

MINUTES OF MEETING OF WHITTLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 SEPTEMBER 2016

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors H Roberts (Chair), Allen, Birkett, Douglas, Gillias and Keeling

In attendance:

Barry Day (Associate Director of Operations, Integrated Community Services, NHS Partnership Trust)

Matt Gilks (Director of Commissioning, Coventry and Rugby CCG)

Alan Butler, Joint Commissioning Manager, Coventry City Council, Coventry and Rugby CCG)

Councillors Roodhouse and Sandison

Officers:

Adam Norburn (Executive Director), Rob Back (Head of Growth and Investment), Raj Chand (Head of Communities and Homes), Mannie Ketley (Head of Corporate Resources and Chief Finance Officer), David Burrows (Regulatory Service Manager), John Hier (Housing and Regeneration Manager) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

12. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2016 were approved and signed by the Chair.

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Pacey-Day.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Items 4 and 5 of Part 1 - Councillor Douglas declared a general non-pecuniary interest by virtue of his employment as Policy and Campaigns Officer for the National Federation of Property Professionals.

Item 4 of Part 1 – Councillor Roodhouse declared a general non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Director of Healthwatch Warwickshire.

15. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 4) concerning a light-touch review of mental health services for young people.

The aim of the review was to identify measures to make improvements to the access to quality mental health services for young people.

The Head of Communities and Homes reported that the council had seen a significant increase in approaches to the housing service from vulnerable applicants, some at crisis point.

Overall there has been an increase of 16 per cent in homeless applications for the first quarter of 2016/17, compared to the same period last year. There had also been a rise in the number of single people approaching the housing service.

Some of the work being carried out by the council included:

A six week exercise commenced on 1 September to monitor people approaching the Housing Options Team to better understand the types of customers and potential mental health issues.

In conjunction with Warwickshire County Council (WCC) some research work was planned on Housing Related Support contracts and the impact on vulnerable individuals being able to access services.

Over the past 12 months the council had worked in partnership with the charity Doorway and other local authority partners across Warwickshire to establish a support scheme for young people and adults with low level mental health issues. The work received funding for two years up to June 2017. Officers were exploring ways of extending this funding.

A Private Leasing Scheme was established to provide more housing options and help reduce the use of expensive bed and breakfast accommodation. This was a new scheme and so far four family properties and three houses of multiple occupation had been secured which would provide guaranteed rent for a minimum period of two years.

Members asked if there were any school programmes in place to help prepare young people for when they leave school and were informed that work was being carried out across Warwickshire, though primarily in Nuneaton, but schools in Rugby could be considered if resources were available.

The committee received a brief overview of the mental health services available, the current position and key challenges for Coventry and Rugby from Alan Butler, Matt Gilks and Barry Day.

Unfortunately, Alex Bastien-Cooper, Clinical Psychologist, NHS Partnership Trust was unable to attend the meeting so the committee could not obtain background information on the types, or groups of people affected.

The main points raised were:

- Reach was a children's and young people's service developed to meet the emotional and mental health needs of young people up to 18 years provided by Coventry and Warwickshire Mind in partnership with Relate. It targeted a lower level of need such as counselling, anger management, bullying and bereavement.
- Support was provided for young people in local authority care and also their families and carers.
- The key aim was to target early intervention and prevent mental health issues escalating.
- One specific target area was the journey through the service.
- Primary mental health support was delivered through a number of means that included local schools.
- More specialist services were provided through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Some of the challenges faced included:

- There was a high demand on the service and an increase in referrals.
- A year-on-year upward trend created a strain on service response.
- More preventative work would help lower demand further upstream, such as young people presenting at hospital with self-harm and further strain placed on hospitals and acute services.
- There were too many handoffs in the system. Pathways were difficult to understand for customers and parents/carers. An easier journey was needed.
- The average length of wait for follow-up care was not such an issue.
- There were few lines of attack available.
- Additional funding was secured following the submission of the Local Transformation Plan to boost capacity and address challenges.
- All stakeholders want a joined up single service and have an agreement on the direction across Warwickshire. Resources should be targeted towards more early intervention instead of specialist higher level support or care.
- The Transformation Plan would redesign services to best serve the needs of young people and their families.
- The age range of the service was extended to 0-25 years.
- One ward of the Caluden Centre was developed to be specifically age appropriate for young people.
- Acute nurses within the adult service area work with CAMHS.
- There was a long way to go to in terms of a mind shift for users and positive investment was necessary, particularly for follow-ups.

During further discussion the following points were made:

Is there anything unique in relation to the situation of young people in Rugby?
Rugby's growth was an issue. Services were funded on population size and a rise in waiting times would link back to highlight growth. Additional resources were available through the national transformation fund which could be used to tackle waiting times and react to growth. Barnardo's is able to deliver a social care follow-through service.

Adult referrals sometimes come through social care and Section 117, but cross boundary care was an issue and follow-through to the right services was also a problem.

How well used are online resources, and are young people searching in the right areas?

There were seven priorities in the transformation plan and these include the use of the right online resources. React was an excellent website containing information on coping mechanisms and contact details that supports a more joined up approach.

Talking therapies were also available free via iTunes.

Members commented that self-harm was on the increase and the first point of contact was usually face-to-face, then via the internet. More support through schools was needed.

Do you engage with employers?

Most of the service was provided through the third sector but this was acknowledged as an interesting point.

Members questioned what the council could do to help the situation. Guidance or training for front line staff would be welcomed that included skills on how to recognise people with mental health issues. People that need help do not necessarily contact their own GP.

It would be useful for members to understand the different levels of support classed as tiers.

The council's sport and recreation team and cultural officers deliver a range of educational programmes that support wellbeing within the community through sports, the use of green spaces and arts and culture particularly for young people. Officers engage with a range of ages and agencies but could do more if additional public funding was available.

Officers welcomed further discussions on working more closely with relevant organisations or agencies.

From a housing service perspective, the council lacks an understanding of what agencies or services exist to support people. Alan Butler undertook to provide further information to officers.

It was acknowledged this was a big subject and there were a variety of options to explore. It was agreed that some form of awareness briefing should be held for officers and members to enable the council to better understand the different tiers of mental health support services, how to train front line staff on recognising people with mental health issues and to raise awareness of, and explore ways of supporting early intervention.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) Alan Butler, Matt Gilks and Barry Day be thanked for attending the meeting;
and
- (2) An awareness briefing be arranged by commissioners at Coventry and Rugby CCG for members and officers as minuted above.

16. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2016/17 – QUARTER 1

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 5) concerning finance and performance monitoring for the first quarter of 2016/17.

The committee was informed that, following the recent changes to officer roles in response to the retirement of the Scrutiny Officer, the Head of Corporate Resources and Chief Finance Officer would report direct to both Brooke and Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

To avoid duplication members were asked to bring the report considered by Cabinet concerning the financial and performance position with them to future meetings where finance and performance appeared on the agenda. Information would be presented differently and would focus on key points relating to the General Fund and HRA budgets and also give a feel of the council's overall financial position.

The Head of Corporate Resources and Chief Finance Officer presented the report on the key adverse variances to budget, expenditure overspends and income shortfalls.

During discussion the following points were raised:

The reduction in revenue from car parking was as a result of a general fall in footfall in the town centre. This was largely due to the out of town retail parks, but there were other annual or season factors such as special events or bad weather that had an effect on visitor numbers.

There had been mechanical issues with some of the ticket machines and new machines were currently being procured.

Private car parks were also suffering from loss of revenue.

Footfall in the high street had fallen by approximately 25 per cent and the council continued to work with Rugby First on a future vision and action plan for schemes and incentives to increase visitor numbers. The Planning Services Working Party was heavily involved in this.

The night time economy in the town centre continued to be good.

A joined up approach linking buses and trains would be beneficial, but as WCC was the responsible authority this was not an area the council could influence.

