

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday, 10 October, 2013 at 6.00 pm in a Conference Room at the Council House

Members in Attendance: Councillor V. Woodruff (Chair)
Councillor I. Azam
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker
Councillor L. Rattigan

Portfolio Holders in Attendance: Councillor M. Arif – Environment
Councillor I. Shires – Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector

Officers in Attendance: Jamie Morris - Executive Director (Neighbourhoods)
Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)
Mark Holden – Head of Clean and Green
Steve Pretty – Head of Highways and Transportation
Paul Leighton – Group Manager (Road Traffic Network)
Stephen Johnson – Service Manager (Strategy)
Craig Goodall - Committee Business and Governance Manager

114/13 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Creaney.

115/13 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

116/13 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

117/13 Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 August 2013, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

118/13 Petition regarding the provision of a new car park at the Lucknow Road Shops submitted to Council 8 July, 2013

The Panel considered a petition that had been received at Council on 8 July, 2013. The petition called for the provision of a new car park at the Lucknow Road shops in Short Heath.

Councillor Ian Shires introduced the petition and explained that approximately 1200 signatories had been received in support of a petition to provide a car park on a green area near to shops in Lucknow Road. Currently visitors were parking on the road and creating safety problems near a junction. The viability of the shops was threatened by the current arrangements, however, before anything went ahead it was requested that local people be consulted on their views so that the views of the community could be fully taken into account.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) responded to the petition. He described the area to the Panel and explained that there was limited parking available with an opportunity to convert the existing green into a small car park. The Council was drafting its Capital Programme for 2014/15 and if Members wished to support the suggestion it could be recommended to include it. He accepted the request of taking into account the views of local residents before a final decision was taken.

The Panel considered the petition and made the following comments and observations:-

- There is concern regarding the proposal in the report to move the bus stop 60 metres away from its current location. Relocating the bus stop could make it more difficult for residents with mobility issues to access the shops which could in turn encourage more vehicles into an already congested area.
- The idea was put forward that providing a car park was against the “Marmot Principals” as it encouraged residents to use motor vehicles rather than more sustainable transport methods such as walking and cycling. Moving the bus stop compounded this issue.
- There are many places in Walsall which suffered from poor parking provision that would benefit from new car parking provision over and above this area.
- A like-for-like replacement would be provided for the tree currently located on the green.
- If a car park was completed it was important to provide good quality lighting to increase security levels. Bicycle racks should also be provided.

Whilst feeling unable to directly support the scheme overall, the Panel was supportive of a consultation taking place with local residents and shop keepers to ascertain whether or not there was support for the proposed car park. Members requested that the consultation collect data on the location of visitors, the preferred location of the bus stop and any wishes for bicycle racks.

Resolved:

That:-

1. a consultation take place to ascertain whether or not local residents are supportive for a car park to be provided near to the site of the Lucknow Road shops;

and;
2. the consultation include the questions to establish the following data:
 - a. The location of where visitors have travelled from to visit the shops;
 - b. The preferred location of the bus stop;
 - c. Do residents want bicycle racks?

119/13 Recycling and Contamination

The Panel considered progress regarding activity to reduce the levels of contamination in recycling across the borough.

The Head of Clean and Green reported that contamination had been reduced from its previous high to between 7 - 9%. Whilst this was an improvement it was still above the 5% level agreed with the Council's recycling contractor. Work was being undertaken to tackle hotspot areas but it was a stubborn problem that would be difficult to erase with current resources. The Portfolio Holder (Environment) reported that efforts were focused on educating residents in hotspot areas. He felt that residents were more inclined to recycle when they understood the Council received an income for recycled items.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:-

- Members were concerned about the Council incurring unexpected financial expenditure due to the consistently high levels of contamination. Negotiations were ongoing with the contractor regarding this issue.
- Approximately 2000 households were still causing problems. These were located in each ward but the problems were more prevalent in the north and south of the borough in particular Beechdale, Caldmore, Palfrey and Pleck.
- A focus was being put on the repeat offenders and refuse crews are encouraged to spend time with residents to explain problems with contamination.
- Communications with residents had evolved and improved throughout the campaign. Leaflets helped to encourage residents to reduce contamination. Pictorial leaflets were used to overcome potential language and literacy problems. A Member enquired if batteries were still incorrectly shown as suitable for the grey bin?

- A request was made for the figures on the number and type of customer contacts regarding contamination made by the Clean and Green Service.
- It was explained that shortly the boroughs residual waste would be sent to an incinerator to avoid it being sent to landfill.

In conclusion the Panel were content that progress had been made to reduce contamination but still maintained concerns about meeting the required level agreed with the contractor.

Resolved:

That:-

1. a further report on recycling and contamination be considered at a future meeting;
 2. Members be provided with the number and type of customer contacts that had taken place to reduce contamination levels;
- and;
3. recycling leaflets be checked to ensure that batteries are not displayed as a suitable item for the grey bin.

120/13 Business and Household Recycling Centres

The Panel considered the position regarding business use of household waste and recycling centres (HWRC) in Walsall following a request by a Member of the Panel at the previous meeting.

The Service Manager (Strategy) reported that a new contract had recently been tendered to manage the boroughs two HWRC's. This new contract included provision to take facilities available for trade waste. He continued to set out details on the number of incidents, type and costs of dealing with fly tipping.

A Member noted that a significant number of fly tipping instances were connected to the construction industry and suggested methods that could be used to attract them to use a HWRC. The Head of Clean and Green hoped that some would be attracted by the new facility but explained that the change was targeting the unscrupulous element to prevent fly tipping. The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) added that fly tipping mainly related to traders attempting to avoid business costs so it was important to catch and prosecute them. CCTV including covert cameras were used to detect and identify fly tippers.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

121/13 **Winter Service**

The Panel considered the Winter Service (WSP) for 2013/14.

The Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) gave a presentation on the WSP (annexed) he highlighted:-

- legislative requirements;
- facts and figures relating to gritting;
- the Council's weather forecasting facilities;
- the changes to the WSP 2013/14 including decision making requirements and thermal mapping;
- salt bin locations and criteria;
- use of CCTV;
- emergency planning;
- communications;
- Operation Snowfall.

Following a question the Group Manager explained that it was expected the new maps developed following the thermal mapping exercise would provide efficiencies as the increased intelligence would mean that only the precise areas which needed gritting would be serviced.

The Council were required to keep stores of grit to allow 48 treatments of the gritting routes but a surplus in excess of this amount was kept. Stock levels were monitored centrally and Walsall had supplied salt to neighbours in recent years. Regular grit was effective to -7C. Other forms of ice prevention were available for colder weather.

The Group Manager clarified that this year the gritting decision making team would be made up of five officers. This was an increase in the number used the previous year and was designed to increase capacity within the team due to the increasing number of callouts (73 in 2013).

The Panel requested that they be provided with a copy of the final WSP.

Resolved:

That:-

1. Members be provided with a copy of the approved Winter Service Plan 2013/14;

and;

2. the report be noted.

122/13 **Work Programme 2013/14 and Forward Plan**

Resolved:

That:-

1. the following items be considered at the 20 November 2013 meeting:-
 - a) Probation Service;
 - b) Monitoring the recommendations of the School Catering Working Group;
 - c) Second quarter budget monitoring;
 - d) 2014/15 draft budget;and;
2. the 'Play Strategy' be considered at the 7 January 2014 meeting

123/13 **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the date of next meeting was 20th November 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 7.37 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: