

Willenhall North/Willenhall South/Short Heath Area Panel

22 September, 2015 at 6.00 pm

Willenhall CHART, 19 Gomer Street, Willenhall, WV13 2NS

Members in Attendance: Councillor C. Creaney
Councillor S. Coughlan (Vice Chair)
Councillor D. Coughlan
Councillor A. Hicken
Councillor D. Hazell
Councillor D. Shires
Councillor I. Shires

Officers in Attendance: Michael Greenfield – Area Manager
Mark Flanagan – West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service
Sandy Urquhart – Principal Regeneration Officer
Liz Forster – Planning Policy Technical Officer
Craig Goodall – Committee Business & Governance Manager

133/15 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. Cooper and E. Hazell.

134/15 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

135/15 Declarations of Interest

Councillor S. Coughlan and D. Coughlan declared an interest in item 140/15 – ‘Evaluation of funding used to support the voluntary and community sector through Willenhall CHART’.

136/15 Local Government Access to Information Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items which required the exclusion of the public for the duration of the meeting.

137/15 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting which took place on 30 June 2015, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

138/15 Fire and Rescue Service

The Panel were informed of work being undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in Willenhall and Short Heath by Station Commander Mark Flanagan.

The Station Commander reported on a number of recent issues in the area. This included the recent fire at the Allens Centre, issues with fires at Longacre and the recent open day at Willenhall Fire Station. He also thanked the Panel for the funding contribution towards the open day and home safety campaigns.

The meeting discussed the Allens Centre in more detail along with the need to be proactive with the management of void buildings. Members felt that break in's and fires were all too common with void properties and more preventative work should take place. The Area Manager reported that a Void Property Group made up of the Council and Partners was being established for exactly this issue. The Station Commander added that information was shared with partners about serial arsonists in order to prevent incidents.

The Chair suggested that the FRS should be involved in the Willenhall Christmas events and suggested the Station Commander made arrangements through the Town Centre Manager.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

139/15

Walsall's Local Plan – Consultation

The Panel considered the ongoing consultation on local planning documents. These included: preferred options for site allocation, the Walsall town centre area action plan and the community infrastructure levy.

The Principal Regeneration Officer briefly introduced the documents and explained that they were the local elements of the Black Country Core Strategy. He reported that a number of consultation meetings had already take place. The only issues raised against the proposals were concerns about new travellers pitches in Darlaston and Blakenall. The plans proposed that the borough would have 120 sites for travellers. The purpose of these sites was to help prevent illegal encampments. There would be no additional pitches constructed in Willenhall and Short Heath.

Members of the Panel stated that they no issues with travellers in the local area and understood the need for additional pitches to accommodate local demand.

The Panel felt that Willenhall town centre needed to have more prominence in the Site Allocation Document (SAD). It was explained that the SAD did not cover any of the District centres, but that an Area Action Plan (AAP) would cover the District centres following adoption of the SAD, including Willenhall District Centre. . However, Members felt that there was too much uncertainty on the timeframe that a Willenhall AAP would be drafted within. It was felt that too much priority was given to Walsall over the boroughs district centres. The Panel agreed to review the current Willenhall town centre Inset Plan (part of the current UDP) with the view of making recommendations to update it as the SAD was viewed as 'top down' document with little local input.

Members felt that more housing should be built in Willenhall town centre. This would provide much needed housing stock plus assist increasing the sustainability of the town centre.

Members endorsed the need to provide rail passenger services to Willenhall as soon as possible.

A Member questioned how Registered Social Landlords would be able to make a significant contribution to affordable housing when the government were extending the right to buy initiative?

Regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy the Panel was informed that any money raised through would be stored in a borough-wide pot. The money was allocated towards a set of pre-agreed priorities. A Member felt that that Area Panels should have a say in how this cash was allocated.

The Panel suggested that the consultation be widely promoted across the local area and a display be included at all libraries, including New Invention.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. Willenhall Town Centre should have increased prominence in the Site Allocation Document;**
- 2. The Area Panel review the existing Willenhall Town Centre Development Plan with the view to feeding recommendations to the Planning Department to include in a future Willenhall Town Centre Area Action Plan;**
- 3. All libraries in Willenhall and Short Heath display consultation materials including maps on the Site Allocation Document, Area Action Plans and Community Infrastructure Levy;**
- 4. The report be noted.**

140/15

Evaluation of funding used to support the voluntary and community sector through Willenhall CHART

The Panel considered a report providing feedback from Willenhall CHART following a funding award to enable the centre to provide assistance to local voluntary and community groups (VCS).

The Area Manager tabled a report (annexed) from the CHART that provided an overview of activity that has taken place. A Member requested a report to a future meeting providing further detail on the number of groups that had been engaged with and what the outcome of the work had been.

A Member noted that it was important that the VCS was assisted with funding applications or benefited from streamlined application processes.

Resolved:

That a further, more detailed, evaluation report on what the outcome of the funding used to support the voluntary and community sector through Willenhall CHART be received.

141/15

Area Manager's Report

The Panel considered a report regarding ongoing work taking place in the area to support the areas strategic priorities.

The Area Manager took Members through his report.

The meeting discussed the deployment of a domehawk CCTV camera in Durham Avenue. The Area Manager reported that this camera had been deployed by WHG.

A Member of the Panel thanked Inspector Keeley Bevington for her work in the area and expressed concern regarding impact of Police reorganisations.

Members asked for more information on the future of the 99p Store in Willenhall and asked for a special meeting to be arranged so that a discussion could take place on proposed changes to youth support service funding.

Resolved

That:

- 1. Members be provided with further information on the future of the 99p Store in Willenhall;**

2. **A special meeting be arranged to discuss proposed changes to youth support services funding;**
3. **the report be noted.**

142/15 **Funding Report**

The Panel considered funding applications.

The Area Manager introduced each funding application and explained how they would contribute to the local area.

Resolved:

That:

1. **£2,500 be awarded to Substance Matters;**
2. **£409.62 be awarded to Holy Trinity Church. Short Heath;**
3. **£1830 be awarded to Willenhall Town Centre Partnership towards the Willenhall Festivities;**
4. **£1270 be awarded to the Teens and Toddlers Youth Development Programme.**

143/15 **Date of next meeting:**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 10 November 2015

Termination of Meeting

The meeting closed at 8.09 p.m.

Chairman.....

Date.....