

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Tuesday 8 June 2010 at 6.00pm

Panel Members Present Councillor L. Harrison (Chair)
Councillor S. Coughlan (Vice-Chair)
Councillor C. Creaney
Councillor G. Perry
Councillor K. Sears
Councillor D. Shires

Other Members Present Councillor D. Coughlan

Officers Present Jamie Morris – Executive Director, Neighbourhoods
Keith Stone – Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods
Chris Holliday – Head of Leisure and Community
Health
Graham Hood – Head of Green spaces
Andy Ody – Grounds, Street Cleansing and Markets
Manager
Ben Percival – Sports and Leisure Service Manager
Craig Goodall – Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

01/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors O. Bennett, P. Bott and D. Shires.

02/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

03/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

04/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2010, copies having been previously circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

05/10 WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11

The Panel considered options for their work programme for 2010/11. Members reviewed the outcomes of previous consultations, the outcome of a specific scrutiny work programme survey, a number of suggestions for work programme items and the latest version of the forward plan.

The Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer highlighted the relevant outcomes within the remit of the Panel of the budget consultation, the Place Survey and recent scrutiny work programme survey. The respective consultations had identified resident priorities around:

- Crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Greater involvement of local residents in Council decisions;
- Greater use of and engagement with the voluntary and community sector;
- Importance of libraries.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) commented that compared to other councils Walsall had a high level of consultation, but a low proportion of residents who actually felt they were able to influence decisions.

He also added that many of the services that fell within the remit of the Panel were discretionary so, in the context of the council having to make large financial savings in coming years, it was likely that large-scale changes to the way services were delivered would be required.

The Chair took the Panel through the suggestions contained in the agenda:

Strategic Review of Leisure Centre/Facilities Review

The Panel agreed a working group would be the best way to consider this issue.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) stated that he valued the Panels input as this was an area where the Council would be expected to make substantial savings.

Bolton and Rotherham had been suggested as possible locations to visit as both areas had gone through a similar process of consolidation and modernisation of their own leisure facilities. The Chair suggested that the working group also visited Swiss Cottage.

First Stop Express

The Panel agreed to be updated about this issue by a briefing note outside of a regular meeting.

Following a suggestion the Panel agreed to carry out a review of public access to service points. There had earlier been an intention to establish mini first stop shops in areas of the borough but that this was not affordable. The First Stop Express had been one way of providing access in local neighbourhoods. But various services also have outlets throughout the borough (children's services for example and adult social care) and it would be useful to explore what locations existed and how these could be used to make council services generally more accessible.

The Future of the Public Library Service in Walsall

The Panel agreed to set up a working group to consider this issue once they had completed their leisure centres review.

Scrutiny of Local Area Agreement (LAA) Targets

The Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer suggested to the Panel that rather than take an overview of LAA targets Members should focus their attentions on poorly performing targets within their remit as highlighted in the report.

Members agreed to take progress reports on progress towards achieving red and amber indicators in the LAA.

National Indicator 4: Percentage of People Who Feel They Can Influence Decisions in their Locality

This was a red indicator in the LAA. The Panel agreed to review progress towards achieving this indicator in the new year following the implementation of the new neighbourhood management structure and the place study.

Recommendations made by previous Panel

Following activity by the previous years panels Members agreed to consider progress with the following issues:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group recommendations
- Alcohol Related Anti-Social Behaviour Working recommendations
- Community gardens
- Neighbourhood Management

Following a recommendation from the Alcohol Related Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group the Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer confirmed that arrangements were currently being made with West Midlands Police for Members to shadow police officers on a weekend evening.

As the Councils 'crime and disorder committee' the Panel requested to co-opt a police authority member for the rest of the municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1. a working group be established to consider a future leisure centre strategy;**
- 2. the following Members be appointed to the leisure centre working group:**
 - a) Councillor L. Harrison**
 - b) Councillor P. Bott**

- c) Councillor S. Coughlan
- d) Councillor C. Creaney
- e) Councillor D. Shires

3. the following items be added to the Panels work programme for 2010/11:

- a) **Public Access to Council Service Outlets;**
- b) **the future of Library Service;**
- c) **Progress towards achieving poorly performing Local Area Agreement targets, namely:**
 - i. **percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (NI 4);**
 - ii. **adult participation in sport (NI 8);**
 - iii. **percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area (NI 21);**
 - iv. **overall/general satisfaction with local area (NI 5);**
 - v. **environment for a thriving third sector (NI 7);**
 - vi. **perceptions of anti-social behaviour (NI 17).**
- d) **revisit progress with the following issues previously considered by the Panel:**
 - i. **Recommendations from Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group;**
 - ii. **Recommendations from Alcohol Related Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group;**
 - iii. **Neighbourhood Management;**
 - iv. **Community Gardens;**

and;

4. a Police Authority Member be co-opted onto the Panel.

06/10 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE STANDARDS FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The Panel considered the roles and responsibilities of Green Spaces and Street pride regarding the maintenance standards adopted for parks and open spaces and allocation of budget for each park in relation to high profile operations including grass cutting, horticultural works, litter and cleansing.

The Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods) explained the management and delivery aspects of the relationship between Green Spaces and Street Pride. The different categories of parks were explained along with the differences in maintenance schedules that came with each category and the budget that was available for each park. It was explained that parks could change categories.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- The sweepers employed to work in Willenhall town centre would work in

the park on request.

- Nature trails were the responsibility of the Countryside Service.
- Members expressed concerns regarding the potential for funding for parks to be reduced if the Council is required to make significant budget savings. If this scenario happened then it was requested that local Members and appropriate friends organisations were informed of the changes.
- It was requested that the maintenance standards be shared with local friends groups.
- 'Other' parks were typically playing fields and other miscellaneous pieces of land. A Member commented that the cutting of grass on this type of open space often created a detrimental impact on the local area. A specific site was discussed and requested to be investigated by the Panel.

The Vice-Chairman expressed his thanks to the staff in Green Spaces and Street Pride for the hard work they put in maintaining the boroughs parks and open spaces.

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1. any significant budget and personnel changes proposed that will impact on the maintenance of the boroughs parks and open spaces be reported to the Panel and local park friends groups as soon as practicable;**
- 2. that the maintenance standards be distributed to local park friends groups for information;**

and;
- 3. the site identified by Councillor D. Shires be investigated.**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 13 July 2010.

The meeting terminated at 6.54 p.m.

Signed:

Date: