

WALSALL SOUTH AREA PANEL

Tuesday, 7 April, 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room, Council House, Walsall

Present

Councillor K. Hussain (Chair)
Councillor E.B. Russell (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D.A. Anson
Councillor M. Arif
Councillor A. Ditta
Councillor R.A. Martin
Councillor A.A Nawaz
Councillor G.S. Sohal
Councillor H.S. Sarohi

Officers in attendance

Denise Perry - Area Manager
Lynne Hughes – Area Manager Community Safety
Matt Underhill - Committee Business & Governance Manager

97/14 **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor McCracken and Councillor Whyte.

98/14 **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting which took place on 4 March, 2015, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

99/14 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

100/14 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)**

It was noted that there were no items to be considered in private session.

101/14 **Public Space Protection Orders**

The Area Manager Community Safety explained that the Safer Walsall Partnership Board had requested that officers provide guidance regarding PSPOs to each Area Panel. These orders will displace Designated Public Place Orders (DPPOs) It was explained that a PSPO can be used to restrict the consumption of alcohol in a public space, or other forms of asb. A PSPO can only be made once the council has consulted with police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, appropriate community representatives

and the owner or occupier of the land to which the order will apply. It was further explained that since December 2008 there has been a borough wide DPPO. This has been helpful in tackling alcohol related asb across Walsall.

In 2009 the Home Office up-dated its guidance on DPPOs which emphasised the need for them to be proportionate and evidence-based, with a steer away from borough-wide orders. The ASB Crime and Policing Act specifies the transitional arrangements for existing DPPOs which unless revoked remain in force for three years from the commencement date of the new Act. Walsall's current DPPO can remain in force until 19 October 2017, at which time it will automatically become a PSPO. The guidance also enables the council to review the need for the current order ahead of the transitional period. If insufficient evidence is obtained of current alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in each and every part of the borough then a decision will have to be taken as to whether it is proportionate to have a borough wide order.

Home Office guidance suggests that a DPPO may not be appropriate or intended for borough-wide usage. However, Walsall could potentially opt not to revoke the DPPO and to allow it to revert to what would be a borough wide PSPO in October 2017. If the DPPO is to be allowed to revert to PSPO a key consideration are the stringent signage requirements, particularly in terms of the number of signs required. These requirements alone would demand a considerable investment of time and money to increase the number of signs across the borough. This makes this approach arguably both impracticable and unviable as a realistic option. If allowing the DPPO to become a PSPO in October 2017 is not the preferred local option, in the absence of case law, the targeted use of smaller scale PSPOs might be deployed. In terms of street drinking it is planned to use the new tools and powers in a targeted, evidence based way focussing on key individuals and locations. This will include the current DPPO or any subsequent PSPOs.

A Panel Member expressed concern that there were areas within her ward where late night street drinking took place and the absence of a borough wide order would create problems. It would be inevitable that groups or individuals would simply move from an area where an order was in place to somewhere close by where there was no order. The Member also highlighted the importance of there being sufficient police manpower to enforce any type of order. The need for effective policing of enforcement orders in the town centre, particularly in relation to late licenses, was also noted. The Area Manager Community Safety explained that one issue that had been identified by Members and officers was that there appeared to be a police shift change at around the time that late licenses ceased. This meant that there was an absence of enforcement at a critical time. It was further explained that the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods would be raising this issue both with the police and the Police and Crime Commissioner. A number of Members highlighted the importance of enforcement, including in relation to known problem drinking hot spots such as Caldmore Green. The importance of enforcement action taken by the police being recorded was also identified. This would help in the evidence gathering process when seeking to introduce an order. A further Panel Member suggested that the police should be asked to help identify problem areas for the use of orders. The meeting also noted the

contribution to this problem by the proliferation of off licenses selling inexpensive alcohol. The importance of seeking to address the causes of asb, including street drinking, was also noted.

A Member noted the importance of the police responding promptly to calls made by the public in relation to asb, particularly as this would help in the prevention of crime and to maintain public confidence.

The Chair highlighted that a robust approach to enforcement was key. He also agreed that the police must respond effectively to calls made by Members of the public. The importance of the continuation of a strong working relationship between the police and the council was also noted.

101/14

Community Hubs

The Area Manager explained that the purpose of the item was to seek the Panel's initial thoughts on how more localised service delivery could be achieved through a network of community hubs. It was suggested that as part of this process the Panel might wish to engage with partner organisations, the local community and key community groups.

A Panel Member noted that all councillors have their own communities. It would be important for each of those communities to have the opportunity to provide their input. The Panel agreed that the Area Manager should scope out some venues and dates for these meetings in each ward. The Panel Member explained that she would like to take the lead for the Paddock/ Park Hall area. She also requested the support of the Area Manager at her resident's group meetings in order to capture local views.

A Panel Member identified a library within Pleck, which although currently closed a number of days per week, would make a suitable base for a community hub. The Member also identified a building, currently being used to provide adult social care services in Pleck Park, as a potential community hub. A further Panel Member suggested that a suitable location for a hub building in the St Matthew's Ward would be the Butts. She also emphasised that given the size of the ward it would be important to ensure that the consultation was wide enough to give all residents the opportunity to contribute.

The Area Manager explained that the concept of community hubs was not necessarily building based. A key focus of discussions would be how to establish effective networks across different organisations. Another Panel Member highlighted the work of a number of small organisations in Palfrey who it would be important to include in the discussion. He noted that it would also be crucial for residents to be included in this process to help identify what might also benefit the local community.

The Area Manager further explained that a key element of this piece of work was to seek to devolve power to the grassroots and local communities. The consultation will enable community groups to contribute towards what they want in their area.

A Panel Member explained that a working group had been meeting recently to review the current duties and responsibilities undertaken by Area Panels. A key aspect of its work was to explore how Area Panels could more effectively to address community issues and challenges. The

working group would be putting a number of recommendations to the next meeting of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

The Chair noted that it was important to get the right vision for Area Panels and community hubs. If this was achieved then all local communities would benefit

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

102/14

Area Manager's Report

The Area Manager introduced the report.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

103/14

Funding Report

The Area Manager explained that it had not proved possible to fit the second gate at Little London and Bath Road as it had not been possible to secure all the signatures required. Only one resident was unwilling to sign but without this signature the work cannot go ahead. As a result the balance of this money will need to be de-committed for this project.

A Member thanked the Panel for permitting the ward councillors the opportunity to seek a resolution in this matter. The Member expressed frustration on behalf of local residents that the absence of the agreement of one resident meant that the gate could not be installed. In response to queries the Area Manager explained that it would not be possible to install the gate without the agreement of the resident. This was based on advice received from the council's legal service and was due to legal challenges having been made in the past where action had been taken without the consent of a resident.

A further Panel Member also expressed his frustration in this matter. He noted that one resident was holding up a project which would benefit all residents on the street. In response to further queries it was explained that the balance of funding would have to be de-committed. However, if circumstances change a new project proposal could be re-submitted to the Panel in the future.

Walsall Big Spring Clean

The Area Manager explained that the funding of £2,000 would be spent only within Walsall South. Panel Members were invited to identify any specific areas within Walsall South or issues to which they would want funding committed.

It was **moved** by the Chair and **seconded** by Councillor Nawaz:-

That the Walsall Big Spring Clean be awarded £2,000.

The Motion having been put to the vote was declared **carried**.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

104/14

Date and venue for next meeting

The Chair explained that the date and venue of the Panel's next meeting would be decided at Annual Council in June.

Termination of meeting

The meeting closed at 6.55 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: