

## Joint Committee

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016

# WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES Business Plan for Worcestershire Regulatory Services 2016-2019

## Recommendation

**That Joint Committee approve the updated approach outlined in the WRS business plan 2016/19**

## Report

Following on from the procurement exercise and in line with the leadership training undertaken by the management team, it was determined that Worcestershire Regulatory Service needed a plan to ensure both the viability of the service and its ability to operate within the financial envelopes available to the partners. This plan is now the high level document that will inform the development of the service for the foreseeable future.

The original plan included an explanation of how the service would accommodate a small Trading Standards and Animal Health presence to match the County Council's financial contribution. This is no longer necessary with the County Council's departure and other than mentioning its inclusion at the beginning of 2016, there is little mention of Trading Standards within the modified plan. This should not be taken as an indication that the service will no longer engage with the TS & AH team. The two services will continue to work closely as partners to exploit all opportunities from which both can benefit, as well as continuing to support each other in event of emergencies.

The Business Plan shows how WRS will:

- Provide a viable service within projected partner cost envelopes
- Understand what a base level of service, would look like for partners who need to reduce their financial contributions further in the current economic climate.
- Allow other partners to "buy back" additional service

levels above this, so there is no significant change to their current provision.

- Define what the standards of provision are in areas of common service delivery
- Provide details of plans to “Grow the Business” and increase income to maintain resilience in the face of continued austerity.

Whilst the recently published government settlement offers local authorities the opportunity of certainty of 4-year budgets, this comes with serious reductions in funding for all current partners. Clarity has yet to be achieved in terms of how the changes to funding, especially the move from RSG to Business Rates will leave all of the partners. In November 2015, when the WRS budget for 2016/17 was set, the difficulties to be faced in the near future were not clear. Partners had planned for difficulties but the scale of the challenge is beyond that envisaged. We will not see the impact of these formally for WRS until the next budget round going into 2017/18.

Income generation will remain a key factor in the service’s business strategy. It is possible that authorities may be encouraged to engage more with WRS and look more widely at contracting services to those who can offer expertise and resilience in service delivery. This will make the plan’s challenging income targets more deliverable. However, there are other bodies coming into the market (Shropshire’s outsourced regulatory team and the 2020 partnership, which is developing around West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils,) that may challenge WRS as alternative delivery options. Support from partners at all levels, but particularly Director, Chief Executive and Leader level may be necessary in selling WRS in what is becoming a significantly more competitive environment.

Following discussion with members at a session in November 2015, the set of performance indicators included in section 4.7 of the Business Plan has been amended, reflecting the discussion on that day. Indicator 13 will show income (effectively turnover,) as a proportion of partner contribution costs and indicator 14 is akin to the CIPFA type overall service cost indicator per head of population. Getting better indicators for licensing has proved problematic. The indicator for the quality/ safety of vehicles in use by the trade has been retained, but the other indicator reflects performance in processing of taxi license applications. We have chosen renewals as generally the whole of this process is within WRS’s control. New applications require criminal records checks and the time taken for these to be processed is notoriously variable. Finally, we have retained indicator 7, around people feeling better equipped to deal with their own problems in the future, however, we will look to work up an alternative during 2016/17 that might give a better indication of whether people are actually using the



## **Financial Implications**

self-help tools that we are offering.

The completed business plan will provide a template for delivering services within agreed cost envelopes and to defined standards.

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## **Background Documents**

WRS business plan 2016/19