

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

26 November 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

### **Panel Members present**

Councillor L. Harrison (Chair)  
Councillor C. Creaney (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor K. Aftab  
Councillor P. Bott  
Councillor D. Pitt  
Councillor I. Robertson  
Councillor I. Shires

### **Portfolio Holders present**

Councillor C. Towe – Finance and Personnel

### **Officers present**

Jamie Morris	Executive Director – Neighbourhood Services
Keith Stone	Assistant Director – Neighbourhood Services
Graham Hood	Head of Greenspaces
Judith Sunley	Head of Public Protection
Jez Holding	Customer Service Manager
Ben Percival	Sports and Leisure Manager
Craig Goodall	Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

### **41/09 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B. Sanders.

### **42/09 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **43/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

### **44/09 MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2009, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

### **45/09 BRYNTYSILIO WORKING GROUP – FINAL REPORT**

The Panel received the final report of the Bryntysilio Working Group established by the Panel during June 2009.

The Chair introduced the report and explained that the working group had had a busy and interesting few months investigating the Councils use of the Bryntysilio outdoor education centre. The working group participated in two site visits and several witness interview sessions which included meeting with representatives from the Camp Trust,

who owned Bryntysilio, Council Officers and representatives of two Bryntysilio related groups from the social networking website, facebook. She explained that the centre was much loved but changes were required to secure its future as the Council could not continue to fund it at any cost.

In response to a question Craig Goodall confirmed that no further feedback had been received from Denbighshire County Council following the working groups meeting.

In closing the item the Chair thanked all witnesses who had assisted the working group.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That:**

- 1. the Panel agrees the findings of the Bryntysilio Working Group;**
- 2. the final report of the Bryntysilio Working Group be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration, and;**
- 3. the Panel review the outcome of Cabinets response and review progress with the implementation of the working groups recommendations after six months.**

#### **46/09 EVALUATION AND IMPACT OF THE FIRST STOP EXPRESS**

The Panel were provided with details of the findings from an initial six month pilot undertaken by the First Stop Express (FSE) customer service mobile vehicle.

Jez Holding informed Members of the outcomes, key learning points, customer feedback/perceptions and proposed next steps for developing the service. During his presentation he referred to previous recommendation made by the Panel to allow anti-social behaviour to be reported on the FSE. He commented that this had always been available and that officers were looking at ways to further promote this aspect of the service.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- Sponsorship for the FSE will be considered as part of the Councils corporate sponsorship programme.
- Councillors had recently been contacted for suggestions for new sites for the FSE to visit to improve visitor numbers. It was also suggested that Local Neighbourhood partnership meetings could be used to promote the FSE.
- Members suggested leafleting areas that the FSE would be visiting a few days prior to its arrival.
- Spelling mistakes in the promotional material for the FSE were acknowledged.
- Following concerns expressed by Members reassurances were provided that the initial teething problems with vehicle reliability had hopefully been resolved.
- Members felt that a range of services and partners could operate from the FSE. In particular the Panel identified, Revenues and Benefits, Streetpride and Walsall Housing Group as the services that would probably be most in demand on the FSE.

## **RESOLVED:**

**That:**

- 1. further services, including those provided by partners, be provided through the First Stop Express. In particular the Panel would like to suggest that the following services/partners are invited to consider how they can facilitate service delivery through the First Stop Express:**
  - a. Revenues and Benefits;**
  - b. Streetpride;**
  - c. Walsall Housing Group;**
- 2. the Panel consider progress with the development of the First Stop Express in Summer 2010.**

### **47/09 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FORUM**

Members were provided with an update on the work of the Domestic Violence Forum, the sources of its funding and future sustainability issues.

Judith Sunley explained that the financial information contained within the report did contain contributions from partners.

A Member commented that it was important that organisation such as the Domestic Violence Forum were supported as they completed lots of good work. It was important that their energies were focussed on delivering support to residents rather than fundraising.

The Panel requested further information regarding the proposed domestic violence initiative to the primary school curriculum.

## **RESOLVED:**

**That the Panel be provided with further information on the domestic violence initiative proposed for primary school children and how this will be implemented in Walsall.**

### **48/09 COMMUNITY GARDENS DEVELOPMENT**

Members were informed of the details and the background to the provision of allotments within the borough and the review and restructure taking place in the Green Space Service towards the development of community gardens.

Graham Hood explained that, with the help of local communities, the Council was proposing to assist in creating community gardens across the borough that would utilise current vacant land to create neighbourhood assets for residents. An officer was to be appointed to facilitate the programme and assist existing community groups gain funding.

Members were supportive of the programme and its potential to enhance and add value to neighbourhoods. There were some concerns about community gardens being vandalised or playing host to anti-social behaviour. It was suggested that good quality

fencing be used to secure the perimeter of gardens particularly in areas where grazing animals. Members also suggested engaging with partners to secure labour from those residents serving community orders. Walsall Housing Group was identified as a key partner in identifying and providing land that could be used as a community garden.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Panel consider the further development of the community gardens scheme at a future meeting.**

**49/09 PLACARDING OF COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Members considered the draft Cabinet report that suggested a new framework for authorising placarding to be displayed in local neighbourhood areas advertising certain community events.

Judith Sunley explained that the Council was trying to maintain its no tolerance approach to fly-posting but permit a limited amount of provision for advertising community events that are not currently permitted by the current policy. The new policy proposed allowing community groups a limited number of posters in pre-identified locations for a limited period. Posters would also be required to be removed within a limited timescale. Any breach of the rules would be enforced with a reduction or refusal to display posters for subsequent repeat events.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- Local Neighbourhood Partnership notice boards were acceptable places for placarding.
- The use of advertisements on lamp posts should be encouraged in line with the Council's policy. It was further suggested that community advertisements could be placed on the rear of commercial advertisements. The Panel were informed that the Council's street lighting contractor had three advertising sub-contractors for advertisements on lamp posts were ongoing but the recession was affecting demand.
- 'Cancelled' posters should not be used for permitted community events.
- It was suggested that placards should be put up no sooner than seven days before an event removed no later than two days after it had taken place.
- In gaining permission for placarding a lead person should be identified with contact details to ensure that the placarding policy was adhered to.
- Concerns were expressed about enforcement of the new policy with fly-posting on void private properties.

**RESOLVED:**

**That:**

- 1. the Cabinet report be amended to reflect a recommendation that display of placards for community events be allowed no earlier than seven days before an event takes place;**

- 2. the Cabinet report be amended to reflect a recommendation that placards for community events should be removed no later than two days after the event taking place;**
- 3. Members be informed of what action the Council can take to remove fly posters that are displayed on private properties, and;**
- 4. the Panel consider enforcement issues on private land and property at a future meeting.**

#### **50/09 CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY**

The Panel considered the draft protocol for the scrutiny of crime and disorder to be agreed between the Panel and Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP) and concluded the process on the co-option of crime and disorder representation.

Craig Goodall explained that the protocol had been developed by officers from the Performance and Scrutiny Team and SWP following a request from the Panel earlier in the year. He reported that the protocol was relatively straightforward and simply set out general principles for how the scrutiny of crime and disorder issues would take place. Following consideration by the Panel the protocol would be considered by SWP Board for their approval. After this the protocol would become operational.

With regard to the co-option of crime and disorder representation it was reported that Chief Superintendent Kevin Bullas had turned down the Panels invitation to become a co-opted member due to the potential conflict that could arise if the Panel was to scrutinise West Midlands Police. West Midlands Police Authority (WMPA) had recently nominated Councillor Eddie Hughes to become their co-opted representative on the Panel. Councillor Hughes was the Walsall representative on the WMPA.

Councillor Hughes reported that the present climate was an interesting one for local policing in respect of the ongoing local reorganisation and the likely need to operate on a reduced budget in coming years. He felt that the Panel had an important role to play during this changing time and that he was looking forward to becoming a co-opted member on the Panel.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That:**

- 1. the crime and disorder scrutiny protocol be approved, and;**
- 2. Councillor Eddie Hughes be recommended to Council for appointment as a co-opted member.**

## **51/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 & FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel reviewed their work programme and the latest copy of the forward plan.

### **RESOLVED:**

#### **That:**

- 1. the alcohol related anti-social behaviour working group be reconvened, and;**
- 2. the Panel consider enforcement issues on private land and property at its meeting on 18 February 2010.**

## **52/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Panel noted the date of the next meeting as 1 December 2009.

*The meeting terminated at 7.28 p.m.*

Signed:

Date: