

MEETING OF THE REGENERATION,
ENVIRONMENT HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
SAFETY, SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE
PANEL

Held at the Leather Museum, Walsall on
26 January 2005 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Shires (Chair)
Councillor Yasin (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Ault
Councillor Coughlan
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Robinson
Councillor Sears

Councillor Andrews (Portfolio holder)

84. CHANGE OF VENUE

Councillor I Shires welcomed members to the meeting. Members felt that moving the venue for these meetings had not increased the number of members of the public in attendance. Members agreed to change the venue for future meetings of the panel to the conference rooms the Council House, Walsall.

85. CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Delete : Councillor Aslam

Substitute: Councillor Sears

86. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Harris and Councillor Johnson

87. DECLARATION OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

The members of political groups represented on the panel indicated there were no whipping arrangements for any of the political parties in respect of the items on the agenda.

Councillor I Shires and Councillor Coughlan declared a personal and non prejudicial interest in WHG as Board members.

88. NOTES OF MEETING

Agreed that the notes of the meeting held on 15 December 2004, copies having previously being circulated to each member of the committee, be agreed as a correct record.

89. FEEDBACK FROM WORKING GROUPS

90. Regeneration Working Group

Councillor Coughlan informed the meeting that the group had not met since the last meeting. He advised that there are two planned meetings 9 February 2005 and 1 March 2005. The purpose of these meetings would be to determine the remit and programme of the group using the presentations received by this panel on major regeneration schemes currently in progress in Walsall, the transportation strategy, and information received at this evenings meeting relating to the master planning framework. He said that the group was focusing on transport and regeneration in Walsall.

91. Telecommunication Mast Working Group

Members were informed that the resolution passed at its last meeting had been agreed by Cabinet 19 January 2005, and that cabinet had resolved that a report and presentation should be given to Council by members of this panel relating to the work and recommendations of the Telecommunication Mast Working group. Members were advised that a further meeting had been planned for 23 February 2005 to progress the work of the group.

92. CPA Housing Improvement Plan Working Group

Councillor Ault was in attendance at the meeting to give feedback. Councillor Ault advised that the group had met and agreed the work items for future meetings. He said that they had noted the actions and feedback on the housing improvement plan and that the group had requested performance data for 2004/5 for a work list based on homelessness.

He advised of the current position with Walsall Housing Group (WHG) and that it had been suggested that labour from outside the organisation be used to clear the backlog of repairs and maintenance. Councillor Coughlan said that the relationship between the Council and WHG essential and said that it is important to get better co-ordination and to understand the connection. Councillor I Shires agreed that the liaison between the two was important.

PERFORMANCE REPORTS

93. Crime and Disorder (section 17)

Jason McGilp advised that the improvement plan had been taken on board as part of the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership, Crime and Drugs Strategy 2005-2008. Members were informed that the combined improvement plan and business plan

would continue to be brought back to the scrutiny panel to monitor the improvement plans.

Brian Holland was in attendance at the meeting to give a presentation 'Crime and Drugs Strategy 2005-2008' and handouts of the presentation were circulated:-
(see annexed)

The presentation highlighted several key issues including the impact of the Licensing Act, Town Centre Drinking and the performance indicators show that reports of domestic violence is increasing, members were advised that this may be due to more incidents being reported and that this was good news.

Members welcomed the report and acknowledged that there was a lot of information to be considered. They welcomed the reduction in crime figures in the borough and the introduction of preventative plans such as the Drugs intervention programme to deal with dealers on the streets in North Walsall.

Councillor Robinson suggested that the presentation should be seen by all Local Neighborhood Partnership Panels LNPs.

Councillor Shires thanked Brian Holland for the presentation.

94. Resolved

1. That the contents of the presentation be noted and further updates be received;
2. That all members receive the presentation from the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership on the Crime and Drugs Strategy 2005-2008, officers to make arrangements.

95. Performance Reports

Vanessa Holding was in attendance to give a presentation and to answer members questions. A copy of the presentation was circulated:-
(see annexed)

She informed members that the purpose of the presentation was to raise awareness of Regeneration Housing Building Environments (RHBE) performance monitoring processes generally and to focus on the 3rd quarter picture of performance for Beacon Index indicators in RHBE showing Red / Amber / Traffic lights.

She advised that the Housing, Environment and Regeneration basket of indicators (HERbi) is available on the intranet and is intelligence on a wide range of indicators:-

- BVPIs
- LPIs
- Quality of life PIs
- WBSP performance management framework
- Past and present targeted performance
- Monitored in style of improvement trend and Red Amber Green (RAG) reporting.

She advised members that the directorate was proactive about managing PIs and as a consequence there were no large swings in indicators. She said the targets

set are sensible yet stretching and advised that under the new Corporate Performance Assessment rules 2005 (CPA 2005) there would be measuring in setting performance standards, setting and actioning within a certain range would make targets more robust.

During the presentation Vanessa Holding gave a performance overview, advising that RHBE were responsible for 51 statutory indicators which were generally performing well in terms of attaining targets for 2004/5.

She said that the CPA 2005 will move away from performance being relative to others and towards setting of performance standards and that 2005/6 target setting will anticipate this and processes developed to make targets more robust.

Members were given information stating the purpose of the PI, the current position and corrective actions and comments about the following PIs:-

- BV84 number of Kilograms of household waste collected per head (red)
- Number of domestic violence incidents in the borough which were repeat incidents (red)
- BV62 Proportion of unfit private sector dwelling made fit or demolished as a result of direct action by the Local Authority
- BV91 percentage of the population served by a curbside collection of recyclables
- Damage to roads and pavements (incidents of dangerous damage to roads and pavements repairs or made safe within 24 hours)
- BV109a percentage of major applications determined within 13 weeks
- percentage of conservation areas which have been subject to a character appraisal, or its review, within last 5 years, as proportion of total number of conservation areas

She highlighted specifically about the Red indicators. Advising that the amount of waste per head is likely to remain red short term but that the recycling collections and composting initiatives should long term bring the figure down.

She advised that the domestic violence indicator looks like there is huge growth, she reported that this is due to reporting being made easier for victims and that this was good news because it enables officers to present better information.

Councillor Shires thanked Vanessa Holding for the presentation in this format he welcomed the breakdown of cabinet quarterly reports and the detailed information presented tonight. He invited questions from members.

Councillor Coughlan asked who sets the targets. Vanessa Holding informed the panel that some of the targets are national standards and that others are local indicators set by officers. Jason McGilp AD said that the service was getting better at getting better and that the targets are realistic figures.

Members requested a colour copy of the presentation be circulated to each panel member.

Members agreed to note the contents of the presentation and to continue to receive detailed performance information.

96. Performance Review Update - Business Sector and Markets

Debbie Wiggins was in attendance to give a verbal update on the progress of the review of Business sector and Markets. She advised that the review was being scoped and that a detailed plan had been developed.

Members thanked her for the verbal update and requested that a further written report be submitted to a future meeting and that the plan outlined at the meeting be circulated to members for information.

Responses to Scrutiny Members Request For Further Information

97. Fly Tipping Costs

Andy Ody was in attendance at the meeting to give a presentation in response to questions at previous meetings from Councillor Robinson. The presentation contained several slides showing photographic evidence of tipping around the borough. Mr Ody said that officers were working to identify offenders and prosecute where possible.

Copies of the presentation were circulated:-

(see annexed)

Following the presentation there was a period of discussion. Councillor Robinson asked if there had been an increase in fly tipping since the introduction of charges for bulky collections. Andy Ody replied that there had been a small increase in fly tipping but that bulky items did not seem to be the problem, as shown in the presentation; he said that many fly tippers were leaving household and commercial waste. He said officers were searching through the waste to identify tippers, looking for envelopes, letters, bills etc. Councillor Robinson thanked Andy Ody for responding to his request for more detailed information, he said he had the answers to his questions.

Councillor Shires suggested that if officers could identify the regular tipping sites they could inform the relevant Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) and ask them to decide how they want to address it.

Councillor Shires indicated he would like to include in next years work programme what the Local Neighbourhood partnerships have done to address the issue of fly tipping in their areas.

During the discussion Mr Ody advised that several education initiatives are underway to advise children and young people about litter. He said that the area in close proximity to comprehensive schools was often badly littered by crisp and sweet wrappers. Members suggested that leaflets on public points and education through schools was the best way forward and requested to be kept informed of the progress.

Members discussed the problems of excess wrapping and packaging on products and Councillor Shires suggested including something on the work programme for 2005/6 about how litter is generated and what can be done about packaging and information to reduce the littering to keep in line with the vision for a cleaner and greener Walsall.

Councillor Coughlan thanked officers for the good presentation and debate.

98. Resolved

1. To note the contents of the presentation
2. To request the Local Neighbourhood partnerships chairman to include an item on the next agenda - Fly Tipping.
3. To include Litter and Fly tipping issues on the work programme for 2005/6

99. Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Officers were in attendance to respond to Councillor Shires enquiry about progress following the Cabinet report 11 May 2004 which gave the Council permission to pursue closure of six definitive footpaths to reduce anti social behaviour .

Panel were advised that since the decision of Cabinet officers had been working with colleagues in Legal section to pursue the closure of six sites.

Members were advised that there were several specific issues to be determined before the closure orders could be progressed:-

- Technical issues
- Issues around long term rights of way
- Access issues, such as access to rear gardens, shared access.

Members were advised that the process had to be followed and that it was specific. They were advised that two of the orders have recently been advertised and that the lengthy consultations with residents had proved beneficial and that no objections had been received from residents; however two objections had been received by the ramblers association.

Members were advised that the objections would delay finalising the order until mid 2006 and that it was likely that all applications for closure would receive a similar objection from the Ramblers Association which would delay the process for each closure application.

Councillor Shires said that the public should be aware of the Countryside and rights of way act 2000 and what its about and in particular how it impacts on them. Members agreed that the work done with the residents so far to secure their safety by closing alleyways should be publicised in line with the vision making Walsall a safer place.

Members agreed to include a further item on the agenda to a future meeting to consider progress on the six applications for closure and to invite the portfolio holder Councillor M G Pitt and a representative of the Ramblers Association to join the panel to raise public awareness of the CROW Act 2000.

100. Key Strategic Discussion - The Regeneration Framework

Councillor Shires welcomed Peter Cromar, the Chief Executive of Walsall Regeneration Corporation to the meeting.

Peter Cromar gave a presentation, copies of the presentation were circulated:-
(see annexed)

During the presentation he highlighted the importance of improved communications and infrastructure; he emphasized the need to develop further education, business and skills connections and working in partnership with the college and blue chip companies to create opportunity.

Councillor Shires thanked Peter Cromar for the presentation of the Regeneration Framework master plan. He said that the scrutiny work group would welcome Peter's input and perspective to their work programme and invited him to attend the meeting scheduled for 1 March 2005. Councillor Shires further suggested that the portfolio holder should be invited to the work group to input into the work of the Regeneration scrutiny group.

Councillor Coughlan said that the focus of Regeneration was on Walsall Centre and raised concerns that district centres such as Willenhall and Darlaston were not represented.

Jason McGilp advised that there is work currently being undertaken focusing on the district centres which is to be reported to this scrutiny panel. Councillor Shires and Coughlan asked that the work also be shared with Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs). Members recognised the importance of this work and agreed to pick it up at the working group. Councillor Andrew, portfolio holder, said that the districts were not going to be forgotten, he advised that it is important to pick up the focus of the district centre and to highlight the need to show the regeneration initiatives providing and producing a style of life.

Councillor Shires asked what the mechanisms were to see where the district centres are going. He was advised that there are a number of things for District Centres to latch onto, the intention to be to challenge the norm. He suggested that LNPs need to look at the framework and discuss it the document.

Councillor Shires thanked Peter Cromar.

101. Resolved

That a copy of the Regeneration Framework presentation slides be circulated to LNPs chairmen for consideration of including an item for discussion on the next LNP agenda and pass any comments to the Regeneration Work group.

102. Forward Plan

A copy of the forward plan was circulated:-
(see annexed)

Councillor Shires asked the portfolio holder to note that the forward plan gives no information about the forthcoming issue and that items are put onto the plan only a few weeks before the item is considered by Cabinet, this gives no opportunity for

scrutiny to be a part of the formation of policies and effective scrutiny of some issues.

Councillor Andrews, portfolio holder, advised that he would feed back the comments.

Part II - Private Session

Minutes

103. Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting 15 December 2004, a copy having previously being circulated, be approved and signed as a correct copy.

(exempt information under paragraphs 8 & 9 of part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 8.40 pm.