

**Minutes of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee Meeting held on
13 July 2017**

Present: John Francis (Chairman)

Attendance

Syed Hussain	Paul Snape
Trevor Johnson	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman)
Jason Jones	Victoria Wilson
Natasha Pullen	Mike Worthington
Kyle Robinson	

Also in attendance: Gill Heath and Mark Sutton

PART ONE

5. Declarations of Interest

There were none at this meeting.

6. Minutes of the Safe & Strong Communities Select Committee meeting held on 13 June 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee held on 13 June 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

7. Children's and Families System Transformation

The Children and Families System Transformation Programme had previously been considered by this Select Committee at their meetings of 8 June, 8 July, 12 December 2016 and 16 January 2017. Members now considered the 21 June 2017 Cabinet Report which set out progress with the Transformation Programme and described the principles and proposed changes to the operating model and associated work practices.

Members applauded the focus on early intervention and prevention but sought clarification on how this would be achieved. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People informed them that there was already a lot of early intervention and prevention work in place, including, for example, under 5s commissioning services that focused on the most deprived areas, and the Healthy Child Programme which brought together the work of midwives, health visitors and the school nurses to provide a more joined up approach to the work of the children's system.

Members were pleased to note the place based approach which had been agreed with partners. They heard that this would allow better collective use of assets, resources and knowledge amongst the County Council and partners to produce a whole system approach. Local governance was built into this place based system to enable its sustainability and Members heard of the importance of the 3rd Sector within this.

Community asset mapping was taking place to support this work and build upon community capacity.

The work of Children's Centres was highlighted as key to building resilient families and helping to identify where support was needed. In particular the very pro-active approach of some of the services working within these Centres was commended as a way of targeting support. The District Advisory Boards (DABs) on Early Years, which were often based in Children's Centres, were an excellent opportunity for local members to become involved and be aware of the work within their areas. In particular the involvement of the Community Cabinet Support Members in the DABs was promoted to enable effective challenge and to support the work taking place within the local community.

Members raised the issue of home educated pupils and asked how progress was assessed when a child was home educated. Parents had a legal right to choose to educate their children at home and the County Council made every effort to work with those families to ensure the child's development. However pupils who missed out on education because of poor attendance (rather than being electively home educated) were significantly adversely affecting their life chances. Members heard that the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee had established a Working Group to consider the issues of children missing out on education, with their report produced in 2014 and requested a copy be forwarded to them for information.

The Select Committee queried the 4-6 weeks intensive support offered to those with drug and/or alcohol dependency, being concerned that this was too short a period of time in which to ensure the individual was able to address their dependency. Members were assured that this intensive intervention was part of the Family Intervention Model and gave intensive support for this relatively short period whilst maintaining a family support worker to work longer term in addressing the needs of the individual and the family. The Family Intervention Service offered up to 12 months intergenerational intervention to tackle issues faced by the family. Members welcomed the Cabinet Member's offer to bring anonymised case studies when the Select Committee next consider the Transformation Programme to help illustrate the work undertaken.

Members heard that there was a holistic approach to Tier 1 and 2 services, bringing together children and family services to provide a holistic offer within the place based methodology. Tamworth was given as a particularly good example of how this approach worked well.

The Select Committee noted the suggestion that in future, where appropriate, children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities should be included in local schools and communities (supported by a clear Inclusion Strategy embedded across the county). They had some concerns about this suggestion, praising the current Special School system in Staffordshire and reinforcing that a Special School was the right place for many children with specific needs. They had concerns that children's progress and development would be adversely affected if included in mainstream schools and that bullying would be a concern. The Cabinet Member reassured Members that the education of each individual would be informed by the requirements of their Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs).

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People was aware of the concerns previously raised by the Select Committee that this specific report had not been subject to pre decision scrutiny due to the constraints of the election. He suggested that the Select Committee could produce a written response to the 14 August Programme Board which would help inform their work going forward.

RESOLVED- That:

- a) the Children, Young People and Families Transformation Programme update be noted;
- b) a written response to the update be produced for consideration by the 14 August Programme Board; and
- c) a progress report on the Transformation Programme be brought to the 15 January meeting to include anonymised case studies to help illustrate the work undertaken.

8. Children, Young People and Families Pilots

Eight Pilot Projects had been initiated at the beginning of the Children and Families System Transformation Programme. Their purpose was to test different approaches to dealing with families and children who present with low level issues. Each of the Pilots were being measured to test whether the different approaches had evidenced that by working at a lower level demand on higher tier services would be reduced.

The Select Committee had received progress on the eight pilots at their meeting of 16 January 2017 and had requested a further progress report in six months. Members now received detail of progress within the eight pilots.

The Select Committee highlighted the importance of information sharing and in particular noted that the Newcastle pilot to create a locally based intelligence function had ceased. The Newcastle Pilot had initially scoped creating an intelligence system which would enable effective information sharing, however information governance and protocols had only been put in place around the Building Resilient Families & Communities (BRFC) and as the pilot developed to other forms of early intervention it had been necessary to develop at a local authority level further agreed protocols to enable the appropriate information sharing at this local level.

Newcastle had therefore focused on the successful Girl Power project and Members suggested that this no longer needed to be a pilot but should be embedded within the District and the successful practice used as a model elsewhere within the County as appropriate.

In Cannock 125 families had been identified as part of BRFC and Members queried whether this large number was too many to make significant change achievable. The BRFC number reflected the need within the District. Within Cannock governance of the BRFC and the DAB had been amalgamated to enable 0-19 wide partnership representation and help use funding effectively. The local community model had put in a lot of resource at a local level and helped support the targeted intervention with these

families. Where the support was targeted at the right level it was making a real difference.

Members noted that as part of the next phase of the East Staffs projects it was proposed to establish links with the Parish Council to provide a key access point for local residents. Whilst accepting the role of Parish Councils Members felt that the importance of the role of the local County Councillor should be highlighted as a key link with local communities.

Members were aware of the constraints of the 3rd sector and asked what risk prevention had been built into service provision where 3rd sector providers were used. A contract was in place with the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) providers, S3, which supported the delivery of 3rd sector services.

Members were aware that the eight pilots were all at different stages of development and had differing levels of success. They felt it was important to move forward with those projects that were successful, finishing the pilot and rolling out the learning to inform best practice. A six month progress report would then be able to inform the Select Committee of how this best practice had transferred to other areas of the County. At their next 6 monthly update the report would indicate which pilots should cease and which would be used to inform best practice.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) the progress on the 8 pilot projects be noted;
- b) the importance of local County Councillors as links with the local community be included in the next steps for the East Staffs pilot project; and
- c) a progress report be brought to the Select Committee in 6 months which sets out which pilots will cease and how the learning from successful pilots will be used to inform best practice across the County.

9. Public Analyst and Scientific Services Laboratory

The County Council has a statutory duty to appoint a Public Analyst under the Food Safety Act 1990, and an Agricultural Analyst under the Agriculture Act 1970. However the Select Committee were informed that these statutory appointments did not have to be employees of the County Council.

Scientific Services provided Staffordshire with in-house statutory and non-statutory testing services and also undertook work for other local authorities. However the work had been declining and following a number of Service reviews and initiatives to reverse this trend, there remained a forecast for an £108,000 loss based on existing staff numbers. The proposal was therefore to close the Service and appoint both a Public and an Agricultural Analyst from either one of the five remaining local authority laboratories or one or more private sector laboratories.

The Chairman read two emails from Stafford MP Jeremy Lefroy, which advocated keeping the Service and suggested a possible private/public company arrangement be considered.

Members heard that redundancies had been made from within the Service in 2014/15 following an initial review, with a further review and possible closure recommended at that time, should the financial viability of the Service not improve. Members heard that the Service had now seen three years of losses.

The Select Committee shared concerns over the use of private laboratories, feeling that though the costs given may seem reasonable initially, once the in-house service was lost the price was likely to increase. Members raised the example of closure of in-house forensic laboratories and shared their concern over the resulting court cases thrown out as a result of poor quality testing and asked whether the service from private providers would be of the same quality as that of our in-house service.

Whilst appreciating there had already been a small number of redundancies in 2016 Members asked whether further redundancies would be possible to help save the Service. The Select Committee felt that it was imperative to try and keep the service if at all possible, particularly in light of the changes that would follow as a result of Brexit. Members also felt the report lacked detail, particularly around cost analyses. They were aware that a business manager had been seconded to the Service in 2016/17 to promote a more commercialised approach. They asked whether consideration had been given to joining with another local authority laboratory as a way of making savings to the management structure, enabling the expertise to remain whilst reducing costs, with the possibility of working on a regional basis considered.

The Select Committee were informed that despite the work of the Business Manager the Service remained loss making and there was an expectation that local authority work across the Country would continue to reduce, as Staffordshire's had, as a result of increasingly reduced sampling budgets.

The amount of work undertaken by the Service for the County Council had been approximately £60,000 out of the circa £900,000 worth of work completed by the Service last year.

Consideration had been given to further redundancies, however whilst there may be some slight adjustment possible, it was necessary to keep the appropriate skill set to ensure the range of sampling could continue.

Members heard that whilst the accuracy of testing between the in-house service and private providers was comparable anecdotal information from returning customers was that the quality of service as a whole was better with the in-house service giving a value added service where appropriate testing options were discussed prior to testing. This had resulted in repeat business gained through the quality of that broader service offer.

The Select Committee agreed that further consideration should be given to a range of issues prior to any decision being made on the closure, in particular:

- the possibility of joining with another local authority laboratory to work regionally whilst saving management costs;

- consideration of the suggestion put forward by Stafford MP Jeremy Lefroy for the creation of a public/private company;
- the possibility of further redundancies;
- the long-term consequences of Brexit and its impact on the work necessary in this field; and
- address concerns over the cost and quality of service from private providers once the in-house service was lost.

The Select Committee were aware that this was due to be considered by Cabinet on 19 July and asked that the Cabinet Member for Communities request that consideration of this item be deferred to allow for the areas of concern raised by this Select Committee to be investigated.

RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Member for Communities share the Select Committees concerns with Cabinet at their meeting of 19 July and request a decision on this item be deferred to allow consideration of those areas of concern raised.

10. Work Programme

The Work Programme had been amended to reflect both the outcome of the June meeting and the Chairman's Triangulation meeting. The Select Committee considered the additions to their Work programme and agreed the following:

- an Inquiry day to consider the Community Safety Agreement be held on 31 July, 9.30 – 11.00 am, County Buildings, Stafford;
- a visit to the MASH be arranged for Thursday 10 August, 2.00pm, with a separate visit on 17 July, 9.30am for those Members unable to attend 10th;
- a working group be set up to consider the Children's Centres, following a previous working group that looked at this 3 years ago. The new Group would re-visit the centres to consider if changes had been made;
- a 6 monthly progress report on the Pilot projects be included on the Work programme for their 15 January meeting, setting out those pilots that will cease and the learning from successful pilots and how this will inform best practice across the county; and
- a progress report on the Transformation Programme be brought to the 15 January meeting to include anonymised case studies to help illustrate the work undertaken.

RESOLVED – That the Work programme amendments listed above be noted.

Chairman