

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel
DATE: 2 April 2009

RE: Community Action Tasking – Progress and Update

Purpose of the Briefing

The purpose of this briefing is to provide an overview of the purpose of the Community Action Tasking meetings and to give an update on progress to date across the 9 LNP areas.

Background

A report was taken to the Council's Cabinet meeting on 14 January 2009 where they agreed a response to the feedback received to date from Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs) about the need to improve the responsiveness of public services in the locality. LNPs are acknowledged as an essential vehicle to hear the views from Walsall's communities about ways in which services delivered by the Council and its partners can be improved and changed to better meet local need, whilst also highlighting the role of Councillors as community leaders and advocates in their community

Each LNP area now has in place a new approach to local tasking called Community Action Tasking (CATs). This follows on from the successful pilot which was introduced by the police in Blakenall and Bloxwich LNP area (which has been in operation for 18 months) and offers a sound platform for the newly established Borough Tasking Group to gain information from the community about issues in their area and ensure matters relating to crime, community safety and the local environment are addressed in a timely manner.

What is Community Action Tasking?

A monthly meeting takes place in each LNP area attended by a core group of operational staff from the Neighbourhood Police teams, housing associations, youth service, Street Pride, anti-social behaviour unit, Green Spaces and the LNP support team. Other representatives are invited dependent on the type of issues that have been raised (for example engineering & transportation, Fire Service).

The meeting is chaired by one of the operational staff and its purpose is to share issues that have been raised by the local community, local councillors or logged by the agency, and to find ways to tackle these. A recent example is concerns from residents about anti-social behaviour in an alleyway. Following discussion at the CAT meeting a range of interventions and actions were introduced (graffiti removal, cutting back of bushes, improved lighting and temporary installation of a domehawk camera). The residents were kept informed of progress after each meeting by the LNP team. The result is that the problem of anti-social behaviour has gone away and the residents were offered solutions that best fitted local circumstances.

What happens if an issue can't be resolved?

Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP) has recently introduced a new approach as part of its updated delivery structure to reduce crime and disorder across the borough. This is known as the Borough Tasking Group and its membership consists of senior representatives from Police, Fire, probation, housing associations, health and Council (Children's Services, Street Pride, Green Spaces, Trading Standards, Environmental

Health, Neighbourhood Partnerships and Programmes). The Chair is the Council's Head of Public Protection.

This group also meets each month with the purpose of sharing information in order to detect, prevent and reduce crime and disorder and substance misuse. It does this by using an intelligence led approach, focusing on high crime areas and directing activities and resources to address identified issues.

The group considers issues that cannot be addressed at a local level through the CATs. This is usually because additional resources are needed over and above that which is available locally. A recent example of this was the request by a CAT for a domehawk camera to be installed to monitor incidences of anti social behaviour and the impact this was having on the local community. A request was made and approval given for this additional resource.

How does the work of the CATs link to LNPs?

In January and February 2009 LNPs received a report explaining the purpose of CATs. Following this progress reports will be taken to each LNP meeting summarising what issues have been raised at the CAT in their area, the number of issues that have been tackled, and asking the LNP if there are any issues that they would like the CAT to look into.

In addition to this, Councillors are receiving a more detailed monthly update about the types of issues being raised and how these are being tackled by the operational staff through the CATs.

LNPs will be invited to review the reporting arrangements for CATs in their area to ensure that the structures in place locally best meet the needs of individual LNPs, acknowledging that with the exception of Blakenall and Bloxwich, the CATs have only been operational for a few months.

Progress to date

There has been excellent input from partners to the work of the CATs so far. Key Council services (in particular Street Pride, Green Spaces and Youth Service) are finding it very beneficial to meet regularly with other agencies to find ways of tackling local issues. Community groups such as tenants and residents associations, neighbourhood watch and friends groups, as well as individual residents, welcome the opportunity to comment on issues that matter to them and receive direct feedback from the CAT. The LNP team has received a huge amount of positive feedback from the community following actions taken through the CAT. Locally, the CATs are beginning to be recognised as offering a systematic approach to reporting issues and resulting in positive action being taken.

Support from partners will continue to be monitored through the Borough Tasking Group to ensure a consistent approach is adopted and all of Walsall's communities benefit from more responsive public services.

Work will get underway shortly to publicise these positive results to the wider community. LNPs will be engaged in this important piece of work as their local knowledge is key about what works best in their area in terms of communicating key messages.

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