student registration
- Targeting particular ethnic groups

RESOLVED that the contents of the briefing note be noted and that the work being done in relation to student registration be welcomed.

56. **Prevent Strategy**

The Committee considered a briefing note of the Executive Director of People that detailed the Prevent programme in Coventry.

The briefing note focused on work being undertaken in schools and the Committee noted that this issue had already been considered by the Education and Children’s Scrutiny Board (2) at their meeting on 9 November, 2016.

RESOLVED that the contents of the briefing note be noted and that a further briefing note detailing work undertaken on the Prevent Strategy outside of the work being undertaken in schools and in the wider community be submitted to a future meeting.

57. Trade and Investment Delegation to Olofstom and Southern Sweden

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director of Place which detailed a trade and investment delegation to Olofstom and Southern Sweden in November, 2017.

Companies in this area with specific capabilities within the advanced manufacturing and automotive industry have recognised Coventry and Warwickshire as a specific opportunity for investment in order to get established in the local supply chain. The delegation was led by City Council officers and included representatives from Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and 52 Global Consultancy. The itinerary included high level business meetings in Olofstom, Karlshamn and Hassleholm. The visit proved an excellent opportunity to meet with potential investors as well as government officials and support agencies across the region.

The Committee congratulated officers on the success of the trip which was viewed by the Committee as an example of the excellent work that is carried out by the Inward Investment Team.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee:-

(1) Endorses the report of the trade and investment delegation to Olofstom and Southern Sweden

(2) Encourages and supports visits to Coventry by potential inward investors from Sweden

58. Outstanding Issues

The Committee received and noted a report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator which outlined the approach to be taken on progress, outcomes and responses to recommendations and actions made by the Committee.

59. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2016/2017

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

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted and that the item on Prevent Strategy (Minute 56 above refers) be added to the Work Programme.

60. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.00 am)