There were long and short stay car parks in the town centre with charges competitively set. A member commented that different charges in different car parks could be potentially confusing for visitors.

Staffing levels have continued to be adversely affected by the ongoing roll-out of Universal Credit; the eventual transfer of this function to the Department for Works & Pensions (DWP) has resulted in a “dying trade” for Benefit Officers. The scarcity of skilled officers has meant it is difficult to manage reduced resources resulting from vacancies and sickness absence – resulting in the need to use agency staff to fill the void.

Rugby Borough Council was one of the pilot authorities for the complete national roll-out of Universal Credit and it had not been the smoothest of transitions, however Rugby's experience was being fed back to DWP as a learning point for

the future roll out across other authorities. A flat rate of funding has been received for being the pilot authority which will continue until April 2017, beyond which it would be on a “payment by results” basis for which work was ongoing to ensure all the correct processes were in place for the future to enable the capture of costs incurred in order to re-claim.

RESOLVED THAT – the report be noted.

17. AIR QUALITY MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL UPDATE

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 6) concerning an annual update on air quality monitoring.

The Regulatory Services Manager gave the committee an overview of the council's management of air quality monitoring and then updated members on the progress made on the Local Air Quality Management Action Plan Annual Status Report and the implications of new residential and infrastructure developments planned in the borough.

The council has a statutory requirement to report on air quality to central government and produce an Annual Status Report (ASR), previously titled a Progress Report, to provide an overview of air quality in the borough during the previous year and showing the strategies employed by the council to improve air quality and any progress made.

The 2016 Air Quality ASR was launched for public consultation and members were invited to forward any comments to the Regulatory Services Manager.

Where an air quality exceedance was considered likely the council must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). Two areas of concern in relation to air quality were Warwick Street Gyrotory and the crossroads in Dunchurch.

Two main points from the AQAP were the Western Relief Road and the improvements to the town centre gyrotory which had not achieved any major reduction in air pollution.

Current legislation requires hard actions to mitigate against air pollution, such as bypass roads, but due to the small numbers of people affected this type of action was not practicable.

The effect of Court action against the Government by the European Union for not meeting set targets was now unclear because of Brexit and legislation surrounding air quality remains unchanged at present.

New approaches through partnership working with Public Health Coventry, Public Health Warwickshire and the joint Arden Health Protection Committee would bring opportunities for change. Some of the methods the WCC Air Quality Task and Finish Group were exploring, such as health warning signage may also be of interest.

Monitoring of NO₂ through the diffusion tube surveys would continue and it was likely the existing AQMA would need to be maintained.

The committee noted the proposed transport schemes and improvements that would influence air quality, particularly in view of new developments and growth across the town. The effects on air quality would continue to be monitored.

Members commented that the additional pedestrian crossings installed around the gyratory could create more air pollution, and more should be done to educate the public on alternative means of transport and the location of traffic hot spots.

RESOLVED THAT – the report be noted.

18. MOTION FROM COUNCIL – GREEN PLAQUE SCHEME

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 7) concerning a motion referred by Council on 19 July 2016.

The Head of Growth and Investment reported that the proposal for a new plaque scheme should be considered alongside other schemes or incentives to promote the town and its local heritage in context with existing work streams that included:

- Town Centre Vision and Action Plan
- Town Centre Branding and Marketing
- Hall of Fame
- Review of Signage and Wayfinding

The committee agreed that this was too big a topic to consider itself and appointing a task group would be the most appropriate way of ensuring a comprehensive review was carried out.

RESOLVED THAT – a task group be created to consider the Motion from Council in the light of all the other work being carried out to promote the town and local heritage and report back to this committee at a future meeting.

19. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 8) concerning agenda items for future meetings.

The committee noted the work programme for the next meeting of the committee.

Members were reminded there will be a Special Joint Meeting of both Brooke and Whittle Committees held at 5.30pm on 17 October 2016 in the Council Chamber, with the Portfolio Holders to discuss performance.

RESOLVED THAT – the work programme be agreed.

CHAIR