

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

8 September 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present

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

Portfolio Holders present

Councillor G. Perry – Communities & Partnerships

Other Members present

Councillor E. Hughes

Officers present

Keith Stone	Assistant Director – Neighbourhood Services
Stuart Wootton	Finance Manager – Regeneration & Neighbourhood Services
Ben Percival	Sports and Leisure Manager
Carol Mason	Community Development Manager
Craig Goodall	Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

17/09 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

18/09 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

19/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest and party whip in respect of items on the agenda.

20/09 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2009, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

21/09 WALSALL COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN

The Panel considered the draft refreshed Community Safety Plan (CSP) and the revised strategic priorities contained within it. It is an annual requirement to review CSP priorities.

Keith Stone explained that the that the strategic priorities contained within the CSP had been refreshed following this year's Strategic Assessment; Walsall Partnerships 'Place Survey', and; West Midlands Police's 'Feeling the Difference' Survey.

The outcome of these pieces of work had resulted in the six priority areas contained within the CSP to be revised to the following:

Priority 1: tackle violent crime (specific focus of domestic abuse and town centre violence).

Priority 2: tackle anti-social behaviour.

Priority 3: address harm caused by drugs and alcohol misuse.

Priority 4: improve community cohesion and reduce the fear of crime by tackling crime and disorder in high crime areas.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- Street cleanliness and graffiti in local streets affected residents' feelings of safety.
- Grounds maintenance was noted as an issue that could affect residents' views of their local area.
- Further information was requested on why there had been a 7.3% increase in drug related offences.
- Problems and the need for better solutions to dealing with problems caused by void properties and land in private ownership were discussed. Control of these issues could help to prevent arson and fly-tipping. A particular problem with a void building was highlighted as Dr Persuads in Willenhall. A request would be made to the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel to consider fly-tipping.
- Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP) cost approximately £1.4m a year to operate. £400,000 of this was accounted for by CCTV surveillance, the remaining £1m was mostly spent on salary costs.
- The effectiveness of SWP was discussed. Members were informed as part of the Neighbourhoods Directorate restructuring a new Head of Public Protection, with responsibility for SWP, had been appointed. The new appointment was welcomed by the Panel.
- Dome-hawk CCTV cameras were considered to be very effective at reducing levels of anti-social behaviour. SWP had over 14 dome-hawk cameras. WHG also had their own stock of cameras which were monitored by their own community safety team or by arrangement with SWP CCTV surveillance unit.
- A Dome-hawk camera cost £22,000 and had expensive installation costs.
- In light of recent national press reports on the ineffectiveness of CCTV further data was requested on the 740 arrests that had been accredited to the use of CCTV in the draft CSP including comparative data with other local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1. Members be provided with further information regarding the 7.3% increase in drug offences detailed in the draft Community Safety Plan;**

- 2. Members be provided with further information regarding the 740 arrests that have been accredited to the use of CCTV in Walsall including comparative data with other local authorities;**
- 3. consideration be given to accessing grant aid that is could be available to facilitate the reuse of vacant land as allotments;**
- 4. the particular issues regarding the condition of the disused 'Dr Persuads' building in Willenhall be referred to the local Community Action Tasking group;**
- 5. the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel be invited to consider fly-tipping in Walsall.**

22/09 WEST MIDLANDS POLICE

RESOLVED:

That the item on West Midlands Police be deferred to a future meeting.

**23/09 COMMUNITY SERVICES – REVENUE & CAPITAL MONITORING 2009/10
FIRST QUARTER MONITORING**

Members were informed of the predicated revenue and capital outturn position for 2009/10, based on the performance for quarter 1 (April to June 2009), for services within the remit of the panel.

Stuart Wootton informed the Panel that the forecasted year end variance for revenue was an overspend against budget of £483,429 and a capital underspend of £1.6m. He added that a recent review of the budget position showed that remedial action had reduced the predicted revenue overspend to £292,000 and that the capital underspends were due to the rescheduling of work into 2010/11.

With regard to table 3 to the report, 'analysis of reasons for forecast variances', Stuart Wootton reported that:

- £158,050 overspend on Sports had reduced to £112,000.
- £95,213 overspend at the New Art Gallery had reduced to £80,000.

Following a question it was explained that the £110,000 loss of sports centre income was related to the under recovery of attendance fees. The income target had been raised following a price rise. Members questioned whether this target could be met with improved marketing or possibly by reducing prices to increase the numbers of paying customers. Ben Percival reported that free swimming for under-16's had increased footfall but reduced the numbers of adults attending. The increase in footfall had increased cleaning and maintenance requirements.

The Panel noted the likely need to make substantial budget savings in future years and questioned if any discussions were taking place regarding shared services? Keith Stone reassured Members that investigations were taking place across the Council establishing how services were delivered and, where appropriate, how they could be provided differently.

24/09 COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION LEASES

The Panel were updated on the latest situation with community association leases.

Carol Mason reported that, as recommended by the former Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel, money had been found to commence the undertaking of 4 condition surveys for community association premises.

Condition surveys had taken place at: Brownhills Activities Centre and Green Dragons Nursery Building both of which are managed by Brownhills Community Association. Further work had been undertaken at Old Hall Peoples Partnership Centre and Bentley Youth and Community Centre both of which are managed by Old Hall Peoples Partnership.

The Panel questioned the cost of the condition surveys and whether it would be more effective in the future to employ Council staff to complete additional condition surveys, by paying overtime if required, rather than outsourcing the work.

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1. Members be advised of the costs associated with completing these condition surveys;**
- and;**
- 2. Members be advised of the potential to pay Council surveyors overtime to complete similar surveys as an alternative to outsourcing the work.**

24/09 BRYNTYSILIO WORKING GROUP

Members considered the draft terms of reference for the Bryntysilio Working Group.

The Chair introduced the draft terms of reference that had been produced by the working group at their first meeting on 6 August 2009.

Amendments to the draft terms of reference were suggested and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the terms of reference for the Bryntysilio Working Group be agreed along with the following additions:

- i. investigation into the possible use of money raised through Section 106 contributions, and;**
- ii. initial assessment of the financial benefit that Bryntysilio has on the local area and whether contributions can be made from businesses and organisations in Llangollen.**

25/09 CO-OPTED MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED:

That the item on Co-opted Membership be deferred to a future meeting.

26/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 & FORWARD PLAN

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

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1. Members be provided with a briefing note on the Playbuilder programme??; (Keith – my notes say ‘BN on play truck NOT reach’ – does this stack up as Playbuilder or is something else?)**
- 2. an item on the Greenspaces Strategy be considered at the Panel meeting on 15 October 2009;**
- 3. an item on the Local Neighbourhood Partnership Review be considered at the Panel meeting on 15 October 2009;**
- 4. an item on the impact on the First Stop Express be considered at the Panel meeting on 26 November 2009.**

27/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel noted the date of the next meeting as 15 October 2009.

The meeting terminated at 7.21 p.m.

Signed:

Date: