



Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 20 November 2014

Attendance

Members of the Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)
Cllr Andrew Wynne (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Ian Brookfield
Cllr Barry Findlay
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Malcolm Gwinnett
Cllr Keith Inston
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Richard Whitehouse

Employees

Deborah Breedon	Scrutiny Officer
Nick Edwards	Assistant Director, Regeneration
Martin Fox	Interim Head of Finance
Adam Hadley	Scrutiny and Transparency Manager
Chris Huddart	Head of Commerce Services
Keren Jones	Assistant Director - Partnerships, Economy and Culture
Steve Woodward	Head of Service Public Realm

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies**
There were no apologies received
- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest
- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (02.10.2014)**
Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting 2 October 2014 were agreed subject to the minute relating to the Community Trigger being amended to show that Cllr Richard Whitehouse questioned the value of review if the community trigger is not backed up with legislation.

4 **Budget Review - 2015/16 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 - 2018/19**

The Chair, Cllr Stephen Simkins clarified the order the budget savings proposals would be considered and welcomed the Cabinet Members and lead officers.

The Chair invited Cllr Peter Bilson and Nick Edwards to the table to provide a brief summary of the 'Economic Regeneration and Prosperity' savings proposals. The comments of the panel were recorded. The Chair thanked Cllr Bilson and officers for their attendance.

The Chair invited Cllr Elias Mattu to the table to consider the removal of subsidy for Blakenhall Community & Healthy Living Centre (Community) savings proposal. The comments of the panel were recorded and a report was requested to a future meeting of this panel.

Keren Jones was invited to join Cllr Elias Mattu to consider 'Education and Enterprise' savings proposals. Cllr Andrew Wynne asked for a report relating to the reconfiguration of internally delivered Cultural Services to a future meeting. The comments from discussion of the items were recorded and the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officer for their contribution to the debate.

The Chair invited Cllr John Reynolds and Chris Huddart to the table to consider the savings proposals from the Delivery Directorate. The comments of the panel were recorded. The Chair thanked them for their attendance.

The Chair invited Cllr Elias Mattu and Keren Jones back to the table to consider Item 5 on the agenda as part of the budget savings proposals for Education and Enterprise.

Cllr Stephen Simkins requested a report back to panel on the focus group relating to the neighbourhood wardens service, the outcomes which would also be fed into the budget consultation process.

Councillor Andrew Wynne requested that the conservative group opposition to the savings proposal was recorded on the same grounds as opposition at the recent Council meeting, that the social effects of not having wardens would cost more in the longer term and was not in effect a saving at all.

The comments of the panel were recorded.

Resolved

That the table of comments be referred to Scrutiny Board for consideration:

Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
Leisure and Communities		

Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
Removal of subsidy for Blakenhall Community & Healthy Living Centre	Community	<p>The availability of the Equality Analysis (EA) relating to this savings proposal was not available. The Cabinet Member gave assurance that the EA and impact on service users will be considered before a decision is made.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member expressed a will to retain a service in some form but would not be able to say what until the feedback from community consultation had been taken fully into account</p> <p>There was a suggestion from the Chair that there could be opportunity to explore work with Health and links to healthy living.</p> <p>Further report to be considered by Vibrant Safe and Sustainable Communities Panel (VSSC) in relation to Blakenhall community and healthy living centre.</p> <p>Agreed to note the proposal</p>
Deletion of Neighbourhood Wardens Service	Education & Enterprise	<p>The funding streams for Neighbourhood Wardens are no longer available. £480,000 per annum is required to deliver the service.</p> <p>Following a petition to Council a focus group will meet to discuss ways forward it was agreed that VSSC Panel will receive a report back on the focus group outcomes which will also be fed into the budget consultation process.</p> <p>Cllr Andrew Wynne requested that the conservative group opposition to the savings proposal was recorded on the same grounds as opposition at the recent Council meeting, that the social effects of not having wardens would cost more in the longer term and was not in effect a saving at all.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member assured VSSC panel that alternative ways of delivering warden services are being explored from neighbouring authorities and from</p>

Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
		<p>beyond the West Midlands.</p> <p>The VSSC panel reached consensus that all savings proposals would have some detrimental effect and that there was strength of feeling in some parts of the City for this Service. VSSC panel were mindful of the nationwide reduction to Police resource.</p> <p>VSSC panel agreed that any suggestion for new arrangements should be welcomed and any alternatives should be explored and fed into the consultation process as options.</p> <p>Comments for alternative arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic wardens, with appropriate training to carry out the neighbourhood warden role. • Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) give consideration to environmental warden role. • The new combined authority to give consideration to neighbourhood warden services. • Neighbourhood wardens to be given powers of a litter warden to issue on the spot fines thereby generating income to pay for the service (previously rejected due to the need for wardens to be approachable). <p>The Cabinet Member re-affirmed that any ideas can be fed into the consultation process and re-iterated that The budget has to balance, anything put in something else has to be taken out, or alternative funding found.</p>

Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
		<p>The VSSC panel noted that it was not a popular proposal with residents and highlighted that cutting neighbourhood warden service could send out the wrong messages to the residents that maintaining law and order was less important than another frontline service. The Chair indicated that representation should be made to Government relating to the neighbourhood warden service nationwide.</p> <p>With the exception of those councillors who have expressed opposition, and who are not in agreement with the proposal, the VSSC panel agreed to note the savings proposal.</p>
Acceleration of reconfiguration of internally delivered Cultural Services	Education & Enterprise	<p>The proposal was agreed last year and is due to be accelerated through restructure. VSSC panel recognised that all cultural establishments had been retained at a reduced function; that under the proposal there would not be so many exhibitions unless external funding could be secured and that the archives had to be maintained as a statutory requirement.</p> <p>Councillors highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating money in cafes at venues. • The excellent reputation and quality of cultural exhibitions and events. • The long and rich history and heritage in Wolverhampton and Bilston. • That a reduction of cultural events would not be a saving if the City offer is reduced; visitors stop coming and potential inward investment is impacted. • Cultural services are linked to adult

Savings Proposals		
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		<p>education and inclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased signage in the City to promote visitor attractions. • Need to look for other facilities in Wolverhampton during the refurbishment of Wulfrun Hall and Civic Halls such as Dunstall Park and Molyneux. <p>The VSSC panel reached consensus that there is a need for the Cabinet Members and officers to give more time to this proposal, to consider the marketing strategy and promoting Wolverhampton's history and heritage.</p> <p>VSSC Panel also felt strongly that there is a need to consider the business strategy with a mind to increase income from fully utilising current assets and exploring other assets across the City with potential to bring more people to the City.</p> <p>Officers confirmed that in the restructure there are no savings proposed that will affect our ability to market the City and fundraise.</p> <p>Agreed to note the proposal</p>
Accelerated Savings From Grand Theatre Grant	Education & Enterprise	<p>The VSSC panel had previously scrutinised the options for making this saving and recommended the option set out in the savings proposal.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair referred to the previous savings proposal discussed and highlighted that many points made were relevant to the savings from the Grand Theatre Grant particularly in relation to the huge cultural asset the Theatre is and how such assets are key to the regeneration of the City Centre and the night time economy in the City.</p>

Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
		Agreed to note the proposal
Review of Community Safety Service	Education and Enterprise	Agreed to note the proposal
City Services		
Reduction in the level of management in the waste service	Delivery	Agreed to note the proposal
Acceleration of saving proposal 0041 - reconfiguration of the waste service	Delivery	VSSC panel welcomed that the efficiency savings had been identified by effective deep cleaning and regular maintenance of the food waste pit. Agreed to note the proposal
Reduction in waste disposal costs (landfill)	Delivery	Agreed to note the proposal

Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
Removal of the historical contract growth costs for landfill tax	Delivery	Agreed to note the proposal
Economic Regeneration and Prosperity		
Additional New Homes Bonus through the Empty Homes Council Tax data cleanse	Education & Enterprise	Finance to provide further information to the Scrutiny Board to advise how many years the new homes bonus has been in operation. Agreed to note the proposal
Housing Revenue Account Shops Portfolio	Education & Enterprise	Agreed to note the proposal

Savings Proposals		
Description of Saving	Directorate	Comments
New combined Housing service	Education & Enterprise	Agreed to note the proposal

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Savings Proposal URN 0360 - Deletion of Neighbourhood Wardens Service

Item 5 was considered during consideration of item 4 on this agenda.