

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 7 April 2011 at 6.00pm in a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Panel Members Present Councillor L. Harrison (Chair)
Councillor S. Coughlan (Vice-Chair)
Councillor O. Bennett
Councillor P. Bott
Councillor C. Creaney
Councillor R. Martin
Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor K. Sears
Councillor D. Shires

Non-Voting Co-Opted Member Mr P. Homes JP

Portfolio Holders Present Councillor A. Harris – Leisure, Culture and Environment

Officers Present Jamie Morris – Executive Director (Neighbourhoods)
Keith Stone – Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)
Clive Wright – Partnership Director
Graham Hood – Head of Greenspaces
Lorraine Boothman – Interim Trading Standards Manager
Craig Goodall – Scrutiny Officer

73/10 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

74/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

75/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

76/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2011, a copy having been previously circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

77/10 BIG SOCIETY / ENGAGEMENT AND UTILISATION OF THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Members were updated with the latest local and national news and policy with regard to the development of the 'Big Society'. A report for the item was tabled at the meeting (annexed).

The Partnership Director highlighted key developments since the last meeting of the Panel including: the working smarter programme, Big Society news, asset transfer, libraries consultation, area partnerships and local government reform.

It was suggested that local 'Friends of Parks' groups would be ideal organisations to take on extra responsibilities and ownership of local assets. The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) acknowledged this and stated that the Council would be very happy to work with these type of organisations. He also reported that to date the demand from local voluntary and community sector organisations to take on additional responsibilities had been very small except for when the Council had pro-actively sought organisations out.

The Chair suggested that the 'Big Society' should be a key area for the Panel to consider in the new municipal year. This could include establishing a working group to consider key areas and develop recommendations on future policy.

RESOLVED:

That the Big Society be considered by the Panel during 2011/12 and that consideration be given to establishing a working group to investigate the issue in more depth.

78/10 GREENSPACES STRATEGY

The Panel reviewed the effectiveness of the Greenspaces Strategy (2006 – 2011/12). An appendix on the Community Gardens scheme was tabled at the meeting (annexed).

The Head of Greenspaces reported that since its inception the strategy had proved to be very successful and had been recognised nationally as good practice. The strategy had contributed to the achievement of three green flag awards for local parks and had seen over 70 separate projects delivered. Satisfaction levels with the boroughs parks had increased by 12%.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- There were 23 Park Rangers who patrolled 280 separate greenspace sites. Priority for patrols was given to key sites or where there had been reports of anti-social behaviour.
- All Greenspaces Staff had a role to play in securing external funding for projects.

- There was a separate 'Play Strategy' for playground sites. There was a need to maintain and upkeep playground sites continuously.
- There were problems with flooding near the bandstand in Willenhall Memorial Park.

The Panel thanked the Head of Greenspaces and his team for the hard work and achievements of the Greenspaces team.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Greenspaces investigate the flooding taking place near the bandstand in Willenhall Memorial Park.

79/10 MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS THE ALCOHOL RELATED ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORKING GROUP

The Panel considered progress and action taken with regard to the recommendations made by the Alcohol Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group (AASBWG).

The Interim Trading Standards Manager gave an update to Members on progress with the implementation of the recommendations made by the AASBWG. In particular she highlighted the implementation of the Street Pastors scheme and the upcoming formation of the Community Alcohol Partnership which would take a holistic approach to tackling alcohol misuse.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- Alcohol should be confiscated from young people drinking in the street.
- Local alcohol retailers should be encouraged to sign up to a 'social responsibility' scheme against the sale of alcohol to young people.
- It was not possible to close or limit off-licence premises for underage sales without a cumulative impact policy.
- Problems were being experienced connecting the radiolink with the Police. The radiolink was how operated by the Councils Resilience Team.
- The Designated Place Order was now in force. Members questioned whether signs alerting residents to the DPO were still in place.
- Limited education work on the dangers of alcohol took place in schools.

RESOLVED:

THAT:

1. the Panel be advised of the problems regarding the radiolink connecting with the Police;

and;

2. the Panel be advised regarding the location of signage alerting

residents of the DPO.

80/10 MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORKING GROUP

The Panel considered progress and action taken with regard to the recommendations made by the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group (ASBWG).

The Partnership Director presented the update highlighting that the tools previously available to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) were due to change imminently.

The Panel commented that new neighbourhood management arrangements presented an opportunity to tackle ASB through integrated working similar to that witnessed by the ASBWG at Manchester City Council. It was believed that the role of Area Managers could be revised to increase engagement with local communities and move forward and tackle problems head on.

Members commented that recommendations concerning mediation training were outstanding. There was also some confusion on how Members should be receiving ASB reports.

The Panel discussed the illegal grazing of horses in the borough. It was noted that the Council had recently appointed bailiffs who would remove horses illegally grazing. The charge for this would then be passed onto the owner in exchange for return of the horse. Following a discussion it was agreed to investigate the Councils approach to illegally grazing horses to ensure an integrated approach was in place.

RESOLVED:

THAT:

- 1. training on mediation and other anti-social behaviour related topics be provided for all Councillors;**
 - 2. clarification be provided to the Members on how they should be receiving updates on anti-social behaviour in their wards;**
- and;**
- 3. an investigation take place to ensure that an integrated approach to dealing with illegally grazing horses is taken by Walsall Council.**

72/10 FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11

RESOLVED:

That the following items be considered by the Panel during 2011/12:

- a. Big Society;**
- b. Area Partnerships;**
- c. Libraries consultation.**

73/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be agreed at Annual Council on 25 May 2011.

In closing the meeting the Chair thanked the Panel for all their hard work during the last year.

The meeting terminated at 6.50 p.m.

Signed:

Date: