

WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

15TH NOVEMBER 2018, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors R. J. Laight (Chairman), P. J. Whittaker, Mrs. B. Behan, Prosser (Vice-Chairman), P. Witherspoon (Substitute), J. Squires, A. Feeney, M. King, J. Smith and J. Baker

Partner Officers: Mr. P. Merrick, Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council and Ms. A. Davey, Worcester City Council.

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. S. Wilkes, Ms. C. Flanagan, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. D. Mellors and Ms. A. Scarce

19/18

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Fisher, Redditch Borough Council, J. Owenson, Malvern Hills District Council.

It was noted that Councillor P. Witherspoon was in attendance as substitute for Councillor J. Fisher, Redditch Borough Council.

Apologies for absence were also received from Mr. M. Parker, Wyre Forest District Council.

20/18

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

21/18

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 4th October 2018 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 4th October 2018 be approved as a correct record.

22/18

REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2018

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources, Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC) introduced the report and in so doing drew Members attention to a number of areas, including:

- The detailed revenue report at appendix 1 and the assumptions which had been made.
- Vacant posts within the services and projected savings in salaries, which had been offset by the costs associated with additional agency staff.
- The inclusion of three technical officers within the salary figures.
- A technical officer specifically funded by Worcester City Council to work on Gull Control for a two year fixed term contract.
- The detailed explanations within the report were highlighted, in respect of overspends for Pest Control and Taxi/Alcohol and other licensing functions.
- The total income achieved.

Following a brief discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the final financial position for the period April – September 2018 be noted;
- (b) that partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2018-19 in relation to Bereavements / Pest Control, as follows:

Council	Apr–Sept Actual Bereavements £000	18 for	Estimated for Pest Control £000	2018/19 Control
Redditch	6		5	
Malvern	3			
Worcs City	9			
Bromsgrove	1			
Wychavon			3	
Wyre Forest			1	
Total	19		9	

and

- (c) that partner councils be informed of their liabilities for 2018-19 in relation to three additional Technical Officers recruited, as follows:

Council	Estimated 2018/19 Tech Officer Primary Authority £000	Estimated 2018/19 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated 2018/19 Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Redditch	3	1	
Malvern	3	3	
Worcs City	3	1	8

Bromsgrove	3	2	
Wychavon	4	3	
Wyre Forest	3	1	
Total	19	11	8

23/18

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGETS 2019-20 TO 2021-22

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources BDC and RBC presented the budget for 2019/20 to 2021/22. A number of areas were highlighted in presentation of the report, including:

- A 2% pay award across all staff for 2019/20 and a 1% award for 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- Pension back fund deficit paid in advance by all partners.
- The increase in employees' budget which took account of the additional staff.
- Additional income for unavoidable salary pressures.
- Partner contributions, it was understood Wyre Forest District Council were looking to make savings for 2019/20 which may impact on the figures and necessitate this being revisited at the February meeting of the Board.

The Head of Regulatory Services advised that he had spoken to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, Wyre Forest District Council, to discuss how savings could be made without impacting on the statutory duties of the Council. This may mean a minor change to the percentages detailed in the report.

Councillor A. Feeney, Worcester City Council, highlighted that the amount previously agreed for the Gull Control had been £15k and asked that the report be amended accordingly.

Following presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of areas in more detail:

- The income increase without any increase in resources and whether this was achievable. Officers confirmed that this would be monitored as it was acknowledged there was the possibility that the income generated would plateau and if this became a concern then consideration would be made as to whether further funding needed to be made available.
- Members asked that in view of this whether it would be appropriate to report back to the Board and it was confirmed that Officers had planned to bring a report back to the September 2019 meeting.
- Concerns that only 1% had been factored in for salary increased in 2020-22. The Executive Director, Finance and Resources confirmed that this was the figure which had been used by

Bromsgrove and Redditch as a base figure and should it be any higher then this would be picked up at a later date.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the gross expenditure budget of £3,506k as shown in Appendix 1 of the report be approved;
- (b) that the income budget of £489k as shown in Appendix 1 of the report be approved;
- (c) that the revenue budget allocations for 2019/20 – 2021/22 be approved;

Bromsgrove	£439k
Malvern	£386k
Redditch	£529k
Worcester City	£499k
Wychavon	£701k
Wyre Forest	£463k
Total	£3,017k

- (d) that the revised partner percentage allocations for 2019/20 onwards be approved:-

	%
Bromsgrove	14.55
Malvern	12.79
Redditch	17.53
Worcester City	16.54
Wychavon	23.24
Wyre Forest	15.35

- (e) that the additional partner liabilities in relation to three additional Technical Officers be approved;

Council	Tech Officer Primary Authority £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Redditch	5	2	
Malvern	4	10	
Worcs City	5	4	15
Bromsgrove	4	6	
Wychavon	7	9	
Wyre Forest	5	5	
Total	30	36	15

and

- (f) that, the approved level of budget allocations be advised to partner Councils through discussions with S151 Officers.

