

**Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Meeting held on 23
January 2015**

Present: Brian Edwards (Chairman)

Ann Beech	Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Len Bloomer	Sheree Peaple
Maureen Compton	Martyn Tittley (Vice-Chairman)
Tim Corbett	Paul Woodhead
Geoff Martin	Candice Yeomans

Also in attendance: Ben Adams and Mike Lawrence

Apologies: George Adamson and Geoff Morrison

PART ONE

27. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Adamson and Morrison.

28. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

29. Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 18 December 2014

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 18 December 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to amendment that the reference to Needwood Forest on page 2 should read Newborough.

30. Libraries in a Connected Staffordshire (part 3)

The Cabinet Member summarised the work that had been undertaken over the last twelve months to adapt and reposition the library service to enable it to remain a sustainable, relevant and valued part of the community and to deliver £1.325m savings. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the feedback from consultations with the public, staff and Trade Unions, petitions and debate in full Council. Key themes of the proposals put forward were assessed against criteria and following evaluation by two independent evaluators, they have been incorporated into the development of new proposals. The consultation process had also highlighted the opportunity for further exploration of a number of themed suggestions that can be developed in parallel to the proposed model. The Commissioner for Tourism and the Cultural County summarised the key changes in a presentation to the Committee:

All libraries will remain part of the County Council network of libraries.

The terms 'Extra' and 'Core' have been removed.

All libraries which were initially proposed as 'Extra' or 'Core' are all part of one category - Staffordshire County Council Managed/SCC Delivered libraries where the County Council will continue to manage and deliver the full library service, sharing space, where possible, with a wide range of partners to facilitate access to extra services.

Community organisations in several locations have expressed an interest in managing their local library. The Council will work with those organisations using the agreed criteria to propose to Cabinet how the Council will contract with and support community organisations to manage and deliver their local services. These libraries that will be known as Community Managed/Community Delivered libraries.

Finally, where no community group has currently expressed an interest in managing their local library, these libraries will be SCC Managed/SCC delivered libraries where the Council will retain responsibility for the library building and the service will be managed by the Council. Day to day operations and any enhancements to the service will be undertaken by volunteers.

Community Managed/Community Delivered and SCC Managed/Community Delivered will have access to paid members of support staff.

Training and support to volunteers and an online portal to support volunteers will be established and an enhanced Library Plus (online service) is also being investigated. The mobile and travelling library service will be subject to a review in 2015. The schools library service will be considered as a fully traded service and the prison library service as a fully funded service by the Ministry of Justice. With Cabinet's agreement the functions that County Council must ensure it can provide as a commissioner of a library service will be translated into organisational structures and job roles as part of the transition process. All aspects of the library service will be reviewed and reduction in the number of roles and redundancies may result. Consultation with Trade Unions will continue. Library opening hours will also be reviewed. The process will begin next month with procurement commencing in June 2015. In June-September 2015 work will take place with community organisations, with further decisions on procurement in September. In October 2015 Community Managed/Community Delivered libraries will be established.

Members asked for a list of libraries in each category. The list of libraries in each category is still being finalised but it remains the Council's aspiration that SCC Managed/Community Delivered libraries will become Community Managed over time. The County Commissioner stated that at this stage the Committee was being asked to comment on the proposed model. A list of libraries in each category would be available in summer 2015.

Members asked for further detail on the access that Community Managed/Community Delivered libraries would have to paid staff. The Council will work with each library to identify the level of support required and will put in a structure to ensure there is effective support. Staff will work with Friends of and other organisations to ensure there is a link between Community managed and Community delivered libraries.

Members asked if the intention was to move all libraries to the Community Managed/Community Delivered model over time and expressed concerns about the availability of volunteer support and long term viability. There will be an assessment of the skills and functions required to provide effective support. There is a need to grow capacity and a model will be built that will support communities going forward. The level of support required may change over time but reassurance was given that it would be there.

Members referred to the development of the on-line portal and the need to ensure that this is well-managed and regularly updated to be effective. The on-line portal will be an integral part of the training package and will be available for volunteers. Management of and support for the on-line portal will be built into the revised staffing model.

Members asked if there would be break clauses built into the contracts with community organisations. The Council is taking legal advice and investigating what is happening in other parts of the country with a view to developing robust legal agreements that are not open to challenge. Discussions will take place with community organisations on how the agreement can be shaped, bearing in mind the Members' concerns.

Members asked what would happen if volunteers did not come forward to run local libraries. A concern was expressed that volunteers may not come forward from deprived areas. There had been a good response to the request for expressions of interest from volunteers from all areas. The Council will now take this forward to the next stage of development, working with volunteers to grow the volunteer base during the transition period and they will work with VAST (support and advice for the voluntary and community sector in Staffordshire) and Support Staffordshire to train volunteers, reviewing the capacity to move volunteers around, as required. Volunteers would have access to the same training as paid staff, with initial and on-the-job training being provided.

Members expressed concern regarding the long-term viability of Community Managed/Community Delivered libraries, given the reliance on volunteers. The County Commissioner reiterated that these libraries would still be part of the Staffordshire library network and as such were part of a professionally managed service with access to support for volunteers. This should ensure the long term sustainability of libraries.

The Chairman asked if the Community Council for Staffordshire had been involved in developments. The Council had involved them in discussions and would keep communication channels open going forward.

Members also asked that Parish and Town Councils be asked to identify volunteers, requesting the Council to give an indication as to how many hours volunteers might be expected to commit. They also asked how many library staff would be made redundant. Parish and Town Councils had been an important part of the consultation and will be important partners going forward. It will be possible to identify the number of volunteer hours required as timetables for libraries will be developed. The County Commissioner indicated that all roles in libraries were being reviewed and staffing structures developed. This process is just beginning so it was not possible to give an indication of the numbers of staff that would be made redundant. However, roles will be different going forward.

In response to a question by Members asking if profit making or commercial businesses could take over libraries and if preference would be given to non-profit making businesses, the County Commissioner indicated that non-profit making organisations had expressed an interest and their business cases would be evaluated. The Cabinet Member responded that he would consider a library being co-located within a building where a business is taking place. The Committee expressed concern regarding the long-term viability of Community Managed libraries reflecting on the transfer of some public sector functions that had resulted in them being taken over by private businesses. The Cabinet Member stated that the Council was a commissioning authority but there was no intention for this to happen with the library service. He said that his ambition was that a community based organisation managed Community Managed/Community Delivered Libraries in the next three years.

Responding to a question from Members for examples of places where Community Managed/Community Delivered Libraries existed, the County Commissioner explained that Warwickshire was an advanced model with 16 libraries that were Community Managed/Community Delivered and officers from the Council had been advising and supporting Staffordshire. Members reiterated the importance of a good support network for library volunteers.

The Director of Place wished to place on record her thanks to the County Commissioner and the Libraries and Arts Manager for their hard work and the Cabinet Member thanked library staff for their positive attitude and engagement throughout the process. The Committee endorsed the Cabinet Member and Directors' thanks to the County Commissioner and Library and Arts Manager for their work.

RESOLVED- That a) the report was accepted;
b) the Cabinet Member was asked to take on board the comments of Members in taking his report to Cabinet in February; and,
c) the Cabinet Member report progress to the Committee in six month's time.

31. Educational Achievement in Staffordshire

The Cabinet Member introduced Jim Tarpey, interim Director of Education, Trudy Pyatt, Senior Commissioning lead for School Improvement – School Improvement and Tim Moss, County Manager for Education.

The Cabinet Member summarised the overall educational achievement of, and work that had been done on school improvement in, Staffordshire during 2013/14. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that Staffordshire schools are improving in a number of key areas and levels of attainment and progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are excellent. The focus in 2014/15 will be at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 where Staffordshire schools need to accelerate improvements and there are variations in attainment between districts and for different pupil groups, such as those eligible for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium. The responsibility for school performance lie with school governors and head teachers and the wider local authority education team support them. Some schools in Staffordshire are now working in formal networks to support each other and there is increasing emphasis on the performance of those

networks. The Council has adopted a policy of intervening earlier to provide commissioned support through our school partner Entrust (or other partners) to schools and this is having some impact. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the importance of educational attainment, of which results are one indicator, but stated the importance of ensuring that pupils are happy, healthy physically, mentally and spiritually. He would be working closely with public health colleagues on well being and doing more to help pupils and parents make an informed careers' choice. Bright Futures (a parents' guide to careers) had been set up and briefings on this service had begun.

The Senior Commissioning lead indicated her intention to focus support and advice to school leaders at KS2 and KS4 in response to the results detailed in the report. The County Manager explained the attainment summaries in the report drawing attention to the fact that there had not been compulsory national collection of teacher assessments at KS3 in 2014, and so there were no national or statistical neighbour results for comparison. At KS4 there had been changes introduced by the Secretary of State that had impacted on what qualifications counted toward key measures. Mr Tarpey added that there were not enough outstanding schools in Staffordshire and he would be working with schools in Cannock to move them from Good to Outstanding. Enabling more National Leaders of Education would help.

