

JOINT WRS SCRUTINY TASK GROUP – FINAL REPORT

Outcome of Presentation to Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee

2nd October 2014

It was noted that Recommendation 6 had been addressed at the Joint Committee's previous meeting and that Recommendation 12 had been agreed and required action by partners' Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Recommendation 6

In order to reduce the focus on financial considerations which currently play a major part in influencing partner participation, to the detriment of other equally important aspects of the service, the following should be addressed:

- (a) A new business model for WRS be developed through the Chief Executives' Panel, building on the proposals already being produced by the Panel.
- (b) Consideration be given to the option for partner authorities to purchase an "out of hours service".

Recommendation 12

- (a) The Joint Scrutiny Protocol should be reviewed in order to take on board the lessons learned during this review.
- (b) Consideration should be given to the reinstatement of the Worcestershire Overview and Scrutiny Chairs Group as a means of feeding back the monitoring of recommendations from Joint Scrutiny exercises, as and when required.

The following recommendations were resolved by the Joint Committee:

Recommendation 1

Performance Management Information should continue to be made available for Members' consideration at every meeting of the Joint Committee and be sufficiently high on the agenda to be discussed in detail.

Recommendation 2

Twelve months after the new contact centre arrangements for WRS have been introduced, replacing the use of the Worcestershire Hub; the Joint Committee should review the effectiveness of these arrangements for communicating with the public.

Recommendation 3

The web-pages of each partner authority should be regularly monitored to ensure they are kept up to date, with the inclusion of a prominent and obvious link to the WRS website.

Recommendation 4

The purpose, content and circulation of the WRS newsletter should be thoroughly reviewed, with a view to it providing a more systematic and comprehensive account of the work and performance of the shared service and with the content and format being agreed by the Joint Committee.

Recommendation 5

That WRS have a designated member of staff to act as a Member Liaison Officer and as a single point of contact to signpost Member enquiries.

Recommendation 11

The lessons learned from the WRS shared service experience, particularly as detailed in this report, should be heeded by elected members and senior officers when considering any future proposals for shared service arrangements involving multiple partners.

In respect of Recommendations 7, 8, 9 and 10 the Joint Committee requested Officers to bring forward alternative proposals to address the issues raised within these recommendations.

Recommendation 7

A new strategic decision making board for WRS should replace the Joint Committee, comprising one elected member per partner authority and supported by senior officers. This should be called the WRS Board.

- (a) Meetings of this Board should take place at the base of WRS.
- (b) Responsibility for attendance at Board meetings should lie with each authority's representative, and the quorum for meetings proceeding should be set at 5 representatives in attendance.
- (c) Meetings of the Board should take place bi-monthly.
- (d) Elected members appointed to the Board should be provided with an induction programme and sufficient ongoing training to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.
- (e) Members appointed to the Board be expected to serve a minimum of two years to ensure continuity.
- (f) The Chair of the WRS Board should be elected annually by the members of the Board.

Recommendation 8

The Management Board be disbanded, with the WRS Management Team taking the lead responsibility for operational decision making under the leadership of the Head of Regulatory Services.

Recommendation 9

- (a) The Head of WRS should be fully accountable to the WRS Board (as the strategic decision making body).
- (b) The Chief Executive of the host authority to act in a mentoring role as and when necessary.

Recommendation 10

- (a) All decisions made by the WRS Board be formally reported back to all elected members of the partner authorities in a timely manner.
- (b) Attention should be paid to communicating updates about any planned changes to WRS services to all elected members of partner authorities.
- (c) The agendas and minutes of all WRS Board meetings should also be uploaded on to the WRS website in a timely fashion.

***Amanda Scarce/Jess Bayley - Democratic Services Officers
Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils
3rd October 2014***