

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 14 February, 2013 at 6.00 pm in a Conference Room at the Council House

Panel Members Present: Councillor V. Woodruff (Chair)
Councillor C. Creaney (Vice-Chair)
Councillor I. Azam
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker

Portfolio Holders present: Councillor T. Ansell - Transport and Environment
Councillor I. Shires - Community Engagement and
Voluntary Sector

Officers in Attendance: Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)
John Leach - Head of Communities and Partnerships
Tracey Evans - Lead Accountant
Richard Bubb - Area Partnership Project Manager
John Morris - Area Manager
Craig Goodall - Committee Business and Governance
Manager

54/13 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

55/13 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

56/13 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

57/13 Minutes

Resolved:

That:

- 1. the Head of Engineering and Transportation report back to Members on his investigation into flooding from surface water near Junction 10 M6;
and;**
- 2. the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2013, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

58/13 Quarter 3 Financial Monitoring Position for 2012/13

Members were informed of the predicated revenue and capital position for 2012/13, based on the performance for quarter 3 (1 April to 31 December 2012), for services within the remit of the Panel.

The Lead Accountant reported that the forecasted yearend financial position was a net revenue overspend of £42,000, after the use of approved reserves and carry forwards. The capital forecast was an underspend of £5,473,000 of which £5,156,000 would be carried forward into 2013/14.

The following were the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- Successful negotiations in land acquisitions had resulted in an underspend of £309,759.
- Based on the information currently available, the identified budget risks were unlikely to materialise, at least not in full.
- The Catering Service was reporting a surplus due to changes in the way the prices for school meals were charged to schools.
- LATS stood for Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

59/13 Devolution through Area Partnerships

The Panel were informed of proposals to further develop the Area Partnership (AP) model including methods of devolution.

The Head of Communities and Partnerships explained the ideas to the Panel. He highlighted the original role of APs, research that had taken place on alternative approaches and the seven proposals included in the report to further develop the Walsall AP model (annexed).

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector explained the rationale behind the proposals and how they linked to the Councils strategic priorities. He explained the key principle of the proposals was to provide local people with a greater say in how money was spent in their localities.

Members of the Panel asked a series of questions. The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- The proposals would not give local people the power to spend money. Rather they would provide a greater opportunity for local people to influence how money was spent in their areas. Only Councillors or Officers were able to make decisions on spending as set out in delegations within the Councils Constitution. In order for Area Community Meetings to be able to make decisions they would need to become Council Committees.
- Wider and more inclusive engagement of the public would be required to gain the views of local people. This would require the design of events to encourage local people to get involved. Experiences of other Local

Authorities, in particular, Leicestershire, indicated that attendances at meetings improved when residents felt involved.

- It was suggested the proposed Local Area Co-ordinators (LACs) would be duplicating the work of existing services. To an extent this point was acknowledged, however, it was explained that LACs had added value in other areas. Therefore the idea was being piloted to review its effectiveness for Walsall.
- It was noted that often AP boundaries and work routes, for example litter picking, were not co-terminus.
- The appointment of a Grants Officer to assist local voluntary and community sector groups apply for external funding was welcomed.
- Some Members expressed frustration that they had not been consulted on the proposals other than a short information item at the most recent Area Community Meeting. It was important that all Members had the opportunity to comment and ask questions on the proposals.
- It was explained that there was a two year time line to the proposals set out in the report. It was expected that developments would evolve as they were worked through.

After hearing the details and having the opportunity to ask questions the Panel felt that all Members of the Council should have the opportunity to receive further information on the proposals and be allowed the opportunity to comment. Members felt that the most effective way of doing this would be through presentations to political group meetings with other arrangements made for Democratic Labour and Independent Members.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. a presentation be provided to all political groups and the Democratic Labour and Independent Members on 'Devolution through Area Partnerships' to allow all Members the opportunity to comment on and ask questions regarding the proposals;**
and;
- 2. following the consultation with Members a further report on 'Devolution through Area Partnerships' discussing the feedback received from Members along with further detail on how the proposals will be implemented be considered at a special meeting of the Panel in April 2013.**

60/13 Scrap Metal Working Group Monitoring Report

Members were informed on activity that has taken place following the recommendations of the Scrap Metal Working Group (SMWG).

The Area Partnerships Project Manager reported on actions that had taken place following the recommendations of the SMWG. He explained illegal scrap dealing in the borough had been reducing due to ongoing partnership working. These efforts had been assisted by the outlawing of cash payments for scrap metal in December 2012.

Members were pleased to hear that a licensing scheme for scrap metal dealers was being worked towards. The Panel were aware of the complexities of the scheme and requested a report on the matter to a future meeting.

It was explained that it was difficult to take action against young people riding horse-drawn carriages. Any damages caused by careless riding would be required to be taken up privately through parents. Members requested further information on whether adult riders of horse-drawn carriages required insurance.

The composite drain and gully cover trials had been a success. The composite material cost £10 more to purchase than a metal part.

Referrals were made to the Department for Work and Pensions if unemployed people were thought to be scrap metal dealing.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. the Area Partnership Project Manager advise Members on whether adult riders of horse-drawn carriages require insurance;**
- and;**
- 2. a report be considered at a future meeting regarding a licensing scheme for scrap metal dealers.**

61/13 Work Programme 2012/13 and Forward Plan

The Panel discussed and agreed items for their next meeting on the 28 March.

Resolved

That:

- 1. the Forward Plan be noted;**
- and;**
- 2. the following items be considered at the 28 March 2013 meeting of the Panel:**
 - a) Police and Crime Commissioner;**
 - b) Sport and Leisure;**
 - c) Recycling;**
 - d) Low emissions towns and cities.**

62/13 Date of next meeting

It was noted the date of next meeting was 6.00 pm on 28 March 2013.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 8.03 pm.

Signed:

Date: