

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**Tuesday, 18 February, 2014 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)  
Steve Pretty - Head of Engineering and Transport  
Tracey Evans - Lead Accountant  
John Roseblade - Group Manager (Highways and Environment)  
Lorraine Boothman - Interim Trading Standards Manager  
Lynne Hughes - Community Safety Manager  
Steve Gittins - Deputy Community Safety Manager  
Jackie Taylor – Senior Enforcement Officer  
Craig Goodall - Committee Business and Governance Manager

### **144/14 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Creaney.

### **145/14 Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **146/14 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

Councillor I. Shires declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 149/14 “Low Emissions Strategy and Low Emissions Zone Feasibility Study”.

### **147/14 Minutes**

#### **Resolved:-**

**That the minutes of the meeting that took place on 14 January, 2014, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

## 148/14 **Quarter 3 Financial Monitoring Position for 2013/14**

Members considered the predicted revenue and capital position for 2013/14 based on the performance for quarter 3 (October to December, 2013) for services within the remit of the Panel.

The Lead Accountant reported that as at 31 December, 2013, a revenue overspend of £238,000 was predicted after the use of approved reserves and carry forwards. The capital forecast was for a £6.664m underspend, most of which would be carried forward into 2014/15.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) advised Members that work was taking place to eliminate the overspend before year end. To this end, he reported that the overspend had been reduced to £168,000 at the end of January, 2014.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing question and answer session:-

- Members were pleased to hear that the predicted income target for car parking was to be rebalanced in the 2014/15 budget;
- Regarding the potential risk for burials where there was no known family, further data was required on the cost, number and frequency that the Council had to undertake these type of burials;
- There was an identified risk of £40,000 of additional costs to deal with the disposal of bodies should there be a flu pandemic;
- The New Invention car park had been delivered marginally under budget;
- The outcome of a Court case regarding liability at Willenhall Gas Works would be known in March.

**Resolved:-**

**That:-**

- (1) Members be provided with data on the cost, number and frequency that the Council deals with burials where there was no known family of the deceased;**  
**and;**
- (2) the report be noted.**

## 149/14 **Low Emissions Strategy and Low Emissions Zone Feasibility Study**

The Panel considered a report on the development with the low emissions strategy and low emissions zone for the West Midlands.

The Group Manager (Highways and Environment) gave a presentation on all workstreams within the Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme (annexed).

It was acknowledged that levels of nitrogen dioxide were a particular problem around the M6 and that it was hoped the Programme would be able to test the feasibility and impacts of methods to reduce the levels of pollution in this area to acceptable levels. One example of this could be by diverting traffic onto the M6 toll.

In terms of vehicles, the largest pollutants were large HGVs. The older these vehicles were, the more pollutants they released. Partnership working took place with Centro and bus companies to encourage the modernisation of the local bus fleet but no formal powers existed to remove older vehicles off the road network.

One proposal on developing planning guidance around vehicle emissions had proved to be controversial. Further negotiations were taking place in order to refine the planning guidance and draft a deliverable solution.

Members suggested that more work should be done to highlight the financial savings that more efficient vehicles provided to freight and bus companies.

A discussion took place on the value of transferring freight from the roads onto the railways. It was noted that this idea was dependent on the creation of additional capacity on the rail network.

A Member suggested that Sat Nav companies should be lobbied to develop an 'eco journey' option where drivers could choose routes that would direct them away from heavily polluted areas.

The Chair noted that the Group Manager was leading the Low Emissions Town and Cities Programme on behalf of the region and congratulated him for his work and achievements so far.

**Resolved:-**

**That:-**

- (1) a further report on the Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme be received in Summer 2014;**
- and;**
- (2) the report be noted.**

## 150/14 **Anti-Social Behaviour Trial**

The Panel were informed about proposals for a more co-ordinated way of working across all partner agencies to collectively deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The Deputy Community Safety Manager presented the report to Members highlighting work that was underway and scheduled regarding the sharing of data and more co-ordinated ways of working between community safety partners. The partners involved in the project were the Council, the Police, WHG, Caldmore Accord Housing and the Black Country Housing Association. He explained that whilst the current situation was improved, there was still some way to go with integrating working practices.

Following a suggestion by a Member of the Panel for a single ASB reporting telephone number, it was explained that in areas where this was piloted, the idea had not worked as well as expected, therefore, partners in Walsall were focussing on developing a consistent approach to dealing with customers. The “Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Police Bill 2013/14” was expected to become law later this year and would reduce existing ASB related powers from 19 to 6. It also introduced a lower threshold for ASB. The Bill was seen to be a beneficial development for community safety matters.

A Member urged community safety partners to be vigilant in eliminating ASB across all areas of the Borough.

**Resolved:-**

**That:-**

- (1) the Panel receive a report on the implications of the “Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Police Bill 2013/14”;**
- and;**
- (2) the report be noted.**

## 151/14 **Unauthorised Encampments**

Members were informed of the work of the Licensing Enforcement Team dealing with unauthorised encampments (UE).

The Interim Trading Standards Manager advised Members of the background to UE in Walsall, regional UE figures and the process to remove them.

Members were curious as to why Walsall was experiencing an increase in UE compared to neighbouring Local Authorities? The Interim Trading Standards Manager explained that despite investigations, no categorical reason for this increase had been identified. Work was ongoing to protect vulnerable sites across the Borough to prevent further UEs where possible, although not all sites can be fully protected as this would prevent their intended use

The Licensing Team dealt with the process of assessing and moving on UEs in-house. The Police were only involved when it came to serving Eviction Notices to UEs but more often than not, this was not needed as the UE had moved on in the knowledge that the eviction was imminent. The Police may also be called on when a family were known to be violent or aggressive. The Executive Director praised the officers who undertook this intimidating work for their courage and professionalism.

The Panel were informed that when UE were on private land, the Council would still assist landowners to remove UE at no cost to the landowner but due to the large number of complaints from local residents, this was considered the most expedient way to act. The Council reserved the right to charge the landowner if the amount of work involved became particularly burdensome. Members requested further information on the number of UE on private land.

**Resolved:-**

**That:-**

- (1) Members be provided with data on the number of unauthorised encampments on private land that have occurred in the Borough;**  
**and;**
- (2) the report be noted.**

#### **152/14 Work Programme 2013/14 and Forward Plan**

The Panel considered their Work Programme and the latest version of Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

The Executive Director reported that work was ongoing regarding Walsall's Active Living Scheme and he would seek to bring this report to the Panel before it was presented to Cabinet.

**Resolved:-**

**That:-**

- (1) the following items be considered at the 3 April, 2014 meeting of the Panel:-**
  - (a) the Probation Service and Private Sector Procurement;**
  - (b) Devolution;**
  - (c) Flood risk management;**
  - (d) Willenhall Lawn Cemetery;****and;**

**(2) the Forward Plan be noted.**

**153/14 Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the date of next meeting was 3 April, 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

*The meeting closed at 7.50 p.m.*

Chairman: .....

Date: .....