

NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 27 March 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present

Councillor C. Towe (Chair)
Councillor C. Creaney (Vice Chair)
Councillor V. Woodruff

Officers present

Jamie Morris – Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services
Julie Ball – Head of Neighbourhood Partnerships & Programmes
Steve Pretty – Head of Engineering & Transportation
Kay Child - Head of Service - Safeguarding
Jody Latham – Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Angela Walker – Scrutiny and Performance Officer

74/07 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors John Phillips, Paul Bott and Keith Sears.

75/07 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting.

76/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

77/07 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS

The Chairman noted that actions agreed at last meeting to arrange a meeting on parks maintenance and to provide information on the service charges for Blakenall library had yet to be carried out. Jamie Morris to action these.

Members were informed that the date of the town centre transport package site visit had been agreed as 4 April 2008.

Steve Pretty informed Members of the details regarding the community drop kerb scheme funding. Drop kerb requests are evaluated on the basis of enhancing accessibility to local amenities. Currently there is a waiting list of 18. Requests are filed in chronological order and dealt with on a first come first served basis. A single drop kerb costs approximately £2000. £30,000 funding had been secured for disabled facilities for 2008/09. In 2007/08 additional funding of £12,000 was provided by the Local Area Agreement (LAA). A request for funding this year via Strategic Choices has been unsuccessful. Copies of a briefing note were circulated.

(annexed)

Resolved

That:

- a) the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2008, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

(annexed)

and;

- b) Officers to provide information to Members on parks maintenance issues and the additional service charge for Blakenall Library.**

78/07 FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan as at 10 March 2008 was submitted.

(annexed)

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- Item 21/08 - Neighbourhood Management Pilot - Members were informed about the proposed Charter to monitor service delivery in the Burrowes Street area. A study was being conducted funded through the Housing Corporation to look at ways in which the community can influence improvements and changes to services delivered in their neighbourhood. Discussions to date have involved Streetpride and the Neighbourhood Police Team.
- Item 105/07 – Parking Strategy - Members asked for clarity on this item as there were two strategies that involved parking. Officers informed Members that this item was related to Car Parking Strategy and is due to go to Cabinet in April. Jamie Morris stated that it is possible this item will have to go to full Council in the future due to the legalities contained within.
- Item 10/08 – Leisure Centres Review - Jamie Morris offered to give a presentation at the next meeting in the new municipal year to update Members on the review status. Councillor Woodruff stated that a site visit to leisure centres across the borough had been carried out by members of the obesity working group. An obesity review document produced by the working group is currently being finalised and Councillor Woodruff asked that Angela Walker circulate the final document to Councillor Towe and Jamie Morris for their reference.

Resolved

That:

- a) the Forward Plan be noted;**
- b) the panel receive a presentation on the status of the current Leisure Centre Review;**
- c) the panel receive updates as the neighbourhood management pilot progresses and;**
- d) Angela Walker to circulate a copy of the final report of the obesity working group to Councillor C. Towe and Jamie Morris.**

79/07 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The panel noted the training opportunities as previously circulated.

(annexed)

80/07 STREET LIGHTING REVIEW

The Panel were advised on matters concerning traffic signals, public lighting and traffic signs within Walsall borough and M6 Junction 10 including consideration of applicable regulations, operation and opportunities for cost savings.

The Chairman commented that the review was very thorough but seemed to conclude that any changes would be costly and difficult to justify in terms of responsibilities held within the Traffic Management Act.

Steve Pretty informed the Panel of the responsibilities the Council has to the Traffic Management Act and its regulations that require a consistent minimum lighting level.

The Panel was also informed of current Officer activities looking at special materials and signage that may help to reduce the need for lighting and the intensity of lighting.

Members were shown a magazine that contained a report on street lighting matters as a national concern and the developments being made to reduce environmental damage. A national report is due in July 2008.

The Panel asked to be kept up-to-date with any developments in this area.

Resolved

That the Panel be kept up-to-date on national and local developments regarding street lighting.

81/07 **ANNUAL COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN**

The Panel were informed that the previous three year Crime and Disorder Strategy had been changed to an annual plan in line with new Government regulation.

The annual plan sets out the current status of the three year plan and highlights the priorities and the targets on safety and crime reduction for the coming year.

The annual plan is due to go to Safer Communities Board week commencing 31 March 2008.

The Panel recognised poor performance in reducing anti-social behaviour and the misuse of alcohol and asked what they could do to help? Jamie Morris indicated that there were three ways councillors could help:

1. As Members, decide if priorities are correct.
2. Members are close to their wards so are better placed to refer issues to council.
3. Focus on the content as a Panel. Work with partners to put specific areas 'under the spotlight' and explore in finer detail.

The Panel agreed with the points and stated that they would like to start to focus on specific areas at the start of the next municipal year, possibly forming work groups to deal with large scale issues such as antisocial behaviour.

Resolved

That the panel considers investigating ways to reduce anti-social behaviour and the misuse of alcohol as part of their work programme for 2008/09.

82/07 **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN WORKING GROUP**

The Panel considered the recommendations of the Safeguarding Children Working Group, established by the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny and Performance Panel, on domestic violence that fell within the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel remit.

The Panel were informed by Kay Child of the Safeguarding Children Working Group and the Domestic Violence Forum (DVF) and their role in raising awareness of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is a significant crime in Walsall and is also the most significantly repeated crime.

Through the pooling of resources and forming partnership with Domestic Violence Forum and the Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) are able to deal with issues more effectively than if they were to try to tackle them alone.

New technology is helping to bring more cases to court through the use of cameras capturing evidence from the scene. These "victimless prosecutions" take the responsibility away from the victim, who will often drop charges before the matter is taken to court. So far, one conviction through this method of evidence has been made,

but work is ongoing to encourage the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to base convictions on these sorts of evidence more readily.

The Safeguarding Children WG are looking for Neighbourhoods WG to continue to champion the long term stability of the DVF and help support them in pursuing continuing funding for the future of DVF.

Resolved

That:

a) the Panel will continue to champion the long term stability of the Domestic Violence Forum;

and;

b) the Panel support the Domestic Violence Forum in its pursuit of mainstream funding.

83/07 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Officer due to present this item was not available for the meeting. Members agreed that they had all seen this presentation at other meetings and that there were no further issues arising around this subject which needed to be addressed by the panel.

84/07 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

The Panel considered the progress made in developing the new Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Jamie Morris informed the Panel that the 198 indicators within the National Indicator Set had been reduced to under 35 which leaves scope to negotiate with Government on indicators they will want to add in.

All 198 will have to be monitored but only the final lower figure, likely to be around 35 indicators, will have to be tracked through the LAA.

The Panel discussed the need for training to help them understand the LAA and what responsibility they have to it. Officers suggested the possibility of focusing in on small specific areas of the LAA at a time to give Members a better understanding of that area which over time will build into a complete knowledge. The Panel agreed this was a good idea and should be considered at the next meeting.

Jamie Morris agreed to arrange for a briefing on the LAA for political party groups.

Resolved

That Jamie Morris arranges briefing on the LAA for members at political group meetings.

85/07 Illuminations update

Jamie Morris updated the Panel on the preparations in progress for the Illuminations 2008.

He informed the Panel that:

- A steering group has been established and is due to meet week commencing 31 March 2008. They will be discussing themes and characters for the coming year.
- Dates for the Illuminations are to be put back to its original shorter dates.
- The dates will include Diwali and Halloween.
- Current focus is on ticket pricing, with a target attendance figure being set at 150k.

86/07 COMMUNITY CALL FOR ACTION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP UPDATES

The Panel considered progress to date of the Panels two working groups. Namely, the Community Call for Action and Waste Management Working Groups (WG).

Firstly the Panel considered progress with the Community Call for Action WG.

Jody Latham informed the Panel that the 'Community' Call for Action has changed to a 'Councillor' Call for Action (CCfA). No date was known for when the CCfA will be introduced. The working group have recently taken part in a consultation with the Department for Communities and Local Government, the results of which are expected in June 2008. It was suggested to the Panel that this working group carries forward to next year's work programme.

Secondly the Panel considered progress the Waste Management WG.

Jody Latham informed the Panel of the working groups work on considering the results of the Waste Management Consultation and the Draft Waste Implementation Plan. It was recommended to the Panel that this working group carries forward to next year's work programme so that the group can consider the revised policies and procedures before they are introduced. This is expected to take place during June 2008.

Resolved

That the Community Call for Action and Waste Management Working Groups carry forward both working groups to the next municipal year.

87/07 ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL

The Panel noted the positive progress in implementing lease arrangements with community associations following approval of the Cabinet report. Updated condition surveys are currently being organised, after which negotiations will begin with each centre. Funding opportunities are still available through the Lottery for initiatives around community management and ownership of assets.

Resolved

The content from the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel to the Scrutiny Annual report 2007/08 be agreed.

88/07 CARRY OVER ITEMS FOR 2008/09

Resolved

That the following items be carried forward to the next municipal year:

- a) Waste Management Working Group**
- b) Community Call for Action Working Group**
- c) Sustainable Travel to School policy**

The meeting terminated at 7.15 pm.

Chair:

Date: