

# DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON

6 JULY 2009

**Councillors:** Irene Neill (*Chairman*) (P), Ellen Crumly (A), David Holtby (P), Mollie Lock (P), Alan Macro (*Vice-Chairman*) (P), Ieuan Tuck (P)

**Also present:** Margaret Goldie (Corporate Director – Children and Young People), Mark Harris (Partnerships Manager), David Lowe (Policy and Scrutiny Manager), Stephen Chard (Policy Officer)

#### PART I

#### 4. APOLOGIES.

There were no apologies for absence received.

#### 5. MINUTES.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2009 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### 7. INITIAL BRIEFING AND METHODS OF WORKING.

The Committee received a presentation on the scrutiny methods of operation (Agenda Item 4).

As part of his presentation David Lowe made the following points:

- The Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation had brought in and developed the Overview and Scrutiny function. Most recent developments were the inclusion of the Councillor Call for Action and a power for scrutiny committees to require information from partner authorities and for partners to have regard to scrutiny recommendations.
- Four of the newly formed Select Committees, which reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC), aligned closely to the West Berkshire Partnership sub-partnerships. The Stronger Communities, Skills and Enterprise, and Housing sub-partnerships linked closely to the work of the Stronger Communities Select Committee. This was also in line with certain elements of the work of the Children and Young People's Trust. This closer working would seek to create greater openness and understanding between the work of the Partnership and the Council.
- Where scrutiny reviews had the potential to cover more than one Select Committee, the OSMC would ensure that links were made and any duplication of work would therefore be avoided.
- Subjects for review would need to meet at least one aspect of the selection criteria, in addition there were underlying principles when selecting a subject for review that included whether an item was outcome focussed and had a probability of being able to make a difference.

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- In instances where recommendations were formed by a Select Committee these would need to be endorsed by the OSMC before proceeding to the Executive and/or the West Berkshire Partnership Management Board for consideration.

Members requested further information on the set up of the Stronger Communities Partnership. Mark Harris advised that this group was in its early stages and had replaced the Accessible Partnership. Its first meeting had been held and Terms of Reference and an action plan had been produced. The Disability Alliance, West Berkshire Minority Ethnic Forum and NHS Berkshire West were among those represented on the Board and there was a requirement for all partners to work together to deliver against targets. Each sub-partnership had 2 Conservative Members and 1 Liberal Democrat Member on its Board. It was noted that only the Council had the statutory duty to perform scrutiny.

Mark Harris then outlined the work done to publicise the meetings and raise the profile of the Partnership. Meeting dates were publicised via a number of different routes including the Partnership Bulletin and evening events had been arranged for Members. It was suggested that it would be useful for those Members on the sub-partnerships to provide reports of the sub-partnerships' activity to their respective political group.

**RESOLVED** that the information would be noted.

**8. SKILLS AND ENTERPRISE SUB-PARTNERSHIP BRIEFING.**

The Committee received a briefing on the work of the Skills and Enterprise Sub-Partnership (Agenda Item 5).

Mark Harris provided the Committee with the following information on the work of the sub-partnership:

- Meetings commenced in June 2008 with the aim of maintaining a prosperous West Berkshire.
- Membership included Newbury College, Learning and Skills Council, Job Centre Plus, Business Link, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and Council service areas.
- Its remit covered work on the LAA2 targets focused on basic skills, and sought to co-ordinate available training and skills related information.
- Most recently the focus of the sub-partnership had concentrated on work to mitigate against the adverse impact of the recession. As at May 2009 the numbers of unemployed people in West Berkshire had increased by around 200% (approximately 1600 people) since June 2008, this was from a very low unemployment base but was the second highest increase in Berkshire. Valuable pieces of work had been undertaken by the Redundancy Task Force, set up by the sub-partnership, in offering assistance to people in employment difficulty.
- Linked to this was work to help achieve targets in respect of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- £50k had been allocated to the sub-partnership from Local Authority Business Growth Incentives (LAGBI) money to fund pieces of work to increase the skills base of residents and encourage business growth.

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- The future focus of the sub-partnership would be a continuation of effort to achieve LAA2 targets, an increase in information sharing and a widening of the support given to businesses.
- A particular area needing focus was the loss in 2011 of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and how this would be managed.

Members discussed the future arrangements that would be in place following the demise of the LSC. Margaret Goldie advised that its work would be taken on by Local Authorities. £58m had been allocated across Berkshire which was based on a national formula for places, but the figure for West Berkshire was not known and was a matter for negotiation by the Berkshire Sub-Regional Board. Both Margaret and Councillor Barbara Alexander, as Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, represented West Berkshire on this Board.

The added value that scrutiny could provide in considering this issue was discussed. It was agreed that an update report would be required in a year's time to identify if there were issues for scrutiny to consider.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- (1) Mark Harris would provide the Action Plan of the Skills and Enterprise Sub-Partnership.
- (2) An update report on management of the work previously undertaken by the LSC in West Berkshire would be required in a year's time to identify if there were issues for scrutiny to consider.
- (3) An overview would be received on the other sub-partnerships relevant to the work of the Stronger Communities Select Committee.

## **9. SCHOOLS' STANDARDS REVIEW – TERMS OF REFERENCE.**

The Committee considered the proposed Terms of Reference for a review into the performance of West Berkshire schools (Agenda Item 6).

Members discussed the Headteachers to be involved in the review. Margaret Goldie suggested that it would be of most benefit to involve Headteachers who had gone through the process of making improvements to a schools performance.

It was confirmed that Michael Wheale, Executive Head at John O'Gaunt; Paul Dick, Executive Head at Trinity, with involvement at Winchcombe School; and Linda Valenti, Executive Head at John Rankin Junior, would be invited to take part in the review. These schools had recently, or were soon to, come out of the National Challenge or Special Measures.

Members also felt it would be of benefit to involve school governing bodies in the review. It was agreed that Rosie Bass, Governor Services Manager, would be invited and would be asked to suggest a Governor who could also be involved.

**RESOLVED that** the Terms of Reference would be agreed for an in-meeting review at the next meeting of the Select Committee on 5 October, with those mentioned added to the list of witnesses.

## **10. WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10.**

The Committee considered the Stronger Communities Select Committee Work Programme (Agenda Item 7).

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It was agreed that the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Laming Report, following the 'Baby P' enquiry, would be transferred to the Work Programme of the Safer Select Committee.

The item to consider the transition of young people to adulthood was mentioned and was amended to cover a wider scope of activity. This item was felt to be a priority.

An update report on Partnership activity in response to the recession was another priority, whereas the review of small schools was felt to be suitable for delay.

Members discussed whether scrutiny of transport issues belonged with this Select Committee or the Greener Select Committee, in particular the use of public transport and travel passes were mentioned. David Lowe advised that a debate would need to take place at the OSMC to decide where these issues were best discussed. Members were of the view that items relating to transport could be discussed at either Select Committee depending on the actual topic.

**RESOLVED that** the Work Programme would be noted with amendments made as discussed.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.07pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature:** .....