24/18

ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2

The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager presented the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 report and highlighted that, as usual, licensing and environmental health nuisances continued to provide the greatest demand on officer time. It was noted that an increased number of complaints which related to filthy and verminous premises had been received in quarter 2. Work on the investigation of pollution offences around the renewable heat incentive, which had been reported at the previous meeting continued with Technical Services undertaking its third enforcement operation in this area.

Further areas within the report which were highlighted, included:

- A correction in respect of sickness figures from the previous report. The recalculated figure for quarter 1 was 1.83 days per FTE with quarter 2 being 2.77. This was a significant improvement on the previous year.
- Cumulatively business satisfaction showed a slight increase, with food businesses remaining at around 98%, which demonstrated that food businesses across the county were well run.
- There continued to be concerns around the return rates for customer satisfaction and a review had commenced to look at this.
- It was noted that 56 compliments against 15 complaints had been received and this was a similar ratio to previous years, despite the dip in customer satisfaction.
- The total income was slightly behind target at 4.7% of base budget; however officers believed that further income from Primary Authority work and other sources would see this increase in the second half of the year.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed the number of public houses which had closed within the county in the last 12 months. Whilst officers did not have this information to hand it was noted that although this could have an impact on some areas, that those public houses which remained open were diversifying in what they offered to the public, for example entertainment, which in turn provided other challenges.

The role of the dog wardens was also discussed including whether cruelty to dogs was part of the role. It was confirmed that with the engagement of two new dog wardens, animal welfare work in certain circumstances would also be addressed.

Councillor P. Witherspoon, Redditch Borough Council, raised concerns in respect of defective vehicles, as the highest level was in Redditch. It was confirmed that this referred to taxis and Officers agreed to ask the examiner from the depot to attend a Redditch Licensing Committee to discuss his work. This may help Members to understand the process undertaken prior to a vehicle coming to them for inspection as part of their role on sub committees, for age criteria vehicles, although it does not form part of their assessment.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarter 2 report be noted.

25/18

DUTY DESK INFORMATION REPORT

The Business and Relationships Manager presented the Duty Desk Information Report which gave an insight into the work of the team, which was the first point of contact for all WRS regulatory services matters. Members were reminded that originally this service had been undertaken by the Worcestershire Hub and following a request for additional funding; Officers recommended that the service should take its own calls. After a period of transition and review for this provision, Officers thought it would be helpful to provide Members with a report which would allow them a better understanding of how the team operated and the type of calls WRS were taking on behalf of partners.

Members were provided with details around the current position and how the team was made up, together with details of the types of calls the duty desk handle. It was important for Members to note that this was not seen as a call centre, with the aim being to, wherever possible, answer the query immediately and close it at the first point of contact. It was therefore highlighted that measures such as how quickly the call was answered were no longer relevant. However, call waiting times were reviewed together with abandoned calls.

It was noted that the website had been reviewed in 2017 to encourage more consumer engagement and understanding of the service provided. It had also been made more user-friendly and accessible. The team had also worked with Wyre Forest IT and introduced an automated phone messaging system in order to reduce waiting times, get customers to the right person more quickly, reduce the number of callers that required a difference service and filter contract work. Officers also drew Members attention to table 2 which showed a comparison of calls taken and abandoned in 2017 and 2018, which showed a decrease in the number of abandoned calls.

Following presentation of the report, Members raised a number of queries which were discussed in more detail, this included:

- Whether the increase in calls received for star/lost dogs related to increased publicity of the service.

- Members had received positive feedback from residents on the service provided and it was questioned whether the use of “live chat” had been considered – officers advised that this would be dependent on the software available and whether there was sufficient resources to cover such a service, but it was something which could be discussed with the web development team at Wyre Forest District Council, who provided IT support to WRS.
- The service requested by District detailed in Table 4 and whether these had any budgetary implications for each district. Officers confirmed that these were purely for information purposes and there was more significant work carried out behind the scenes which was used to calculate the percentages for each District for the annual budgets.

RESOLVED that the Duty Desk Information Report be noted.

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TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, EQUALITIES AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.

The Head of Regulatory Services and Members took the opportunity to thank the Business and Relationships Manager for her and her team’s hard work and gave their best wishes to her for her forthcoming maternity leave.

The meeting closed at 5.25 p.m.

Chairman