Members asked if the trend for schools to transfer to becoming academies impacted on results at KS4, noting that some results in Tamworth were disappointing. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that results in Tamworth (and Cannock) were a focus of his attention. Strong leadership and embedding aspiration were fundamental. Some academy schools were doing well, however some were doing poorly. The results of pupils in academies were taken seriously, but the local authority was not represented on governing bodies and cannot apply the same level of encouragement. He was pleased that Regional Schools Commissioners were monitoring the performance of academy and free school governing bodies and ensuring robust governance. The Cabinet Member considered that the same issues existed across academy and non academy schools. The Cabinet Member was pleased that the new school strategy was having an impact. Regular meetings were held between commissioners and academies to discuss performance.

Mr Tarpey stated that he has a strategic lead in Cannock and would be happy to take up discussions with the local Tamworth Member on education matters in her area.

The Senior Commissioning lead highlighted good progress that had taken place in Tamworth and described a peer to peer project that had taken taking place in primary schools to tackle school performance, working with Her Majesty's Inspector. The project had been supported by national and local education leaders from Newcastle under Lyme and this project would be extended to East Staffordshire in spring 2015 There was another project on work scrutiny in Tamworth. Progress was also being made in the Cannock area. Last term a range of briefings were provided for head teachers and this showed that Cannock was one of the most improved districts and was moving at pace. Working with local Councillors in their local areas to discuss school performance had been positive and councillors had a key role in encouraging schools to work together.

Members emphasised the importance of teachers in making a difference in schools. Head teachers and governors are responsible for performance management systems

and ensuring teachers reach the national teaching standard and that progress is good and moderated across the school to ensure consistency. Governors have an important role in triangulating evidence across the whole school and challenging and supporting the head teacher. It was added that it is important to attract, retain and develop teachers in Staffordshire and encourage support in individual schools and in clusters.

Members asked if it would be possible to separate academy results in the statistics. The Cabinet Member explained that an analysis showed similar issues and gaps as for non-academy schools.

In regard to the KS2 results Members noted that small improvements could result in a significant change in the National Rank, much of which was outside our control. In KS4 Staffordshire was above the national average but in the third quartile nationally. Members asked if this was down to the very poor performance of a few schools. The County Manager confirmed that there would be 9,000 pupils in this cohort and a 1% movement would therefore represent 90 pupils. Members asked if it was more important for Staffordshire to be above the national average than to consider which quartile they were in. The County Manager stated that it was important to look at both measures. The aspiration of the local authority is to perform as the best. Therefore to be in the higher quartiles would reflect this aspiration.

Members acknowledged the importance of school governors and of collaboration, particularly for new governors who can feel isolated. However, many schools have not engaged in the Governors' Forum. Members asked what governors could do to promote better engagement between governors.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged the important contribution that the Governors' Forum over the last twelve months. However, some schools do not recognise the value of alliances with other schools and that more needed to be done to encourage similar schools to network. A cultural change was required amongst governors but good results have been achieved where schools have reached out to partners and communities. Following consultation with Uttoxeter residents on proposals to change from a three tier to two school organisation model, it had become evident that more needed to be done to share with parents the results of schools in the local area, to raise community expectations and drive improvements.

Members asked for clarification on the KS2 assessments and tests data and asked if the expected progress was assessed by teacher assessment and at KS3.

At the end of KS2 reading and maths are tests. For the last three years writing at KS2 has been based on a teacher assessment. Expected progress is based on a figure at the end of KS1 – two levels of progress from KS1 to end of KS2. However, Staffordshire expects more than two levels of progress. For KS3 information is not statutorily collected nationally, but is based on a teacher assessment.

Members considered the APS (average points score) per entry at A Level and Equivalent confusing. However, it was pointed out that from a higher education point of view it was easier to measure APS as there are a wider variety of qualifications (apart from A levels) that are taken into account at the end of Key Stage 5.

Members offered to set up a Working Group to monitor the school improvement strategy. The Cabinet Member stated that he would welcome scrutiny engagement but proposed that scrutiny involvement be deferred until summer 2015 to allow time for the School Improvement Strategy, new roles and the pilot studies to take effect. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Cabinet Member give further consideration to the scope of this item and that it be deferred until June/July 2015.

RESOLVED – That: a) the report be accepted; and
b) further consideration be given to undertaking further detailed scrutiny of school improvement in June/July 2015.

32. Work Programme

There were no comments on the Work Programme.

33. Exclusion of the Public

34. Exempt Minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 18 December 2014

RESOLVED – That the exempt minutes of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee held on 23 January 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Chairman

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.