

Cabinet – 21 March 2018

Petition Concerning Unauthorised Encampments in the Short Heath Ward recommendations of the Corporate and Public Services Scrutiny Committee on 11 January 2018

Ward(s): Short Heath

Portfolios: Cllr I Shires - Community, Leisure and Culture
Cllr C Jones – Clean and Green

1. Summary

The Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a petition concerning unauthorised encampments in Short Heath. Councillor Hicken as the Lead Petitioner introduced the petition which called for injunctions on parks and playing fields in Short Heath and Willenhall.

The Committee heard the following statements and highlighted issues:-

- A number of sites in Short Heath and Willenhall required deterrents to prevent unauthorised encampments.
- Additional resources and defences at vulnerable sites in Short Heath and Willenhall would save the Council long term financially.
- The Council had reduced the amount of unauthorised encampments during 2016/17 and 17/18 by prioritising resources to target hotspots.
- Transit Sites had been successful in Oldham and Runcorn.
- The Council had been dealing with high cost of enforcement officers and associated legal costs.
- A desire for increased Police support in dealing with unauthorised encampments. In response to a Member request for further investigation into procuring additional Police resources, the Leader of the Council confirmed that the Police had been willing to assist with requests as resources allowed.
- Body cameras used by enforcement officers would be implemented in future.
- Issues of displacing unauthorised encampments to other areas and sites had been a concern for the Committee.
- The Committee noted the work carried out by officers and the progress made with Council and Police cooperation.

2. The Committee resolved to recommend to Cabinet that:-

- 2.1 The Cabinet allocate finances in order to undertake preventative measures to parks and green spaces in Willenhall North and Short Heath in consultation with Ward Councillors and residents to secure sites from unauthorised encampments;**

2.2 In connection with 2.1 above, the Cabinet carry out a review of preventative measures and strategies in relation to unauthorised encampments across Walsall as a 'spend to save' measure.

Background papers

Report to Corporate and Public Services Scrutiny Committee on Petition: Secure our parks.

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