

Willenhall North/Willenhall South/Short Heath Area Panel

Tuesday, 21 January, 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room, Council House, Walsall

Present:

Councillor I. Shires (Chair)
Councillor Barker (Vice Chair)
Councillor Cook
Councillor S. Coughlan
Councillor Mrs D. Shires
Councillor Ilmann - Walker

In Attendance

Jo Lowndes	Partnership Manager
Andy Rust	Head of Joint Commissioning Unit
PC Khalid	West Midlands Police
PC Emery	West Midlands Police

35/13 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors C. Creaney, V. Woodruff and D. Coughlan

36/13 Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were submitted.

37/13 Local Government Access to Information Act, 1985 (as amended)

The Panel noted that there were no items on the agenda which required the exclusion of the Public.

38/13 Minutes

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December, 2013, a copy of which had been previously circulated.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December, 2013, a copy having been previously circulated, be approved as true and accurate record.

39/13 Local Police Plan

The Chair welcomed PC Khalid and PC Emery to the meeting. Members were advised that the Local Policing Plan had been presented to the Safer Walsall Partnership on 7 January, 2014. The Partnership was seeking the views of the Area Panel regarding local community concerns with the Local Police Plan.

The Chair made reference to Wave 34 of the 'Feeling the Difference' survey carried out by West Midlands' Police. He noted that only 898 of the 8,451 interviews were carried out in Walsall which was not a good representation. He requested a further breakdown of the survey to indicate more specifically where the surveys were completed across the 6 area partnerships.

A discussion followed on the fact that 'teenagers hanging around' was one of the top 3 problems identified in Local Areas. It was questioned whether it was peoples' perceptions of anti social behaviour rather than young people actually causing nuisance. It was indicated that vulnerable people, especially the elderly would be intimidated by youths gathered together whether or not they were acting in an anti social way. The Police had to manage the perceptions of the public as well as responding appropriately when anti social behaviour did take place.

Members commented that social landlords had a role to play when dealing with anti social behaviour by tenants. The Police explained that they had a good working relationship with Walsall Housing Group (WHG) which had led to positive results. The Chair explained that even if evictions took place the same residents could take up private rented accommodation in the same area. It was more difficult to take action in this scenario. It was highlighted that the process of dealing with difficult tenants could take a considerable amount of time and that processes should be improved upon to enable action to be taken more quickly. The police commented that WHG could improve upon their vetting procedure for potential new tenants to follow that of Beechdale Community Housing Association.

The Chair explained that public transport needed to be improved to enable better mobility for young people to travel to facilities around the borough. He also said that strengthening partnership working was crucial to assist the Police.

In relation to the top 3 problems identified it was noted that during phase 33 inconsiderate parking was an issue. The Chair referred to the participatory budgeting project which enabled the public to vote for a verge parking scheme. WHG had recognised the value of the scheme and agreed to contribute 100k for the next round of the scheme. The Chair suggested that whilst he appreciated that budgets were diminishing, he would welcome a contribution by the Police as it was an issue that affected all Partners.

In relation to the respondents to the survey, members stated that more should be done to encourage representation from varied backgrounds. The Police advised that they did try to engage with temples and mosques however communities were often reticent. As generations progressed these barriers would also diminish. Members suggested that carnivals etc should be used by the Police to engage with communities in a positive way.

Resolved

That the report be noted and

40/13 Funding Report

The Panel considered a report, tabled at the meeting, which provided an update on projects that had previously been approved by the Panel.

The Partnership Manager advised that no applications had been submitted which required the Area Panels approval.

A councillor raised concern that, in other area panels, a Cabinet member had agreed to make up any shortfall in funding approved by the Area Panel. The Chair advised that he would investigate the matter.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

41/13 Area Manager Update

The Panel received an update on activity carried out within the within Willenhall and Short Heath.

Members were updated on the changes to the Walsall Plan Priorities and the Black Country Foodbank. In relation to the latter it was suggested that foodbanks should also consider supplying nappies as these were often required by families in need.

Resolved

That the update be noted

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.