

Minutes of the Corporate Review Committee Meeting held on 2 December 2013

Present: Philip Jones (Chairman)

Frank Chapman (Vice-Chairman)
Tim Corbett
Brian Edwards
Derrick Huckfield
Kevin Jackson

Brian Jenkins
Kath Perry
John Taylor
Susan Woodward
Mike Worthington

Also in attendance: Mike Lawrence (Cabinet Member for Children, Communities and Localism) and Ian Parry (Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Finance, Resources and Transformation)

Apologies: Carol Dean and John Francis

PART ONE

20. Declarations of Interest

The Following Members declared an interest:-

| Member | Minute Number | Type of Interest | Reason |
|--------------|---------------|------------------|--|
| Sue Woodward | 23 | Personal | Works for a charity which works with disabled children |

21. Minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2013

In relation to Minute Number 18, Mrs Woodward queried the comment relating to schools becoming academies. She acknowledged that the minute reflected the discussion at the meeting but highlighted that there were instances when schools were required to become academies, referring to discussions that had taken place with the relevant Cabinet Member on this issue.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2013 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

22. Achieving Excellence Staffordshire County Council Strategic Plan 2014 to 2018

The Committee considered the report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Transformation which gave an update on the development of the Councils strategic Achieving Excellence plans and priorities.

It was reported that the draft strategic plan was being prepared and would shortly be considered by Cabinet. The plan was being used to shape both the budget for 2014/15

and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The planning process was based on the priorities for Staffordshire's people, reflecting both recent levels of unprecedented change in local government and public services and the commitments from the controlling Conservative groups manifesto. The report also highlighted work internally on 'think pieces' across eight themes to refine these priorities as well as work to ensure the plans would align with the wider priorities of the public sector in Staffordshire including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Health and Wellbeing Board and the Police and Crime Commissioner. These priorities were underpinned by 12 principles for a connected Staffordshire, which set out how the Council would work to achieve these aims. This would be articulated through both the strategic plan and a more operational business plan, which would be available in April 2014. The Deputy Leader advised the Committee that the draft strategic plan would be presented to the Committee for comment in January 2014 before being considered by Cabinet and recommended to the County Council meeting in February.

During the discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- Some Members expressed concern about a lack of clarity in the priorities and principles that focussed more on ideology than a clear sense of purpose. The Deputy Leader highlighted the importance of identifying key challenges through the priorities, particularly around transforming how the Council worked to deliver services with reduced resources and commented on the role of the strategic plan in engaging residents in that process. He advised that there would be continued work on the strategic plan to ensure that it's language was more outward focused and as jargon free as possible.
- Members queried the extent of the customer insight used to inform the planning process and asked for details of the sources and processes used. The Deputy Leader advised that a range of customer insight inputs and processes had been used to develop the plan including survey work as well as using insight gleaned from partners. In response to further questions, he acknowledged the difficulties of effective segmentation to verify insight but highlighted the importance of the County Council providing leadership to drive clear understanding of the changing environment for delivery of public services.
- The Deputy Leader was asked for further details of the think piece work. He advised that this had involved officers working across thematic issues to bring a wide range of viewpoints into the planning process. In response to queries about the lack of Member involvement he advised that Cabinet Members had been involved and that the controlling group had a mandate and responsibility to provide leadership and develop clear future plans.
- Members highlighted the fact that the 12 principles for a connected Staffordshire emphasised the role that Members played as community leaders and reiterated the value of involving them in planning processes. The Deputy Leader highlighted Member's community leadership role in their divisions, particularly in feeding insight into the County Council. Members commented on mechanisms for achieving this, both through formal partnership arrangements involving parish councils and voluntary sector and more informal contact with officers and Cabinet Members.
- The linkages between the high level priorities, the themes used and the principles were discussed. Members expressed some concern that the priority around support for vulnerable people was not clearly evidenced in the operational principles. The Deputy Leader highlighted how the principles focussed on putting

communities and local people first stating that this implicitly included support through the most vulnerable in the community.

- Recent news coverage of alcohol abuse, particularly by young girls was raised and this was highlighted as an example of a priority worked across different agencies. In particular, Members commented on the development of the Police and Crime Plan and the wide public consultation undertaken by the Police and Crime Commissioner in developing it.
- Members also queried the impact of partnership plans, including the LEP's economic strategy on the Council's MTFS. The Deputy Leader highlighted the positive work being undertaken through the LEP, in developing jobs and growth. He also reiterated that the LEP was a partnership and was not funded by the County Council other than the officer support provided.
- Members also commented on the linkages between the County Councils work on priorities and the use of resources in other organisations. The example of work on public health improvement was cited, suggesting that if work by the Council's Public Health team to increase smoking cessation led to reduced costs to the NHS, the savings could be shared. The Deputy Leader commented on partnership working on these issues through the Health and Wellbeing Board and suggested specific questions could be directed to the Board itself.
- Comments were made about the commissioning process and the Deputy Leader reiterated that commissioning was a process and mindset that ensured the way services were designed, delivered the desired outcomes effectively.
- The importance of effective community engagement and consultation was highlighted, with Members expressing concern that views expressed during consultation often didn't lead to meaningful change. The Deputy Leader highlighted the Cabinet's role in leadership and stressed that consultation often reflected that this leadership had determined a response to an issue before seeking views on whether there were realistic alternatives. He highlighted that where significant issues or material alternatives were presented, this would lead to changes.
- In response to a question, the Deputy Leader agreed to share the feedback from the Peer Review undertaken in the Autumn with the Committee.

RESOLVED – That

- 1) The progress with the development of the strategic plan for 2014 to 2018 be noted.
- 2) The draft strategic plan be considered at the January 2014 meeting.
- 3) The feedback from the Local Government Association Peer Review be shared with the Committee.

23. 2012 Legacy and the Sportshire Agenda

The Committee considered the report of the Director for Place which highlighted how the 2012 Olympic legacy was being used to drive forward local priorities.

The report highlighted the work of the 2012 Steering Group, which included District Councils as well as health and education partners, in developing a Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Legacy Action Plan. This action plan included a 2012 charter, which partners had signed up to. This committed them to achieving a sporting legacy locally that would contribute to increasing economic prosperity through a strong sport and leisure offer improving visitor numbers as well as health benefits through increased participation in sport. To support this process, the County Council had funded a post to

coordinate legacy work under the Sportshire branding. Members were given a presentation by the Sportshire coordinator which included a montage of moments from the Olympic Games to highlight the level of inspiration and momentum generated as a result of its success. She also highlighted tangible outcomes for the County, including the £0.5 million of economy activity generated through the torch relay visits to the County and the over £51 million worth of contracts for the games won by Staffordshire businesses. In addition, international teams – including the Pakistan Hockey team – had based themselves in the County and it was hoped that this would lead to opportunities relating to future world class sporting events. She also referred to the continuing development of the Sportshire Strategy to address key issues for the County including increasing the impact of sport related activity on economic growth, improving the tourism offer for the County to increase visitor spend and impact on obesity. This all fed into the overall vision to make Staffordshire a better place to live, work and visit.

During the discussion on the report and presentation, the following points were raised:-

- Increasing participation in sport to improve health outcomes was only part of an overall picture. Members also highlighted links with licensing activity and the proliferation of hot food takeaways as other contributory factors.
- Members highlighted the importance of inspirational examples to encourage participation, linked into giving children sporting opportunities at a young age. Mark Thornewill, Partnership Director of Sport across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent referred to additional funding announced for Primary Schools to support sport in schools that could be used for a range of purposes, including training for teachers or on sports coaching. In response to further questions around sport in primary school not being prioritised he referred to new Ofsted inspection guidelines that would start to address this issue.
- The role of the voluntary sector and bodies such as local sports councils was raised, with Members commenting on the need to increase capacity to support smaller clubs with accessing funding streams. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Localism reiterated the importance of the commitment from members of the voluntary sector to support grass roots sport.
- Members queried the level of inter school sports taking place. Mark Thornewill referred to the national School Games programme which operated across several levels which included internal activity as well as competition between schools including a Staffordshire school games festival. He also referred to a programme of community sports days organised locally, of which there had been 44 in the past year.
- In response to further questions about the level of economic activity generated through sport, the Cabinet Member highlighted the diverse range of activity captured, including sporting goods, leisure and tourism spend. Members also commented on the potential for Staffordshire residents to access opportunities outside the County and improving linkages. The Commissioner for Tourism and the Cultural County highlighted work that was underway to improve linkages across the tourism offer, including coordinating packages of events to include additional attractions.
- Members referred to the impact of the Paralympic games and expressed concern that disabled people hadn't been included in the presentation. Mark Thornewill referred to ongoing work to encourage disabled sport, including a designated Aiming High Inspire club in each district.

- A query was raised about investment in facilities to encourage participation by attracting additional investment and capacity to host major events. Mark Thornewill advised that district councils were responsible for developing playing field strategies that would feed into a sub regional facilities plan that would be developed by April 2014. This facilities plan would be used to inform future work.

RESOLVED – That the Committee endorse the principles underpinning the development of the County Council’s Sportshire vision and framework in the context of the County’s business priorities and community outcomes.

24. Work Programme

The Committee considered its work programme for the remainder of the municipal year. The Democracy Manager highlighted the fact that the Committee would have a further opportunity to comment on the strategic plan at its January meeting and would also receive an update on how the authority was using customer insight. He also advised that the Committee would need to arrange an additional meeting at the end of January to allow the Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group to complete their work prior to making any recommendations to Cabinet.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year be approved.

Chairman