

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board 21st June 2018

Chair's Report

Recommendation

That the Board notes the report.

Introduction

When the new legal agreement that came into effect on 1st April 2016, it was envisaged that the new operating arrangement for the partners would be reviewed at the end of 12-months to ensure that the arrangement is working in the envisaged way. Officer members of the Board felt it appropriate that this review be presented by the Chair of the Joint Board who oversaw this period. This gave the then Chair the opportunity to reflect on the events of her year chairing the Board. Going forward it was felt that the out-going Chair of the Board should be given the opportunity to highlight, from an elected member's perspective, the key events and elements delivered on behalf of partners by the service during the 12 months that they held the chair.

Report

This report gives an overview of the highlights that the Board covered during the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. The Board received a number of information reports alongside the standard activity data and financial reporting, which has allowed members to get a better understanding of the day to day work of the Regulatory Service and to understand the issues faced by our officers in trying to protect the public in each of the districts and also supporting the local businesses to thrive and grow.

Financial Reporting

Bromsgrove, as host, has provided the Board with timely and concise budget information so that the Board can ensure the financial probity of operational delivery. Occasionally concerns have been expressed over the presentation of the data, but generally officers have rectified any faults raised by Board members. The host's officers continue to provide the level of assurance that the Board requires.

Income generation has become the basis for maintaining the level of



service delivery that we, as partner authorities receive. Improving the picture of income coming into the service will be important going forward so that members can continue to have a good oversight of the service's finances. I would urge Bromsgrove, as host, to ensure that this is delivered.

Officers have established a working group to consider changes to the way income is collected on behalf of partners, with the possibility of income being collected by the host rather than each individual partner. This is particularly relevant for Licensing fees and officers from WRS and the 6 partners are looking at systems that could allow a wider range of these payments to come into the authorities by electronic means via a single internet site. This could offer a more streamlined process for clients of the partner authorities and ease pressure on the administrative support of both WRS and partners. However, there may be other impacts on both the host and the shared service should this go forward, which need to be considered carefully. This is an area over which the Board may wish to keep a watching brief going forward.

Operational Reporting

The quarterly review of performance and activity data continues to provide members with a clear picture of operational activity in all district areas. One or two suggested improvements in presenting the data have been made and members should continue to ask questions to ensure that the picture provided is as clear as possible with the resources available. Constant change for its own sake is not something the Board should seek but continuous small improvements in the report and the suite of indicators is something the Board may wish to consider in the future.

The previous Chair encouraged the use of information reports at each Board meeting to help to engage members more in the workings of the service and these helped to paint a clearer picture of what officers are doing on the ground. This year we received reports on a wide range of areas. We heard about the excellent results of the audit of the service by the Food Standards Agency and how the innovative approach that the 6 partners have adopted was welcomed by the national body. We had an update report on Air Quality, highlighting the work of our team in helping to protect the health of local residents. The way our officers have engaged on this agenda is one of the best examples of why the shared service works so well. I hope that the elected member working group being supported by the team in Worcester City will benefit greatly from the expertise of the team.

We had an eye-opening report on the nature of statutory nuisance and an explanation of how the law works in this area. Members found the paper highly informative and left with a greater understanding of the limits to which our shared service can intervene in some of the cases that residents highlight to us. We heard about the work the service has done with the Worcestershire LEP on the creation of the organisation Worcestershire Food and Drink, which I understand continues as we



Highlights

speaking, and also a review of the service complaints, particularly those relating to the Dog Warden service which offered us a clearer understanding of what the issues are that face the service in trying to discharge our duties in such an emotionally charged situation.

I would agree with the previous Chair that, whilst as a governance board we must be focused in the main on financial and strategic issues, it is important that we have a feel for what the service is doing and that we are able to reflect this back at each of the partner authorities in our role as senior elected members. A number of the reports in the past 12 months have given us just that.

One of the highlights of the year was that we were finalists in the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health's "Best Environmental Health Team" at the Institute's Awards. The CIEH is the professional representative body for Environmental Health Officers in the UK. The team showcased a number of their innovative approaches, including the use of intelligence, in the work that they do and were highly commended for this.

As Chair of the Joint Committee I attended the awards ceremony with a small group of staff. Seeing the other services in contention demonstrated how far we as partners have come in terms of the delivery of these service elements. We remain at the forefront of innovation in these areas from a local authority perspective. The eventual winner of the Award was a team of officers from local authorities along the route of HS2, working on the potential nuisance that could be created by this project assuming it goes ahead. Whilst this kind of co-operation on single issues is not uncommon, the kind of collaborative model we have in Worcestershire remains unique in terms of its scale.

I also attended the opening of the Worcester Victorian Fayre with members of the team and was asked to judge the best Food Stall at the opening of the event. This is an excellent example of how our regulatory team works with colleagues in the partner authorities to support community events, for the benefit of people attending from all over the County and the local businesses who make these events so successful.

On behalf of the Board I would offer my thanks to the team for the work they have done over the previous twelve months. We know that this team works very hard for all of the partners and it is their dedication that ensures we continue to provide residents with a superior service that addresses many of their day to day issues in these areas, keeping our communities safe and supporting a thriving local economy.

Contact Point

Councillor Emma Stokes
Chair of the Shared Service Partnership Board 2017/18

