

## **SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE**

20<sup>th</sup> February, 2013

### Scrutiny Co-ordination

Committee Members Present: Councillor Mrs Bigham (Chair)  
Councillor Blundell  
Councillor Clifford (substitute for Councillor Mrs Abbott)  
Councillor Mrs Fletcher  
Councillor Howells  
Councillor Lakha  
Councillor Skipper (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor Welsh

Deputy Chairs of Scrutiny  
Boards Present:

Councillor Heatherton

Employees Present:

P. Deas (City Services and Development Directorate)  
G. Holmes (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
L. Knight (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)  
S. Lal (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)  
B. Messinger (Director of Customer and Workforce Services)  
H. Peacocke (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)  
D. Pearce (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)  
L. Read (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)

Apologies:

Councillor Abbott  
Councillor Foster  
Councillor J. Mutton  
Councillor M. Mutton

### **Public Business**

#### **80. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

#### **81. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2013 were signed as a true record. Further to Minute 69 headed 'Advice Services Review', the Committee were informed that the Welfare Reform Sub-Group would be meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2013 to consider the Advice Services Review. In relation to Minute 72 headed 'Census 2011 – Identifying Ward Level Census Data', the Working Group were due to meet on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2013 and regarding Minute 73 headed 'Establishment of an Olympic Legacy Scrutiny Panel', the first meeting of the Panel was scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2013.

#### **82. Overview and Scrutiny Management – Agreement of Urgent Item Relating to Home Energy Conservation Act 1995**

The Chair, Councillor Bigham, informed the Committee that she would be attending the Joint Meeting of the Cabinet Members (Neighbourhood Action, Housing, Leisure and Culture) and (Sustainability and Local Infrastructure) on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2013 for the 'Home

Energy Conservation Act 1995' report to agree the reason for urgency and that Call-in should not apply. The reason for urgency was that approval of the report needed to be submitted to the Secretary of State by 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2013.

### **83. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Coventry and Warwickshire Local Partnership Ltd**

The Committee considered a report of Councillor John Mutton, Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance) which detailed the work of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) during the previous twelve months, this included the LEP becoming an incorporated company; details of its membership; and how it operated in practice. The benefits to the City Council of this appointment were highlighted. Councillor Mutton was unable to attend the meeting in support of his report.

The report indicated that the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP was developed in response to the Government's reforms to sub-national economic development and was established due to the strong economic linkages evidenced across this geographical area and to successful partnership working in economic development.

From September, 2012 the LEP became an incorporated company meaning it could enter into contracts in its own name and incur its own liabilities and assets. It was now a Company limited by guarantee. Its Board of Directors consisted of eight Directors drawn from the private sector and eight from the public sector. The Chair of the Board was Sir Peter Rigby with Councillor Mutton being the Vice-Chair. Further membership details were set out in the report. The objectives and purpose of the Company were also detailed.

An explanation was provided on how conflicts of loyalty and any conflicts of interest were dealt with, as set out in the Articles of Association of the LEP.

The Committee noted that there were eight established LEP Business Groups which had recently been revamped and energised. An Appendix to the report set out the membership of these Groups.

Progress over the past twelve months was highlighted which included securing £24.4m of Regional Growth Fund (RFG) Round 3 funding; consolidating the RFG3 funding to create a £36.2m funding pot; and new premises in Warwick Town Centre. Future work included giving a clear focus on key schemes and innovation assets significant to the economy such Gateway; NUCKLE; M40 (12); Stoneleigh; Friargate City Centre South; and MIRA. Attention was drawn to the initial success of the Coventry and Warwickshire City Deal which moved the region forward to the next stage of City Deal status and to the negotiations now to be undertaken with Government Departments prior to any funding being released. The deal aimed to create 30,000 jobs across the region providing training and apprenticeships opportunities for engineers.

The Committee questioned the officer on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- The positive aspects of the appointment of the new Chair of the Board
- Further information on conflicts of interest
- The options for strengthening links with Cabinet Members
- Details about the funding opportunities available from City Deal

- Clarification about the availability of minutes from Board and Business Group meetings (to be provided following the meeting)
- The resources 'in kind' provided by the City Council to support the LEP
- Details about the objectives/plans for the Business Groups and the frequency of meetings
- Attendance details for the Council representatives.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(i) The partnership's transition to an incorporated company limited by guarantee, now operating as The Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership Ltd, be noted.**

**(ii) The work of the Partnership and its benefits to the City be noted.**

**(iii) The Director's for the City Council be noted.**

**84. Business Services Review**

The Committee considered a briefing note of the Director of Customer and Workforce Development reviewing the effectiveness of Business Services twelve months after implementation and informing of the findings of the Business Services Evaluation. A copy of the Evaluation report was attached at an appendix. The Committee also received a presentation highlighting the key findings of the evaluation.

Following the Fundamental Service Review of Administration and Business Support Services, the new service 'Business Services' was implemented across the whole of the Council between April and October, 2011 restructuring the old administrative and support functions. Part of the implementation was a comprehensive evaluation of the first year of operation, measuring progress against key deliverables and principles as set out in the original project plan.

The presentation set out what had been achieved including savings of £2.4m; the deletion of 108 admin posts; a reduction of the transferred workforce from 645 FTE to 537 FTE; the creation of a completely new service and management structure; greater efficiencies through centralisation; proactive sickness management; the multi-skilling of staff through existing training; and the development of baseline performance management information.

The Committee were provided with a number of facts and figures of interest along with the feedback from customers and Business Services employees. Just 3.39% of customers responded to the Customer Survey, with 44% of Business Services staff responding to the Employee Survey. 67% of these employees agreed that their work was challenging and interesting while 52% felt under pressure.

The challenges that were faced were outlined which included a pre-recruitment freeze which led to huge gaps in areas; skilled/experienced staff being allowed to leave in the first round of voluntary redundancies; and inheriting a range of staff performance/capability/sickness issues. Attention was drawn to the level of resistance to change from across the organisation. The Committee were also informed of what could have done better during the implementation of this new service and the lessons to be learned,

particularly for other reviews.

The Evaluation report set out a series of recommendations which aimed to build the foundations of the future shape the service and assist in securing additional savings.

The Committee questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Where most of the savings had been made
- Why there was so much resistance to change and how could Members offer support to reduce resistance
- The implications for the service of the review of the Council's buildings
- The expectations of new employees
- The importance of communication and listening to concerns
- The issue of flexibility with staff being able to move around to cope with peaks and troughs in workloads
- Further information concerning the issue of the Child Protection backlog of case conference minutes that had reduced through flexible resourcing.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(i) The recommendations set out in the Evaluation report be endorsed and supported.**

**(ii) A progress report on the recommendations be submitted to a future meeting in approximately six months.**

## **85. Electoral Registration and Democratic Engagement**

The Committee considered a briefing note of the Director of Customer and Workforce Services which summarised the results of the 2012 annual audit for the register of electors in the City, and increasing registration together with democratic engagement issues such as Local Democracy week activities and following up from lessons from other cities participating in the 2012 Kiel conference, which the Lord Mayor attended.

The annual audit (or 'annual canvass') for the register of electors was conducted between July and early October, 2012, having been brought forward by the Secretary of State for the Cabinet Office. This timetable made it challenging to register students who were just starting their new academic year at the end of the registration period. The report set out the steps required to be undertaken by the Electoral Registration officer and highlighted the key activities undertaken. The Committee were informed that a 94% registration rate was achieved, which was the second highest level in Coventry following on from the record response rate of 95% in 2011. A total of 237,464 electors were registered, compared to 237,680 the previous year. Coventry's performance compared well against other West Midlands authorities, the details of which were set out in an Appendix attached to the briefing note.

The Committee noted that public awareness was conducted as per the agreed strategy, consisting of press releases, a website campaign, twitter and Facebook campaigns.

To deal with the challenge of registering students, Council tax data was used early on to

identify those properties registered as occupied by students. Canvass teams in areas with the greatest number of student properties were given a list of these and an extra weekend to canvass. Additional letters were provided to leave at student properties where they were unable to gain a response.

Further appendices provided information on individual Wards including the changes in the number of properties and electors in each polling district over the last twelve months; the response rates by ward and by polling district including comparisons with the 2011 return rates; and some general statistics comparing 2011 to 2012.

Reference was made to the actions taken to increase voter registration in 2012 and mention was made of the support provided by the two universities and Whitefriars Housing Association. The actions to be taken in the 2013 canvass were also detailed.

Local Democracy Week took place between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2012, with the objective of the week being to promote engagement in democratic processes through Mayoral functions and events. Successful events included Lord Mayors for the day; Lord Mayor's Charity Quiz; a Year 12 debating competition; and a virtual Council.

A Lord Mayor's delegation from the Council attended the 2012 International City Forum in Kiel, Germany which was the subject of a report to the Committee at their meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2012 (Minute 16/12 refers). The Forum involved an exchange of information and best practice from 13 cities on democracy in the community. The Committee requested further information about the responses from other attendees to establish if any lessons could be learnt.

An appendix to the briefing note summarised the practices reported by the 13 cities who had listed a number of initiatives for citizen involvement. The Council's response included many of the initiatives used by the other cities and the Council actively encouraged civic engagement and public participation in decision-making. The Council also led the way with initiatives such as CovJam, the Council's virtual Council event and the Local Democracy Week with a programme of events aimed at young citizens of Coventry. Additional initiatives mentioned by other cities were also highlighted.

The Committee questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- The encouragement given to Council employees to register
- Further details about the actions being undertaken in the 2 Wards and 18 polling districts that were below the targets for response rates
- The actions taken to deal with houses in multiple occupation

**RESOLVED that the report and the actions taken regarding registration and democratic engagement be noted.**

## **86. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – West Midlands Councils**

The Committee considered a report of Councillor John Mutton, Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance) informing of the work of West Midlands Councils over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the two City Council representatives.

The report highlighted the changing role of the West Midlands Councils and indicated that the Council was now working more closely with other local authorities at a sub-regional level through the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sub-Regional Programme and with the other West Midlands Metropolitan Councils through the West Midlands Joint Committee. The Committee noted that each local authority was currently being asked to consider a number of options for membership of West Midlands Councils. A further report on future membership was to be submitted to the future meeting of the Council.

**RESOLVED that the Council review its membership of West Midlands Councils.**

**87. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – West Midlands Joint Committee**

The Committee considered a report of Councillor John Mutton, Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance) informing of the work of the West Midlands Joint Committee over the preceding twelve months along with details of attendance by the three City Council representatives. The report also highlighted the benefits to the Council of this appointment emphasising that it was a legislative requirement that the Council was a member.

**RESOLVED that the Council continue to make appointments to this body.**

**88. 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 updated to include a report on the Coventry Partnership and a Progress Report on the Recommendations in the Business Services Review (Minute 84 above refers).**

**89. Outstanding Issues**

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

**90. Meeting Evaluation**

The Committee evaluated the meeting which was viewed as fine. The request for information about the levels of all posts being taken out when Services were reviewed was reiterated.

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

There were no other items of public business.

**Private Business**

Nil

Note: The meeting closed at 12.25 p.m.