

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014**

**General Briefing Note On Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS)**

1. Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) is a shared service of Worcestershire County Council and the six district councils. The service was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010 and is hosted for the partners by Bromsgrove District Council. It brings together all of the previous district council responsibilities under the 'environmental health' service area together with the County Council responsibilities for trading standards and animal welfare.
2. In order for the service to operate, all of the partners have transferred their responsibilities for decision making to WRS following a series of council decisions and this is facilitated through a detailed legal agreement – the Partnership Agreement. All of the respective partners' officers were TUPE transferred across to Bromsgrove DC as host in 2010.
3. The governance arrangements for the service are established using the joint committee model provided for by section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972. This allows a number of local authorities to arrange for discharge of their functions by a joint committee comprising Members of the constituent authorities. By entering into arrangements under section 101, discharge of the functions concerned passes to the Joint Committee and can no longer be exercised by the individual councils.
4. Each partner however retains sovereignty of setting policies that operate in its respective administrative area and any proposals that fundamentally change the original basis upon which the partnership agreement was entered into require the agreement of the individual partners.
5. There is a slightly different situation regarding the council's licensing function; this is a function of the council which cannot legally be delegated to another partner to undertake and therefore decisions on licensing matters are still made by WFDC through its Licensing Committee. The only difference under the new arrangements though is that it is serviced by officers from WRS.
6. The partnership agreement places responsibility on the Joint Committee to oversee the development, planned implementation and continued operation of WRS on behalf of the member authorities. Each partner has two Members representing it on the Joint Committee, for WFDC that has been the Cabinet Member with responsibility for regulatory services (currently the Leader) and the Chairman of the Licensing Committee. The Joint Committee meets roughly on a quarterly basis.
7. The partnership agreement contains a number of checks and balances to safeguard the interests of the member authorities. These include a requirement for major decisions, such as agreeing the annual budget, service plan or change to the partnership to be unanimous. In practical terms this means each partner has the power to veto decision making but equally has an obligation

along with other partners to find a consensus position to enable decisions to be made and the partnership to function effectively.

8. The Joint Committee is supported by a Management Board comprised of senior officers from the respective partners whose responsibility it is to ensure that the strategic operation of WRS is delivered effectively. WFDC is represented at the Board by the Director of Economic Prosperity & Place. The Management Board meets on a monthly basis.
9. WRS currently operate out of Wyatt House in Worcester, but each of the partners provides desk space within its offices for the WRS officers to operate from on a peripatetic basis.

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