

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday, 3 April, 2014 at 6.00 pm in a Conference Room at the Council House

Members in Attendance: Councillor V. Woodruff (Chair)
Councillor I. Azam
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker
Councillor L. Rattigan

Portfolio Holders in Attendance: Councillor I. Shires – Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector

Officers in Attendance: Jamie Morris - Executive Director (Neighbourhoods)
Keith Stone – Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)
John Leach – Head of Communities and Public Protection
Steve Pretty - Head of Engineering and Transportation
John Roseblade - Group Manager (Highways and Environment)
Jag Raan – Major Projects and Minor Improvements Team Leader
Steve Billing – Bereavement and Registration Services Manager

154/14 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Douglas-Maul.

155/14 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

156/14 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

157/14 Minutes

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the meeting that took place on 18th February, 2014, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

158/14 Transforming Rehabilitation Agenda

The meeting received a report from the Head of Probation for Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Resolved

That a further in-depth report be received by the Panel detailing the latest changes to Rehabilitation and Probation Services.

159/14 Flood Risk Management

The Panel were informed of the latest work being undertaken in relation to the Council's duties under the Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

The Group Manager (Highways and Environment) explained the Council's responsibilities; flood risk assessment and investigations; GIS mapping; drainage maintenance and sustainable drainage systems; the gully cleansing project; risks associated with water courses contained in culverts; and that a Flood Risk Manager for the Black Country was being sought to coordinate activity across the area.

Following a series of questions Members were informed that the gully cleansing project was largely complete with 30,000 gullies cleared and 1,500 difficult to clean areas remaining. These areas would be scheduled for clearance in the near future subject to gaining access which could include the need to call road closures. Once complete the results of the borough wide gully cleanse will be analysed to develop a needs based schedule for future clearing. The Panel was given a demonstration of a system that recorded data on the gullies that had been cleaned.

Members discussed the loss of front and rear gardens as drainage areas due to them being covered with concrete and the strain this placed on water systems and what work could be done to prevent this? The meeting heard about the forthcoming requirement for sustainable drainage systems on housing developments which it was hoped would contribute to reducing water runoff.

The Council kept a small stock pile of sand and sandbags to protect property from flooding. Sources to rapidly extend this resource were in place.

Resolved

That the results of the gully clearance project be promoted through Area Panels.

160/14 Willenhall Lawn Cemetery Feasibility Study Interim Report

The Panel were provided with an update on investigations undertaken into the viability of extending the existing lawn cemetery onto adjoining land.

The Major Projects and Minor Improvements Team Leader reported that all required surveys and investigations had now been complete. A full analysis of the surveys and investigations was now required to move forward into the planning stages. Since Members had last seen the proposals an area for excavations and storage of topsoil had been added. It had also been established that it would be necessary to fence off a right of way between the existing

cemetery and the proposed extension. He highlighted that no variance was required to the existing road network and the ecology survey revealed no species on the site that required protecting. Sustainable drainage systems were planned on the site to limit the impact on the existing sewerage network.

Following a question it was confirmed that no water from the proposed extension should run off into the existing drainage systems.

Regarding the soil storage it was clarified that this was required at all graveyards to enable toping up of graves with topsoil.

Resolved

That :-

1. the report be noted;

and;

2. a further report be taken summarising the implications and costs of the proposed extension once planning approval has been granted.

161/14 Devolution through Area Partnerships

The Panel considered a progress report on the implementation of the seven proposals for devolution.

The Head of Communities and Public Protection provided Members with an overview on activity under the seven devolution headings, namely:

- Devolution of budgets and participatory budgeting; highlighting the participatory budgeting exercise that took place at Willenhall/Short Heath Area Panel;
- Greater alignment of teams;
- Strengthening local accountability and support to scrutiny;
- Community Hubs;
- Local Area Coordinators;
- Work to enhance the role of voluntary sector;
- Support for attracting funding for key local initiatives

The Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector) reported how the development of a strong voluntary and community sector (VCS) would assist the growth of devolution and the role of local communities.

Following questions it was explained that the Local Area Coordinator's pilot, if successful, would be considered for rolling out across the borough. It was reported that the contract with "Inclusive Communities" was to be extended in order to complete the pilot. The pilot was to be assessed for effectiveness by the University of Birmingham.

Resolved

That:-

- 1. the Panel consider a further update on Devolution through Area Partnerships at a future meeting;**

and;

- 2. the report be noted.**

162/14 Review of support by Walsall Council to the Voluntary and Community Sector

Members were informed of the outcome and recommendations of the consultant led review of the support provided by Walsall Council to the VCS.

The Head of Communities and Public Protection highlighted the findings of the review to the Panel and explained the framework that was proposed to take the Council's support to the sector forward. He reported that the findings and recommendations had been put back to VCS leaders who had broad support for the proposals in the report. He circulated the paper summarising the feedback of the VCS (annexed).

The Chair questioned why the VCS had viewed the Council with suspicion? The Head of Communities and Public Protection explained that was not an unusual situation but due to the positive nature in which the review had been received it was important to build a relationship of, trust and openness to move forward.

The Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector) spoke to the Panel on the importance of changing the culture towards the VCS so that the sector could add real value to the area.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

163/14 Work Programme 2013/14 and Forward Plan

Resolved

That :-

- 1. the Forward Plan be noted;**

and;

- 2. the following items be recommended to be considered in the 2014/15 Municipal Year:**
 - a) Anti-social Behaviour and Crime Act 2013;**
 - b) Recycling and Contamination;**
 - c) Litter Working Group;**

- d) Play Strategy;**
- e) Active living;**
- f) Food Law Enforcement Plan;**
- g) Environment Enforcement Annual Report;**
- h) Transforming Rehabilitation and Probation Services;**

164/14 Date of Next Meeting

The Chair reported that the date of the next meeting was 6.00 p.m. on 8th April 2014. This is a special meeting to consider proposals on Active Living.

The meeting closed at 7.13 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: