

NORTH WALSALL AREA PANEL MEETING

Tuesday, 31 March, 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

Blakenall Village Centre, Thames Road, Walsall, WS3 1LZ

Present

Councillor K. Phillips (Chair)
Councillor L.D. Jeavons (Vice-Chair)
Councillor J. Fitzpatrick
Councillor P.S. Lane
Councillor I.C. Robertson

Officers

Ness Croft – Area Manager
Steve Knapper – Principal Licensing Officer
Steve Gittins – Deputy Community Safety Manager
Karl Dipple - Community Hubs Project Lead

100/14

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

101/14

Apologies

Apologies for the duration of the meeting were received from Councillor S.F. Fitzpatrick, and Councillor T.J. Jukes.

102/14

Declarations of Interest

Councillor J. Fitzpatrick declared an interest as a Board Member of Bloxwich Community Partnership in relation to the Youth ASB prevention and Keep Out of the Cold funding applications.

103/14

Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

104/14

Minutes of the previous meeting

The meeting considered the minutes of the meeting that took place on 27 January 2015.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2015, copies having been previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

105/14

Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013

The Principal Licensing Officer explained that within Walsall there were 72 mobile scrap collectors with 40 site licenses granted to companies that process the metal. It was also explained that that world-wide demand for metal had fallen and this had resulted in a drop off in applications for scrap metal licenses.

It was further explained that that there had only been a total of 20 complaints received. In response to a Panel query it was explained that a license had been revoked in one instance due to a failure to keep records, while a individual was prosecuted for operating without a license. In response to a further Panel query it was explained that there is no requirements regarding scrap dealers meeting payment of tax duties. However, it is possible to cross reference those holding scrap metal dealer's licenses and whether or not they are in receipt of benefits.

In response to a further Panel query it was explained that a scrap metal dealer's license cost £188 and lasted for 3 years. The meeting noted that it was more difficult to spot a scrap metal collection vehicle as closed vans were now more commonly used. However, it was explained that all scrap dealers would require a license regardless of the vehicle they used. It was also explained that intelligence regarding complaints relating to those participating in scrap metal dealing is passed by the police to council officers. It would then be the decision of the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods as to whether an individual's license is revoked. It was also explained that a multi-agency taskforce led by West Midlands Police will be investigating allegations of illegal scrap metal dealing during April.

Resolved

That the update be noted.

106/14

Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO)

The Deputy Community Safety Manager 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 very successful in helping to tackle 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. 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 number of Members noted the significant success of the current DPPO across the borough. In response to Panel queries it was explained that the possibility of being able to aggregate evidence to justify borough-wide PSPOs was also being considered. However, ultimately it may prove difficult to achieve a borough-wide alcohol ban similar to what is currently in place. It was also explained that PSPO lasts for three years although it was possible to apply to extend it. It was further clarified that it was possible that under PSPOs it might prove necessary to evidence need and place signage in each specific location. Panel Members expressed concern regarding the difficulties the police would have in being able to enforce orders in specific locations only. This would mean that in certain locations individuals would simply need to move a short distance to a site without any type of order in place. However, the meeting also noted that the police would not be able to enforce any type of order without the necessary manpower.

Resolved

That the Panel would wish that a borough-wide order be operated in Walsall; &
that the update be noted.

Community Hubs

The Community Hubs Project Lead explained that Cabinet had taken the decision to seek to deliver services at a more local level through community hubs. He was meeting with each of the Area Panels as part of the process of starting the debate in terms of identifying what was wanted locally. It was explained that amongst the key questions to be answered was in relation to how local services, including those operated by other organisations and the voluntary sector, as well as council services, could be better delivered. He also explained that a working group was currently seeking to determine how devolution to Area Panels could be developed.

A Panel Member noted that this was a scoping exercise and that each ward was different. A number of Members expressed concern regarding efforts to develop the voluntary sector. They explained that much of their interaction with volunteer groups was to respond to complaints. A Panel Member suggested that there was a need for a different approach to be taken to the voluntary sector. This would include ensuring that the sector and those working within it were properly supported and respected. This would include providing proper training and support to individuals, as well as for organisations in terms of governance and other operational functions. An approach like this might then lead to voluntary organisations taking ownership of their own complaints. He also suggested that the voluntary sector would benefit from operating under the umbrella of Public Health given that some of the key objectives for local communities were health based. A further Panel Member noted that there were a range of networks, including virtual networks formed of many different partners. The meeting identified various potential approaches to operating community hubs. This included sites which currently house libraries having a role in tackling inquiries to the council and other organisations. It was also noted that whg had office-type accommodation within local wards which might be used for this function. The Community Hubs Project Lead expressed the view that a further function for community hubs is likely to follow the introduction of Universal Credits. In particular,

there is likely to be significant demand for access to computers and the internet within local communities.

The meeting identified the importance of avoiding duplication of existing community hubs and services. A number of Panel Members expressed support for a one-stop-shop type of facility similar to that operating in the town centre. The importance of signposting local residents to services delivered by non-council organisations was also discussed.

The Panel Members agreed that a number of workshops would be held within North Walsall where the public could give their views on community hubs. Members also agreed to pose questions around this issue when they met with resident groups during the coming weeks.

Resolved

That a number of workshops would be held within North Walsall to discuss future community hub arrangements; &

the briefing be noted.

108/14

Area Manager's Report

A Panel Member advised that the linked radios used to support Bloxwich retailers had been introduced by Bloxwich Business Partnership.

A number of Members expressed concern regarding the waste dumped in Goscote Lodge Crescent and Slackey Lane. The Area Manager explained that the site lent itself to the use of covert cameras, although there were not any plans in place for the site at present.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Funding Report

The Panel considered the funding applications as set out in the report.

Area Partnerships – camera repairs and redeployment

It was explained that the funding was sought towards the repair and redeployment of domehawk cameras. The Panel approved the application for £2,000.

Area Partnerships – Environmental Projects 15/16

It was explained that the funding was sought towards the cost of spring cleanup project. Members were also invited to advise the Area Manager of any hot spot areas where they would like clean up action. It was also explained that community payback now required funding for any work undertaken. The Panel approved the application for £3,500.

Area Partnerships and Bloxwich Community Partnership- Youth ASB prevention

It was explained that the funding was sought for the project aimed at delivering outreach, detached and centre based events to encourage young people to engage in positive activities. Having earlier declared an interest as a Board Member of Bloxwich Community Partnership Councillor J. Fitzpatrick did not participate in the vote. The Panel approved the application for £5,000.

Environmental Crime Unit (WMBC) – Purchase of covert video cameras

It was explained that cameras were required to support the tackling of fly tipping across the borough. The Panel approved the application for £4,000.

Bloxwich Community Partnership – Keep Out of the Cold

It was explained that this was a continuation of an already successful breakfast based initiative. The Panel approved the application for £1,010.35.

110/14 **Councillor suggestions for future sessions**

The Chair invited the Panel to consider people they would like to nominate as co-opted Members.

The meeting terminated at 7.55 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: