

NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 19 February 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present

Councillor C Towe (Chair)
Councillor C Creaney (Vice-Chair)
Councillor R. Martin
Councillor Mushtaq
Councillor D. Pitt
Councillor I. Robertson
Councillor V. Woodruff

Portfolio Holders present

Councillor A. Andrew – Deputy Leader

Officers present

Jamie Morris	Executive Director – Neighbourhood Services
Julie Gethin	Head of Neighbourhood Partnerships & Programmes
Craig Goodall	Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer
Matthew Underhill	Scrutiny Officer

68/08 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor L. Beeley.

69/08 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

70/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

71/08 MINUTES

Item 64/08, add the word 'stop' to recommendation 2 to read:

'As part of any planned replacement of car park ticket machines consideration should be given to introducing ticket machines that print car registration numbers on tickets to stop the transfer of tickets between vehicles'.

In reviewing the minutes to the last meeting Members queried the Community Action Tasking (CAT) process and felt that they were still largely unaware of how this new system was going to work and in particular how they, as elected Members, were going to be able to feed into the process. Julie Gethin explained the purpose of CAT's and that Members would be able to feed information to them through their Local Neighbourhood Partnership meetings. Ward Members would then receive feedback once a month from issues discussed at a CAT in their area. The Panel requested that this item be considered at their next meeting.

Resolved

That:

- 1. the minutes of the meetings, as amended, that took place on 22 January 2009, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record;**

and;

- 2. the success or otherwise of Community Action Tasking, in particular the reporting mechanisms to ward members and LNP's, be reviewed at the 2 April 2009 meeting of the Panel.**

(annexed)

72/08 DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Members considered the development opportunities that were available from the Performance and Scrutiny Team.

In considering the development opportunities available Members queried the latest situation on the introduction of Councillor Call for Action (CCfA). Craig Goodall advised the Panel that the guidance on CCfA had recently been published and suggested to the Panel the guidance be considered by the Panels CCfA Working Group who could then develop a protocol for the CCfA process which they could then recommend to Cabinet and Council for adoption.

73/08 FORWARD PLAN

Contract for treatment, recovery and final disposal of municipal waste

Jamie Morris explained that this was a re-tender for temporary waste contracts and not related to the private finance initiative incinerator that was to be built in Staffordshire.

Streetly Crematorium

Members noted that there was nothing new to add to this than they had already considered as part of the budget setting process.

Highways Maintenance Strategy

Jamie Morris explained that this was to agree the plan of highways standards for Tarmac, the Council's new highways maintenance contractor, to adhere to. In response to a question Jamie Morris stated that he was not aware of any proposed takeover of Tarmac.

Following further questions Jamie Morris explained that the Council would continue to inspect repairs to the highway made by utility companies and that the Council would still be liable for compensation claims for damage caused by pot holes, however, redress would be sought from Tarmac if they were liable.

Members felt that it would be worthwhile considering the performance of Tarmac during the summer.

Resolved

That the performance of Tarmac as the Councils highways maintenance contractor be added to the Panels work programme for consideration during 2009/10.

74/08 DIVERSITY PEER CHALLENGE – INITIAL FEEDBACK

Members were informed of the initial findings of the Diversity Peer Challenge (DPC) assessment.

Julie Gethin explained that the DPC was the local government equality standard inspection and was about assessing the Council on how it understood its communities and how this understanding affected Council services. The key areas focussed on were:

- Leadership and corporate commitment
- Community engagement
- Service delivery and customer focus
- Employment and training

A range of elected Members were interviewed including, the Chair of the Panel, Councillor Towe, the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Partnerships and the Leader. Interviews also took place with officers, key stakeholders and partners.

Following the inspection a level three (out of five) 'achieving authority' status was awarded. The key findings from the inspectors were included as an appendix to the report.

(annexed)

Julie Gethin reported that the key areas that had been identified for development to increase on the level three award were:

- Feedback with partners, stakeholders and staff
- Equality in the workplace
- A strategic approach to equality impact assessments (EIA's)
- Member engagement
- Realising the potential of performance management

A number of areas had been identified regarding the role of Members, specifically:

- Equality and diversity training including a module on cultural awareness
- Greater scrutiny focus on equality and diversity outcomes
- Member attendance at the Corporate Equalities Group
- Member engagement with employee networks

Members felt that introduction of Member training on equalities, including a module on cultural awareness, was a good idea and debated how they could make this training a prerequisite. Julie Gethin reported that at Barnsley Member allowances were withheld

until all required training had been completed. Members felt that the training would best be delivered at their political group meetings, and in smaller sessions for those Members not in political groups. It was also suggested delivering equality training through electronic means and that good practice on training on sensitive issues could be gained from the Domestic Violence Forum.

Councillor Andrew suggested that it was likely that a number of Members may have already received equality and diversity training through their employers.

In terms of Member representation at employee networks the Panel felt that this should be a Member of Cabinet. It was noted that currently the Council had a higher percentage of black employees leaving than any other ethnic group and that exit interviews were not compulsory.

Jamie Morris reported that the issue would be reported to Cabinet and Council in April.

Resolved

That:

- 1. all Members be trained in equality and diversity issues as soon as is practicable;**
- 2. equality and diversity training should include a module of cultural awareness;**
and;
- 3. training to take place through political groups in the first instance with sessions for those Members not in political groups arranged separately.**

75/08 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Members were informed of the progress to date of the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group (ASBWG).

The Chair highlighted the last meeting of the ASBWG where Members had met with a range of representatives who worked with young people. The ASBWG had been impressed with the Safer Schools Programme but were surprised to hear that not all schools attended.

Members also heard of the youth warden scheme and questioned why this was limited to certain areas of the borough. Jamie Morris explained that the areas with youth wardens had been chosen as they had higher levels of deprivation. The Chair noted the good work completed by the Young Fire Fighter Scheme. A Member also highlighted the good work undertaken by the Fire Service's anti-joyriding campaign and suggested that the Council should utilise it. Jamie Morris agreed to find out more information about this.

The Chair reported that the ASBWG felt that a seven day youth service was desirable, this led to Members questioning how the opening hours for the Council operated youth centres were agreed.

The Panel heard that at the next meeting the ASBWG would be investigating drug related ASB including discarded needles and needles exchanges. A Member suggested that it was important that the problem with discarded needles was quantified.

A Member suggested that when replacing swings in play areas the Council should try to use a material that prevented the swings from being tied together.

Resolved

That:

- 1. Jamie Morris to enquire about the Council accessing and make use of the Fire Services Anti-Joyriding sessions;**

and;

- 2. Members to be informed of how opening times for youth facilities are set.**

76/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Panel was noted as being 2 April 2009.

The meeting terminated at 7.10 p.m.

Chair:

Date: