

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Monday 15 June 2009 at 6.00pm

Panel Members Present Councillor Harris (Chair)
Councillor Anson (Vice Chair)
Councillor Carpenter
Councillor C Bott
Councillor Douglas-Maul
Councillor Phillips
Councillor D Shires
Councillor B Tweddle
Councillor M Yasin

Portfolio Holders Present Cllr R Walker - Environment

Officers Present Jamie Morris - Executive Director (Neighbourhoods)
Keith Stone – Assistant Director (Built Environment)
Clive Wright- Director (Walsall Strategic Partnership)
Angela Walker - Performance and Scrutiny Officer

01/09 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Ansell, Portfolio Holder for Transport.

02/09 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting

03/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at the meeting

04/09 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Members noted the available training opportunities as previously circulated

05/09 WALSALL PARTNERSHIP

Clive Wright tabled two documents for Members to refer to during this item:

- Summary of Walsall Partnership Business Plan (Annexed)
- Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008-2011 (Annexed)

Clive Wright outlined some of the areas of work highlighted within the business plan that he felt the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel could examine as part of their work programme for 2009/10. These were:

- Thematic Groups – Members were informed that there was an

environment theme group, which was chaired by Councillor Walker. The Panel could receive updates on the work of this group if they wished

- Travel to Work Differently Week – Members were informed that between 16 and 22 September 2009, employees across the Partnership would be encouraged to travel to work via a sustainable mode of transport rather than by car for one day. The impact on congestion for this week would be closely monitored and could be reported back to the Panel
- Sustainable Communities Act
- Climate Change – The Panel heard that Walsall Partnership had signed the Nottingham Declaration, which commits the partnership to tackle the causes and effects of climate change on the borough. The Local Authority and Partners agreed targets to decrease CO2 emissions and fuel use to reduce damage to the atmosphere. The Panel could examine each partner's action plan for addressing climate change as part of their 2009/10 work programme.

A Member enquired how the impact of the travel to work differently week would be monitored. Clive Wright responded that staff were encouraged to log onto a dedicated web site to record how they had travelled to work during the week and whether they continued to travel differently following the week. A random prize draw of all those entering information onto the website was carried out as an incentive to employees to log their activity, with last years prize being a bicycle. A survey of staff car parks would also be carried out - results from last years event showed an increase in the number of empty spaces during the week.

Clive Wright then referred Members to the LAA document and explained that the National Indicator Set (NIS) and local performance indicators contained within it had been selected, as they were priorities for the borough. He suggested the following performance indicators may be of interest to the Panel:

- NI 5 – Overall / general satisfaction with the local area
- NI191 – Residual household waste per head
- NI 188 – Adapting to climate change
- NI 198 – Children travelling to school – mode of transport used
- NI 186 – Per capita CO2 emissions in the LA Area

He explained that the LAA covered a three-year period and that the first year had now been out-turned. Therefore, first year performance could be presented to the Panel. Jamie Morris suggested that Members might like to receive regular updates on the performance of these indicators. This would provide Members the opportunity to challenge what is reported and, if desired, question the accountable officer for each target on what is being done to ensure they are delivered.

The Panel agreed that they should receive regular updates from Walsall Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That Walsall Partnership should provide regular updates to the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel on the suggested items during 2009/10

06/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Chair introduced the item and explained that it would be preferable for the Panel to concentrate on two or three major items to start with. Members would be asked for their thoughts on the content of the work programme for 2009/10 during the course of the item.

The Chair invited Jamie Morris to provide some background on the Panel remit. Jamie Morris explained that the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel would cover the Cabinet remits of Councillor Ansell (Transport) and Councillor Walker (Environment). The previous Neighbourhoods Panel had suggested some items that could be carried forward by the new Environment Panel including:

- Civil Parking enforcement
- Highways maintenance contract
- Impact of new recycling scheme
- Impact of ring road

Jamie Morris added that the Panels work programme would also be influenced by forthcoming items on the forward plan. He also suggested the following potential items:

- Street Cleanliness and resident satisfaction – work was currently underway within the Neighbourhoods directorate to examine what could be done to improve the service, alongside benchmarking activity with other local authorities. Street cleanliness was known to have a lot of influence over general resident satisfaction with the local area. This was a piece of work which the Panel could commence immediately
- Changes to the grounds maintenance service – Members were informed that the grounds maintenance service had previously been split into parks and highways maintenance. These services had recently been integrated; therefore, it would be possible to review the effectiveness of these changes in a few months time. This could include looking at the public perception, effectiveness and efficiency of the new service.

Jamie Morris suggested that the Panel would look at street cleansing over a period of several months to enable them time to look at all available information including benchmarking data, undertake site visits, meet with staff etc. The output from these work streams could be a report to Council outlining the Panels recommendations on street cleanliness in Walsall.

Councillor Walker advised the Panel that they might be better served to have all of the information from the benchmarking exercise currently underway within street cleansing to inform their debate, before starting the review of street cleanliness. This was likely to be available for the October Panel meeting.

Members discussed the importance of reviewing the effectiveness of the new civil parking enforcement arrangements. Several concerns were raised by Members in particular around the number of complaints that were received regarding the new arrangements and how they were having a negative impact on private individuals and business alike. The Panel agreed that they would like to investigate the impact of civil parking enforcement, but in the widest possible sense to incorporate wider car parking issues, the impact of changes to parking fees and the private and commercial impact of decriminalised parking. Jamie Morris recommended that this work should commence once decriminalised parking had had time to become embedded and once adaptations had been made in light of initial complaints received. The Chair asked that as a starting point, the Panel receive some analysis on the level of complaints being received concerning the new arrangements and the rates of resolving the complaints. Jamie Morris agreed that these figures could be provided in time for the next meeting of the Panel.

In response to a Member's question, Keith Stone agreed to discuss the issue with deliveries to shops on the Bridge with Paul Leighton. The Member stated that the time slot for unloading was not sufficient and drivers were receiving fines for exceeding the recommended 10 minutes. Keith Stone agreed to report to the Panel on this issue following discussion with Paul Leighton.

Members discussed the cost of using public transport and how this was often a barrier to increasing its use. Clive Wright explained that Travel West Midlands had been involved in the Travel to Work Differently initiative but were not able to reduce fares; however, they had been able to offer some incentives.

The Panel discussed the importance of integrating transport systems to enable users to flow easily between methods of transport. Members agreed that public transport must work effectively and be of good quality to attract users. The Panel agreed that an in depth look at the local public transport system and integration of services would be an issue to which they as a scrutiny panel could add real value.

Members discussed possible working groups and agreed that they should initiate two, these being:

- Integrated transport working group
- Street Cleansing working group

The Panel agreed to keep membership of both groups open to all Members of the Panel and that Lead Membership of both groups would fall to Councillor Harris in the first instance, with Councillor Anson as deputy.

The Panel also agreed to include the following items on their work programme for 2009/10:

- Impact of decriminalised parking and associated issues
- Review of Highways Maintenance contract with Tarmac

- Review of Ring Road impact
- Grounds Maintenance, following review of street cleanliness

Members discussed the importance of having a clear summary page for each report. They requested that each report presented to the Panel have such a summary to enable Members to pick out salient points. It was agreed that all Members of the Panel should also receive a copy of the Chairs Briefing Note at the start of the meeting to ensure all Members were fully informed.

In response to the Chair's question, Angela Walker agreed to circulate a briefing note to all Members of the Panel on which partners could be invited to Scrutiny by the Panel.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) **The following items be included in the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel Work Programme for 2009/10:**
 - **Impact of decriminalised parking and associated issues**
 - **Review of Highways Maintenance contract with Tarmac**
 - **Review of Ring Road impact**
 - **Grounds Maintenance, following review of street cleanliness;**
 - b) **The following Working Groups be initiated:**
 - **Integrated transport systems working group**
 - **Street Cleanliness working group;**
 - c) **Civil Parking enforcement be included on the agenda for the Panel meeting scheduled for 28 July 2009, to include:**
 - **complaint data analysis**
 - **update on delivery vehicle unloading times to business in the town centre;**
 - d) **A clear summary page should be provided for each report presented to the Panel;**
 - e) **All Panel Members will receive a copy of the Chairs Briefing Note at the start of each meeting**
- and;**
- f) **Members will receive a briefing note on inviting partners to meetings of the Panel**

07/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair confirmed the date of the next meeting was 28 July 2009.

The meeting terminated at 7.17pm

DRAFT