

MINUTES OF BROOKE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 APRIL 2018

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee: Councillors Claire Edwards (Chair), Mrs A'Barrow, Mrs Bragg, Mrs New, Pacey-Day, Srivastava and Dr Williams

Members of the Whittle Committee: Councillors Sandison and Gillias

Officers: Dave Wortley (Community Advice and Support Manager), Pratik Popat (Housing Services Manager) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

In attendance: Nick Andrews, Pavels Scerbakovs and Mawgan Stinchcombe (Rugby Youth Council)

29. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 15 February 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair.

30. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Mrs Crane (Communities and Homes Portfolio Holder), Douglas (Whittle) and Keeling (Brooke).

31. RUGBY YOUTH COUNCIL

The committee received a presentation from Nick Andrews, Pavels Scerbakovs and Mawgan Stinchcombe updating the committee on the work of the Rugby Youth Council (RYC), Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) and VOX Youth Council. A copy of the presentation is attached at Annex 1 to the minutes. The main points were as follow:

- The annual election for Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) and VOX (county's youth council) took place on Thursday 15 February where Mawgan Stinchcombe was elected as the county's new MYP and Samred Reddy was elected as the Deputy MYP. James Andrews and Pavels Scerbakovs were elected to represent Rugby on VOX.
- This year, 16,397 young people voted in the county election. 3,168 votes were casted by young people from Rugby. As well as voting in their representatives, young people also chose the issues that were the most important to them. The top three issues identified by young people county wide were:
 - *Curriculum to Prepare Us for Life* – schools should cover topics such as finance, sex and relationships, education and politics.
 - *Mental Health* – services should be improved with young people's help.

- *Protect LGBT People* – Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender young people deserve to be treated the same as everyone else. Discrimination needs to be challenged.
- This year's county-wide campaign will focus on Curriculum to Prepare Us for Life and Mental Health. The national campaign will focus Curriculum to Prepare Us for Life and Votes at 16. The local campaign has not yet been decided.
- RYC will be moving to one meeting a month going forward due to a reduction in funding and support. The youth council is supported by the Targeted Support for Young People (TS4YP), a service provided by Warwickshire County Council. The service has undergone a review and a redistribution of resources. The youth council will be required to take on more responsibilities and carry out more work outside their meetings.

Mental Health Conference

- The county-wide conference led by Nick Andrews took place on 15 March 2018 and was a great success.
- Over 75 people representing 20 secondary schools and various organisations across Warwickshire were in attendance.
- The aim was to reconnect schools, charities and services and to promote good practice.
- A range of workshops was provided: Suicide Prevention, Time to Change, Mental Health First Aid and Dimensions Tool.
- *Suicide Prevention* was run by PAPYRUS, a national UK charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide.
- *Time to Change* is a mental health campaign in England with the objective of reducing mental health-related stigma and discrimination.
- *Mental Health First Aid* is a national training programme funded by central government where a member of staff in every secondary school across the country will receive practical advice on how to deal with issues such as depression and anxiety, suicide and psychosis, self-harm and eating disorders. Participants in the training programme will be invited to become a Youth Mental Health First Aid Champion, and will help to share their knowledge and understanding of mental health across the school and wider community. Around one in 10 children are believed to have a diagnosable mental health disorder, with half of all mental health conditions begin before the age of 14, making it vital that children with early symptoms receive the support they need.
- *Dimensions Tool* is an information gathering tool provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Feedback received from participants was positive with areas for improvement identified for future conferences.

The committee place on record their thanks to Nick Andrews and wished him all the best for the future.

RESOLVED THAT – Nick Andrews, Pavels Scerbakovs and Mawgan Stinchcombe be thanked for their attendance and informative update.

32. UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE

The committee received a report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 5) providing an update on the impact of Universal Credit within the borough.

The Community Advice and Support Manager and Housing Services Manager attended the meeting to present the report and answer questions. A list of Universal Credit impact case studies was circulated at the meeting.

The Communities and Homes Portfolio Holder was unable to attend the meeting and provided a brief update via email. The update was circulated at the meeting and a copy is attached at Annex 2 to the minutes.

The report was discussed in detail at the meeting and the following additional comments were made:

Budgetary Support

The number of residents taking up budgetary support has not been as high as anticipated. Representatives from Citizen Advice Bureau now have a regular presence at the JobCentre and this has resulted in an increased take-up in Quarter 3 (support was provided to 55 residents). Officers will continue encouraging residents to take-up budgetary support.

To access the service, a referral is required. All who apply for Universal Credit have an interview with a work coach at JobCentre Plus. During the interview, applicants are made aware that budgetary support is available to them. Some are choosing not to take advantage of the offer. The support can be taken up at the point of claim or later on if required. Further information on the service is available via the government's website and in the pack provided to applicants.

Other organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau also provide budgetary support.

Changes to the Administration of Universal Credit

- The advanced payment covers 100% of the claimant's monthly award with any repayments being taken automatically from future payment of Universal Credit.
- No repayment of the two week additional payment for Housing Benefit claimants, transferring to Universal Credit, will be required.
- Where claimants have been in receipt of Housing Benefit and it was paid directly to the landlord, will benefit from continuing with the arrangement for a period of time when transferred to Universal Credit. It has been acknowledged that the transition may cause issues for some claimants. Support will be provided where necessary.
- Universal Credit is administered solely by The Department of Works and Pension (DWP). It's entirely their decision on whether to pay the landlord directly. Only social housing providers can ask for direct payments. The Council, as a landlord, can ask for direct payments for tenants. Requests are assessed on individual basis.

- Officers work closely with tenants to prioritise their expenses. Repayment arrangements are in place for all of Council's tenants. The time it takes to repay a debt varies from case to case.
- For the DWP to consider paying the housing element of Universal Credit directly to the Council, the Council is required to demonstrate that the client is vulnerable and has eight weeks' worth of rent arrears.
- Officers work generically with all of the Council's tenants with regards to income collection, tenancy management and anti-social behaviour. In terms of arrears collection, officers send out reminders and carry out home visits. Within four to five weeks, there would be either an arrangement in place or a notice served.

Universal Credit Impact Case Studies

Due to the nature of the information within the individual case studies, a copy will not be published with the minutes. The case studies highlighted issues which are being addressed by DWP.

The committee was informed that the DWP are rolling out a web portal which will make it easier for Registered Housing Providers to send verification of rent electronically.

RESOLVED THAT – the Community Advice and Support Manager and Housing Services Manager be thanked for their attendance and informative update.

33. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The committee received a report (Part 1 – Agenda Item 6) concerning the progress of task group reviews within its remit and the forward work programme.

The Chair of Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee was presented at the meeting and informed the committee of the following:

- The Public Spaces Protection Order Sub Group has completed its work. The final review report will be submitted to Cabinet in the new municipal year.
- As part of the Air Quality Monitoring and Management mid-year update, presented to Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2018, a thorough overhaul of the overall Local Transport Plan was proposed by Warwickshire County Council as the plan had not been reviewed since 2011. Work will be carried out in conjunction with Rugby Borough Council.

RESOLVED THAT – the topics identified for inclusion in the 2018/19 work programme as listed in the report be noted.

CHAIR



Rugby Youth Council

The Elections

- ▶ Across the county 16,397 young people voted
- ▶ Rugby cast 3,168 votes
- ▶ Election success:
 - ▶ Mawgan Stinchcombe MYP; Samren Reddy DMYP; James Andrews VOX; Pavels Scerbakovs VOX
- ▶ Top 3 Issues:
 - ▶ Curriculum to Prepare us for Life; Mental Health and Protect LGBT People.



Outcomes

- ▶ Will have a series of Lead Offs on issues raised at our meetings.
- ▶ Residential for new intake: 23rd–25th March at Whitemoor Lakes
- ▶ Decided what to campaign on in Warwickshire: Curriculum for Life and Mental Health
- ▶ Nationally– Curriculum for Life & Votes at 16
- ▶ The Local Campaign is still undecided; we will look at the top 3 issues, but we welcome any suggestions?



Mental Health Conference

- ▶ 15th March
- ▶ Reconnect Schools, Charities and Services
- ▶ Promote good practice
- ▶ Provide helpful workshops on: Dimension's Tool, Suicide Prevention, Time to Change and Mental Health First Aid.





How did it go?

- ▶ It was a great success:
- ▶ Over 75 people attended.
- ▶ 20 schools across Warwickshire
- ▶ Achieved our aims!

Did the event you're your expectations?	N/A	No	Somewhat	Yes
Response:	1	0	5	34

Other Comments:

- More info on practicalities.
- Well-presented and organised.
- More support for special schools.
- Event provided lots of information and network opportunities..
- Needs to be young people driven.
- Brilliant, well done a positive event.
- Informative, well presented.
- More time in workshops.
- Learnt new ideas on how to support young people.
- Very impressed on information shared.
- Stands were useful and lunch was great. Youth Parliament are inspirational.
- Run by a group of impressive young people.
- Well done youth Parliament.
- And many thanks.

Going Forward



- ▶ We have had reduction in funding and support so are moving locally to 1 meeting a month.
- ▶ Still 1 VOX & MYP meeting a month
- ▶ Will have to become more flexible and do more work outside of meetings.

What do we need from you?

- ▶ Continued support and encouragement
- ▶ Back our national campaigns, for example lend your support to allowing votes at 16 in local elections.
- ▶ Allow us to continue having a voice
- ▶ Help us with ideas and future projects





ANY QUESTIONS?

Brooke Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 April 2018

Universal Credit Update

Cllr Emma Crane, Communities and Homes Portfolio Holder:

'I have been monitoring the Universal Credit (UC) applications and arrears levels closely over the past few months. Concerns were raised at the Rugby Strategic Partnership Meeting by Bedworth, Rugby and Nuneaton Citizens Advice Bureau (BRANCAB) that their funding for providing budgetary advice could be cut for 2018/19 due to a lower than anticipated take up of budgetary advice from UC applicants. I'm pleased to confirm that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have now allocated funding for 2018/19 and have increased rather than reduced funding. DWP will be providing funding for 319 cases in 2018/19, up from 264 cases in 2017/18.

In order to try and address the lower than expected take up of budgetary advice, BRANCAB has agreed to provide an officer to give advice at the JobCentre Plus making it easier for applicants to access the budgetary advice. Officers are working with applicants, the JobCentre Plus and BRANCAB on various initiatives to try and improve take up to ensure that more tenants receive budgetary training - including whether it might be possible to have a BRANCAB officer at the Town Hall. A successful initiative has been rolled out at the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in South Warwickshire (the Reach for Help initiative) which includes leaflet dropping and door knocking to try and identify individuals who wouldn't necessarily go to CAB for advice. Rugby Borough Council officers are going to look into whether it might be possible to do something similar in Rugby.

Following a meeting with Damian Hinds back in December 2017, I am chasing up the new minister (Alok Sharma) for a response regarding when Rugby will be given access to the landlords portal system which will allow council officers to see whether and when tenants have received their UC payments. This should assist in terms of chasing up arrears. Officers continue to work closely with tenants. The new structure for the housing service will be focusing closely on supporting tenants with tenancy sustainment and providing specialist advice to those most vulnerable customers.

If members have any questions on any of the above, please don't hesitate to contact me.'