

WORCESTERHSIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS AND COUNTY C O U N C I L

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES

MEETING OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

8TH OCTOBER 2015 AT 4.54 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors B. Behan (Chairman), E. Stokes (Vice-Chairman)
P. Whittaker, J. Fisher, B. Clayton, M. Johnson, A. N. Blagg,
S. Chambers and J. Hart

Observers: Mr. D. Sutton, Worcester City Council, Mr. N. Anderson,
Worcestershire County Council, Mrs. S. Garratt, Worcestershire
Regulatory Services, Mr. D. Mellors, Worcestershire Regulatory Services
and Mr. M. Cox, Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Mr. I. Pumfrey, Ms. C. Flanagan, Ms. S. Morgan
and Mrs. P. Ross

12/15 **APOLOGIES**

The Chairman apologised for the late start of the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Laight, Bromsgrove District Council, D. Chambers, Malvern Hills District Council, A. Roberts. Worcester City Council, L. Hodgson, Worcestershire County Council and M. King, Wychavon District Council.

13/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

14/15 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 25th June 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

15/15 **PROGRESS ON RECONSTRUCTION OF WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES PARTNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURING OF WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES**

Following on from the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee meeting on 25th June 2015, where Members approved recommendations to partner authorities for the dissolution and reconstitution of the Joint

Committee; Members were provided with an update on the progress of the approval of those recommendations.

The Chairman, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Management Board introduced the report and in doing so informed Members that partner authorities were progressing with the approval of the recommendations, as agreed by the Joint Committee in June 2015. Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Wyre Forest District Council and Wychavon District Council have completed the approval process, with the recommendations being resolved. Malvern Hills District Council would present the recommendations to their Council meeting by the end of October 2015.

Members were further informed that Worcestershire County Council had not yet confirmed a date when the recommendations would be considered by its Cabinet, as it was considering other possible arrangements for provision of their trading standards services. Worcester City Council (WCC) had made a decision to defer consideration of this matter until the position with WCC was clear.

The WRS Senior Management Team had been appointed and in post as of 28th September 2015. The Business and Relationship Manager's position would be advertised externally within the forthcoming weeks.

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman took the opportunity to welcome and congratulate Mr. Simon Wilkes on his new role as Head of WRS. The Chairman also welcomed the WRS Senior Management Team to the meeting.

The Chairman, (WRS) Management Board responded to the concerns raised by Members with regard to the fact that the reconstitution of the shared services partnership required the unanimous agreement of all current and future partners.

He informed Members that the rationale behind the dissolution and reconstitution of the Joint Committee was to create an environment whereby licensing and environmental health were sustainable, with WCC having an agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA) for trading standards. It was agreed that delegation would be given to the Head of WRS to agree the terms of reference for this SLA.

As highlighted at the June 2015 Joint Committee meeting, the extant partnership agreement as of 1st June 2010 contained provisions enabling partners to leave the partnership following the required notice period given and the terms of exit agreed by all partners.

The Chairman emphasised that assumptions were being made as to what WCC aspired to and therefore there were currently no specific answers.

Councillor J. Fisher, Redditch Borough Council stated that one of the key drivers for changing the partnership was to enable WCC to become a customer of WRS, with an agreed SLA, there was never any mention of WCC taking trading standards back 'in house'.

The Chairman, (WRS) Management Board highlighted that the revised working model would give the partnership a means of managing change; more so than the current model. If one partner authority decided to leave the current partnership, the whole thing would drop. A partner authority who decided to leave the partnership was required to follow an exit strategy. There was a requirement that the partner authority would give twelve months exit notice at the annual meeting of the Joint Committee.

Councillor A. Blagg, WCC, informed the Committee that all partner authorities had voted for the change to the partnership in June 2015. The changes had highlighted that WCC would not be a partner, but a customer of the service. WCC wanted the best trading standards service for the County. No decision had been made and WCC were moving as fast as possible. The appointment of the new Head of WRS would enable discussions to continue with regard to a SLA. He was not in a position to clarify everything, but with regards to the questions and concerns raised regarding timescales, WCC were looking at their Council meeting cycle.

Councillor M. Johnson, Worcester City Council, stated that Worcester City Council would look to see what WCC would do and at their exit strategy. Worcester City Council would also look at the SLA, as a council looking to outsource more services. He would, however, reiterate that they were still part of the current partnership.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted, and
- (b) that the contribution to the success of Worcestershire Regulatory Services made by Mark Kay, Business Manager and Chris Philips, Trading Standards and Animal Health Manager, be acknowledged.

16/15

ENDORSEMENT OF WORCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered a report on Worcestershire Regulatory Services participation in Worcestershire County Council's Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategy Action Plan.

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) introduced the report and informed Members that the action plan had been prepared for the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board and drawn up by the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategic Group. The action plan identified the actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the key priorities and target areas as detailed in the Strategy.

Members were further informed that all Local Authorities and other relevant bodies had been asked to endorse the action plan. WRS were keen to show support and to play a key role in raising awareness with licensed premises and hackney carriage and private hire licensed drivers.

The key responsibilities within the Strategic Plan for WRS were detailed at section 3.3.4 to 3.3.6 in the action plan. In line with its responsibilities under the action plan, WRS had incorporated guidance leaflets (as included with the report) within its application processes. This was to raise awareness of CSE amongst the licensed trade, both for premises licence holders and the taxi trade. The guidance leaflets would be routinely added to outgoing granted licence packs.

The Head of WRS further informed Members that there were approximately 2,500 licensed taxi drivers within Worcestershire, therefore a phased approach to CSE awareness raising would be taken by WRS licensing officers.

CSE awareness raising had been included as an agenda item at recent Tax Forum meetings so that trade representatives could pass the relevant information onto their members (the majority of districts had active tax forums).

The action plan detailed and highlighted the complexity of Child Sexual Exploitation. The action plan would be actively monitored and revised over time to reflect any new issues or particular actions that emerged and needed to be addressed.

The Head of WRS responded to Members' questions with regard to the issuing and dissemination of information to licensed premises with a focus on 'hotspot' areas. He explained that 'hotspot' areas would be sensitive information provided by West Mercia Police and other relevant partners. He would, as suggested by Members, include the 999 emergency number in the WRS guidance leaflets; but would highlight that calls to the 999 emergency number should only be made if there was any immanent risk or immediate danger.

The Head of WRS reassured Members that whilst focusing on CSE awareness raising, that older and vulnerable people would still remain a priority for WRS officers.

Members stated that they had welcomed the report and the involvement of WRS in awareness raising of CSE. Following on from the recent high profile independent inquiries into CSE, whilst Worcestershire had not had any high profile cases or incidents identified and reported on, it should still be an overarching priority to increase the knowledge and understanding of CSE within the Worcestershire area.

RESOLVED that Worcestershire Regulatory Services participation in Worcestershire's Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy Action Plan be endorsed.

17/15

WRS REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - JUNE 2015 AND AUDITED ANNUAL RETURN

The Committee considered a report which detailed the financial position for the period April to June 2015.

The Finance Manager, Bromsgrove District Council introduced the report and in doing so informed the Committee that the report presented the final financial position for Worcestershire Regulatory Services for the period April to June 2015.

The Finance Manager, Bromsgrove District Council drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 to the report which highlighted a projected outturn underspend of £29,000. Members were asked to note that this was an estimate to the year-end, based on the current level of expenditure. The underspend was mainly due to:-

- Vacant posts within the service together with savings resulting from maternity leave, long term sick etc. Part of the underspend was offset by the costs associated with additional agency staff being used to cover the vacancies.
- There was a projected overspend on IT, this was due to the uncertainty with the ICT transfer. This may be reduced when arrangements are finalised.
- Income includes £72,000 worth of Disturbance Allowance, 50% to be recharged to Worcestershire County Council, with the remaining 50% to be split equally between the Districts. Contracts on Nuisance Work, Contaminated Land and Stray Dogs projected to generate £55,000 and Feed Grant received from CEnTSA £45,000.
- Any grant funded expenditure was shown separate to the core service costs as this was not funded by the participating Councils.

Members were further informed that should the service fund the pension deficit of £119,000 for 2015/2016 there would be a resulting overspend of £89,000. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the apportioned charge that would be attributed to each partner authority based on the percentage as agreed by the Joint Committee at the meeting held on 27th November 2014.

The ICT system implementation / mobile working budget was £179,000. There was no expenditure to June 2015 due to the move to Wyre Forest. Further consideration would be made with regard to the requirements of the team in relation to mobile working.

The Finance Manager drew Members' attention to the revised Annual Return as detailed at Appendix 2 to the report. Members were informed that the books and records maintained by the Joint Committee had treated finance leases and fixed assets consistently as per the host authority, Bromsgrove District Council. However External Audit had recommended that figures on the Annual Return should be in accordance with their Practitioners' Guide. Therefore finance leases had not been classed as borrowings and fixed assets were reported at cost price, as shown in the revised Annual Return at Appendix 2 to the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the final financial position for the period April to June 2015, be noted;

- (b) that the funding from partner authorities for the 2015/2016 pension deficit as detailed below, be approved, and

Council	2015-16 Pension Deficit £'000
Bromsgrove	14
Malvern Hills	12
Redditch	16
City of Worcester	16
Wychavon	21
Wyre Forest	15
Worcestershire County Council	25
	119

- (c) that the revised Annual Return 2014/2015, as detailed at Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

18/15

ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE DATA QUARTER 1

The Committee considered a report that covered both district and county functionality and the wide range of each local authorities corporate priorities to which regulatory services contributed. The report detailed Worcestershire Regulatory Services Activity Data for Quarters 1, 2015/2016.

The Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) informed the Committee that he had asked the WRS Senior Management Team to attend the meeting today to be introduced to Joint Committee Members.

The Chairman welcomed Mrs S. Garratt, Licensing and Support Manager, Mr. D. Mellors, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager and Mr. M. Cox, Technical Services Manager to the meeting.

The Head of WRS introduced the report and in doing so informed Members that the activity report, as detailed at Appendix A to the report, showed that consumer complaints in respect of Trading Standards functions remained at the same level as the last quarter, but were lower than quarter 1 in 2014/2015 and at a similar level to quarter 1 in 2013/2014. It was felt that this was due to the low level of promotion undertaken by Citizens Advice Consumer Service of their 0345 number to the public.

The two top areas were, as ever, second hand cars and home improvements however, for this quarter clothing had exceeded furniture as the third most complained about product. The report further detailed the reasons why this had occurred. The reduction in infectious disease notification related to a change in protocol, the recording of some issues being logged but not

actioned (effectively duplicating what Public Health England recorded) had ceased being recorded, only issues dealt with by WRS were now recorded.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, responded to questions from Members and in doing so, highlighted that the bar chart, as detailed on page 71 of the agenda, showed an upward trend in demand for planning requests for both support and discharge of conditions. This was linked to the increasing levels of development in various parts of the County. With regard to the information detailed for contaminated land, this was not purely contaminated land, but also included land with contamination issues, e.g. former industrial sites or contaminated as a result of natural occurrence, such as methane.

Questions were raised by Members with regard to the format of the information presented. The Chairman briefly explained that the current format had been agreed following the requests and suggestions made by Members at previous Joint Committee meetings. The Head of WRS agreed to liaise with the relevant officers to see if the data for the previous year could be produced in the same format. If possible he would provide Members with the information.

RESOLVED that the Activity Data Report, Quarter 1, 2015/2016, be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.42 p.m.

Chairman

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