

AT A MEETING  
of the  
**REGENERATION ENVIRONMENT  
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY  
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE  
PANEL** held at The Council House,  
Walsall on **Tuesday 25 April 2006** at  
6.00pm

**PRESENT**

Councillor I. Shires (Chair)  
Councillor Anson  
Councillor Robinson  
Councillor Aslam

**Officers in Attendance**

Martin Yardley (Assistant Director- Regeneration)  
Stuart Bentley (Scrutiny Officer)

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Rose, Harrison, Arif and Johnson.

Councillor Robinson stated that, given the recent debate over the future of scrutiny, he was disappointed by the lack of attendance of both panel members and the invited portfolio holders. He would have liked Councillor Longhi to be present in order to begin the work around recycling issues.

Councillor Shires echoed Councillor Robinson's concerns and expressed further disappointment that the portfolio holders had not sent apologies to the panel for non-attendance. He believed that there were issues around available funding that the panel could have had an input into.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**Resolved**

- That the minutes of previous meetings, held on 26 January, 20 February, 23 February and 16 March 2006, copies having been previously circulated to each member of the panel, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

**BUDGET PROPOSALS**

## Resolved

- That the item would be deferred to the first meeting of the relevant Scrutiny and Performance Panel in the new municipal year 2006/7.

## LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSSINESS GROWTH INITIATIVE (LABGI)

Martin Yardley gave the panel a brief background and overview of the agreed framework.

Councillor Robinson thanked Martin Yardley but stated that the panel had already put forward two resolutions which the Cabinet had chosen to disregard.

Martin Yardley suggested that, in light of previous work undertaken by the panel, the roll-out of the brown bins the Scrutiny Panel might consider that they fall within the terms of the framework.

Councillor Shires asked how much money would be required to facilitate this.

Councillor Robinson replied that it was in the order of £300,000.

Councillor Shires raised this issue of the Community Wardens and stated that his Ward was seeking additional funding from partner organisations in order to retain the service. However, he expressed concerns over how many could be provided and where they would be deployed.

Councillor Aslam asked if there was clarity over the numbers and deployment of the wardens in the borough.

Councillor Shires replied that he had an idea locally but not across the borough.

## Resolved

- That the Regeneration Environment Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend that Cabinet utilise LABGI funds to facilitate the roll-out of the brown-bins and to increase the provision of Community Wardens across the borough.

## MARKETS REVIEW

Martin Yardley reported that the Best Value action plan had highlighted budget concerns that had resulted in an urgent review of the budget, functions and contractors. This project recovery plan was proposed to produce a stabilisation of the budget which would then enabled the improvement plan to move forward. In light of this, he asked if the panel could establish a working group to address the question "What do we mean by a 21<sup>st</sup> century market".

There was a general debate over the state of the Markets across the borough and general agreement that something had to be done to improve them.

Councillor Shires stated that it was clear that a working group was needed and that the group should obtain the views of residence and stall holders along with benchmarking data from other sources.

Martin Yardley stated that there were potential re-development plans for the area and that it was important that the markets was seen as central to these, but this was difficult without a clear concept of what a 21<sup>st</sup> Century market would look like.

Councillor Shires stated that it would be good to have Christmas, farmers and other speciality markets.

Councillor Robinson stated that the location of the market should also be investigated.

Councillor Shires asked what the re-development timescales were.

Martin Yardley replied that currently phase 3 would be agreed around September / October.

Councillor Aslam asked how residence would be consulted and with what timescales.

Martin Yardley replied that there was a need to decide how to engage with stakeholders as part of the initial work of the working group. There was also a need to look at pedestrian flow in order to inform the debate regarding around the market.

Councillor Shires suggested that an events day may be a way forward for the consultation and the founder of Hootys Superstore should be asked to participate. He also suggested that the benchmarking should include continental markets. He asked that a report detailing the current position and suggested ways forward be brought to the first meeting of the relevant scrutiny panel in the new municipal year.

#### Resolved

- That a task and finish working group be established to investigate ways forward for markets within the Borough.
- That a report detailing the current position of Walsall markets, and suggested ways forward, be brought to the first meeting of the relevant scrutiny panel in the new municipal year.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY

Councillor Shires suggested that things had moved on. LNPs were instigating community action meetings, liaising with police locally. He suggested that the Partnership setup a working party to look at community policing and that the current policy should be review half way through the year, sometime in September, and the police and Partnership should be invited to give an update on progress and impact. He expressed his concerns over the apparent duplication between the Neighbourhood Watch and the proposed Street Champions and he felt that this should be re-visited.

#### Resolved

- That the Regeneration Environment Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel request that a report on the proposed street champion scheme be brought to the first meeting of the relevant scrutiny panel in the new municipal year 2006/7. This report to focus: on how the scheme will be funded; how the training of the champions will be facilitated and funded; and the level of sustainability built into the scheme.

GALLERY CONSERVATION AREA

Martin Yardley gave a brief overview of the current position and stated that he felt there was movement towards a mutually acceptable middle path. He reported that there was to be a further meeting that should help to broadly define an agreement.

END OF YEAR REVIEW

There was general agreement among members that the panel had done some good work over the year, but they felt there to be a lack of support from Cabinet.

FORWARD PLAN

Martin Yardley reported that the car parks strategy document was now back from the consultants and suggested that scrutiny may wish to look at the issues arising from it, such as looking at the distribution of car parks around the borough.

Resolved

- That the car parks strategy be addressed at the first meeting of the relevant scrutiny panel in the new municipal year 2006/7.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.10 p.m.

Signed.....

Date.....