

NEIGHBOURHOODS SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Tuesday, 6th January, 2015 at 6.00 p.m. in a Conference Room at the Council House

Members in Attendance:

Councillor C. Creaney (Chairman)
Councillor C. Towe (Vice-Chair)
Councillor A. Ditta
Councillor S. Fitzpatrick
Councillor E. Hazell
Councillor J. Murray
Councillor A. Nawaz
Councillor K. Phillips
Councillor E. Russell
Councillor I. Shires
Councillor G. Sohal

Portfolio Holders in Attendance:

Councillor K. Hussain – Community, Leisure & Culture
Councillor B. Cassidy – Children’s Services

Officers in Attendance:

Jamie Morris - Executive Director (Neighbourhoods)
Keith Stone – Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)
Kate Bowers – Interim Head of Communities and Public Protection
Alan Michell – Head of Integrated Youth Support Service
Sue Wright – Electoral Services Manager
Paul Leighton – Group Manager (Road Traffic Network)
Chris Knowles – Services Finance Manager
Craig Goodall – Committee Business and Governance Manager

Invitees in Attendance:

Eleanor Boycott – Chief Executive Officer - Bloxwich Community Partnership
Rachael Doughty – Finance Manager – Bloxwich Community Partnership
Daniel Garbett – Youth Manager – Bloxwich Community Partnership

22/15 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Hazell.

23/15 Substitutions

Councillor E. Hazell substituted for Councillor D. Hazell.

24/15 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor S. Fitzpatrick declared a pecuniary interest in item number 26/15 petitions against cuts to funding for the voluntary sector. He left the room for the duration of this item.

Councillor J. Murray declared a pecuniary interest in item number 27/15 devolution to Area Partnerships.

25/15 Minutes

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the meeting which took place on 12th November, 2014, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

26/15 Petition against cuts to funding for the voluntary sector

Having earlier declared a pecuniary interest Councillor S. Fitzpatrick left the room for the duration of the item.

The Panel considered a petition against funding cuts to the voluntary sector proposed in the 2015/16 draft revenue budget. The petition was focused on the impact of funding reductions on Bloxwich Community Partnership (BCP).

The Executive Director introduced the petition and explained that as it contained over 500 signatures then the appropriate senior officer was required to provide a response to it at a Scrutiny and Performance Panel meeting.

Eleanor Boycott, Chief Executive Officer of BCP, explained the rationale behind the petition and the impact that the funding reductions were going to have on service delivery at BCP. A letter containing detail on the impact of the funding reductions was tabled at the meeting (annexed).

The Interim Head of Communities and Public Protection reported on the consultation that had taken place regarding reductions to building maintenance budget for Community Associations. She noted that a meeting had taken place with Community Association (CA) Managers including Ms Boycott. The meeting had discussed the long term effects of multiple funding reductions on services delivered through CAs.

The Head of Youth Support Services (IYPSS) reported that funding reductions were being made to directly delivered and commissioned Youth Support Services (YSS) activity. He added that since the draft budget proposals had been agreed it had been decided to undertake a root and

branch review of targeted youth work activity. This would include a comparison of value for money between directly delivered and voluntary and community sector (VCS) commissioned activity.

The Portfolio Holder (Children's Services) explained that she was supportive of the review and the role of the VS in delivering services to young people.

The Portfolio Holder (Community, Leisure and Culture) expressed sympathy with the situation CAs found themselves in.

Members of the Panel expressed sympathy with the situation. There was a view that reductions to building maintenance budgets to CAs would cost the Council more in the longer term if CAs were forced to hand buildings back over to the Council. The YSS review was welcomed but some concerns were expressed about the timing of the review. Some Members felt the review should have taken place before the draft budget was put out to consultation. Members noted how spending reductions across portfolios were impacting on similar organisations such as CAs and called for improved coordination on the predicted impact spending cuts would have.

A number of points were made expressing disappointment at the proposed level of funding reductions to the VCS. Some Members felt that the VCS should be protected as it provided value for money. Other Members expressed the view that due to funding reductions from Government undesirable funding cuts were being made in many areas.

Resolved:-

That:-

- 1. funding for Community Association building management be restored to the draft revenue budget 2015/16;**
- 2. Cabinet pay due regard to the outcome of Youth Support Service targetted youth work review in particular the outcome of the costs/benefit analysis putting voluntary and community sector led youth work compared to directly provided services;**
- 3. More coordination of the impact of budget reductions across portfolios be undertaken.**

27/15 Devolution to Area Partnerships

The Panel considered a report on devolution to Area Partnerships including information on their reconfiguration and a suggestion to establish a working group to contribute ideas to their future direction.

Members discussed the issues and felt that something could be done to improve the level of engagement at Area Panel meetings. A discussion took place on former Local Committee models. It was noted that each area was different so local solutions could be required.

Members agreed that a working group would be a good opportunity to contribute to the future direction of Area Partnerships. Due to the cost cutting nature of the issue Members asked that a Member from each of the Council's Scrutiny and Performance Panels be appointed to the working group.

Resolved:-

That:-

- 1. A Working Group be established to consider devolution through Area Partnerships;**
- 2. The following Members be appointed to the Area Partnerships Working Group:**
 - a) Councillor A. Ditta;**
 - b) Councillor S. Fitzpatrick;**
 - c) Councillor A. Nawaz;**
 - d) Councillor C. Towe;**
 - e) Councillor I. Shires;**
- 3. The Council's remaining Scrutiny and Performance Panels be invited to appoint a Member to the Working Group.**

28/15 Amendments of Polling Places Outside of the Compulsory Review Period for Polling Districts and Polling Places

Members reviewed the proposed changes to Polling Stations and Polling Places.

The Electoral Services Manager presented proposed changes in the Pelsall, Pheasey Park Farm and Paddock Wards.

Members were supportive of the proposals.

Resolved:-

That Council approve the proposed changes to Polling Places.

28/15 Road Safety Framework and 20 mph Zones

Members were informed of the need to undertake a review to set up a new Road Safety Plan to support the delivery of a Road Safety Framework throughout the borough.

The Group Manager (Road Traffic Network) explained the range of activity taking place and noted the borough road casualty figures. An increase in road casualty figures was expected when the figures were next updated.

Members discussed the 20 mph zones and the criteria for selection. A number of Members said they were disappointed with the lack of Police enforcement of 20 mph limits. Problems with speeding were also discussed. The Group Manager reported that the new Police and Crime Commissioner was an advocate of speed cameras so it was anticipated that current redundant cameras could be bought back into use along with more mobile speed traps.

Issues caused by traffic taking children to school were discussed. In particular the needs to control the speed of cars around schools. Members felt that work to encourage walking to school should continue. It was commented that for this to be successful good quality footpaths free from obstructions were needed. It was noted that in some areas cars were forced to park on the pavements to allow traffic to pass on the roads.

Following a question it was confirmed that Government money announced to tackle potholes was money which the Council expected to receive anyway. A Member commented that the potholes repaired in a section of road in the Willenhall area were already beginning to return.

Resolved:-

That the report be noted.

**29/15 Financial Plan 2015/16 – 2018/19 – Update on Draft Revenue and Capital Programme and
Outcome of Budget Consultation to date**

The Panel considered the draft revenue and capital programme for 2015/16 and the outcome of the budget consultations to date.

The Executive Director introduced the report and highlighted the relevant point to Members.

Capital 2014/15 – Transport Projects

The Panel disagreed with the reallocation of funding for transport projects. Firstly, Members felt that the provision of a car park at Lucknow Road, Willenhall, was a worthwhile scheme so should still go ahead rather than have its funding reallocated. Secondly, Members were not supportive of the proposed highway scheme for Caldmore Road. Serious concerns regarding the viability of the proposed one way scheme were raised and Members requested that it did not go ahead. There were worries about the impact a one way system could have on businesses in the area. It was noted that there were issues to resolve with traffic in the area. The one way system was not felt to be the best way to address these issues.

With regard to other matters further information was requested on the potential increase to the Council insurance premium and the development of a car park on the site of a former Neighbourhood Office in Buxton Road.

Resolved:-

That:-

- 1. Funding be allocated to the 2015/16 Capital Programme to create a car park at Lucknow Road, Willenhall;**
- 2. A one way system should not be introduced on Caldmore Road;**
- 3. Further information be provided to Members on the issues arising from the predicted increase in the Council's liability insurance arrangements;**
- 4. Further information be provided to Members on the development of a car park on the site of a former Neighbourhood Office in Buxton Road..**

30/15 Work Programme 2014/15 and the Forward Plan

Resolved:-

That :

- 1. the following items be considered at the 17th February 2015 meeting of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel:-**
 - a) third quarter budget monitoring;**
 - b) implementation of free school meals;**
 - c) unauthorised encampments;**
 - d) highways maintenance strategy and asset monitoring plan**
- 2. Street light lantern LED conversion be considered at the 8th April 2015 meeting of the Neighbourhood Scrutiny and Performance Panel;**
- 3. Members be provided with information regarding the role of Scrutiny;**
- 4. The Forward Plan be noted.**

31/15 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 6.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 17th February, 2015.

The meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: