

**REGENERATION, HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY  
SAFETY SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**Agenda  
Item No.**

**DATE: 25 April 2006**

**10**

**END OF YEAR REVIEW**

**Ward(s)                      All**

**Portfolios:** Councillor Andrew – Regeneration  
Councillor M.G.Pitt – Housing and Community Safety  
Councillor Longhi – Environment and Transport

**Summary of report:**

- The purpose of the report is to give a brief overview of the Panel's work programme for 2005/6 and to highlight issues that the Panel may wish to recommend as carry over work-streams.

**Recommendations**

- That the Panel agree to recommend a review of Markets provision, within the borough, be undertaken as part of the work programme for 2006/7.
- That the Panel agree to recommend a review of the council's community policing policy be undertaken as part of the work programme for 2006/7.
- That the Panel agree to recommend a review of the findings from the overall parking study be undertaken as part of the work programme for 2006/7 and the Panels findings to be fed directly into the development of a new parking strategy for Walsall.
- That the Panel agree to recommend that the work on the partnership approach to the conservation of the heritage in and around the leather district of Walsall town centre be continues as part of the work programme for 2006/7.

**Reason for scrutiny:**

- To inform the work programme for scrutiny for the year 2006/7 and to highlight issues that the Panel may wish to recommend as carry over work-streams.

**Signed:**



**Councillor I. Shires  
Date: 13 April 2006**

**Resource and legal considerations:**

- The Council has appointed Scrutiny and Performance Panels to discharge the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act, 2000.

**Citizen impact:**

- The role of scrutiny is to examine past, current and future initiatives and policies to ensure that the public has access to the best possible policies and services.

**Environmental impact:**

- None arising directly from this report.

**Performance management:**

- The council's scrutiny function sits within the performance management service. Performance Management is the key driver to improved service delivery and Scrutiny and Performance Panels now monitor and challenge performance variance to improve services to the public.

**Equality Implications:**

- None arising directly from this report.

**Consultation:**

- Members and Officers involved with the Panels work programme.

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## **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give a brief overview of the Panel's work programme for 2005/6 and to highlight issues that the Panel may wish to recommend as carry over work-streams.

## **2. Work of the Panel 2005/6**

- 2.1 During the year the panel has considered a variety of issues from the work programme agreed at the start of the municipal year. Key areas of work were:

### **2.2 Walsall Market Improvement Programme**

The Panel received a presentation on the Best Value Review of Walsall Market, undertaken between February and July 2005, advising that the review had concluded that the market service should remain in council control, whilst making a range of recommendations for service improvement across the full range of service activity. The key points of the improvement action plan were outlined as: -

- Action Plan based on review recommendations;
- Consultation with staff and traders;
- Report to Cabinet;

The Panel discussed various issues around the present and future aspects of Walsall Market and agreed to arrange a special workshop to consider the style of markets available.

### **2.3 Quarterly Monitoring of Environment Inspection**

The Panel was presented with the environment improvement plan outlining: the current position relating to the preparation of the car parking strategy; the option appraisal; and the traffic management scheme utilities.

At a subsequent meeting the Panel received the updated plan which highlighted that all bar those issues delayed by Central Government were meeting expected targets. The Panel resolved to pass their concerns to the Leader of the Council over delays, and their implications on performance measures, caused by delays in Government, which were beyond the control of the Council.

### **2.4 The call-in of the decision by Cabinet on community wardens service post April 2006.**

Councillors had called in the decision by Cabinet because of concerns regarding the lack of evaluation and consultation with the public, police and wardens, and also the consequences of providing a reduced warden service.

Following extensive discussion the Panel recommend that officers consult with partners, through the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership, regarding possible additional contributions to the Community Wardens Service and to report back to a further meeting.

At a subsequent meeting the Panel was informed that there was no further funding available through the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership but that due to

the reprioritising the Local Area Agreement during its final setup phase, sufficient funding for 50% of the service had been found until March 2007.

The Panel, with the support of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety, resolved to undertake a policy review on Community Safety.

2.5 In addition, the panel has:

- a) Received regularly monitored performance issues and held a workshop to gain an over view of how Walsall council monitors and makes improvements to its performance.
- b) Held 2 special meetings to consider the budget and made comments and recommendations to cabinet.
- c) Monitored the Planning best value review improvement plan.
- d) Received a report on the open space recreation supplementary planning document.
- e) Been briefed about the Local Area Agreement (LAA).
- f) Received a presentation on the Darlaston strategic development area
- g) Received a presentation on the Walsall strategic corridor
- h) Monitored the Crime and disorder best value review.
- i) Received a presentation on the black country study, managed by the Black Country Consortium, to promote the regeneration of the four Black Country Boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton
- j) Received a presentation on the West Midlands Transportation plan 2005/06 to 2010/11.

### **3. Work of the Working Groups 2005/6**

3.1 The Panel also constituted three working groups looking at Regeneration, Car Parks Strategy and Telecommunications Masts.

3.2 The Regeneration Work Group produced a report, to the full panel, which had found that there was a need to link key elements when considering the long-term plans for regeneration and transportation and take into account the human factors of employment, choice of where to work and live and funding opportunity to enable more creativity within regeneration initiatives.

The group had found many cross-cutting issues such as: transportation; buildings; physical regeneration; development; employment; and social activities, but there was not an overarching group or strategic body to co-ordinate major projects and to ensure the best way forward for the borough over a period of time. The group also drew attention to the potential of the accessibility planning software as a corporate tool for regeneration and forward planning. The Panel agreed to note the report.

3.3 The Car Parking Strategy Working Group was established to investigate staff car parking, following an initial scoping exercise, and a questionnaire was circulated to staff with a purpose of evidence gathering for the review to feed into the car park strategy.

The report made specific recommendations and informed an action plan for improving the management of parking for Council Staff. The findings from the report were endorsed by the full panel and fed directly into the overall review of parking for Walsall and the group agreed to reconvene early in the financial year 2006/07 to review the findings from the overall parking study and feed directly into the development of a new parking strategy for Walsall.

- 3.4 The Telecommunication masts working group concluded their review of the issues and submitted a report whose recommendations included, amongst others: the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships considering the roll-out plan for telecommunications equipment; informing of the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Theme Group to raise awareness of the issue; the adoption of new guidance notes for planning applications for the telecommunication operators; a request that Serco advise school governors of the requirement for telecommunication operators to consult when making a planning application close to schools; and that mobile phone recycling initiatives be developed in Walsall in conjunction with mobile phone operators and businesses.

The group extended their remit, at the request of the portfolio holder, to give consideration to a proposition from British Telecom related to 3G telecommunication network in Walsall Town Centre. Following several meetings, with BT officers and partners, to clarify the issues the group recommended that Cabinet proceed with a contract for the installation and hosting of telecommunications equipment subject to;

- All upfront legal and contract development costs being met by BT.
- All operational costs that the council and its lighting PFI partner (AMEY) may incur being met by BT.
- All additional risks being identified and managed through the contractual arrangements.

A Cabinet paper is currently in train.

- 3.5 A task and finish working group was established to investigate concerns around the proposed designation of a conservation area in and around the Leather quarter of Walsall town centre (Gallery area). A first meeting highlighted the concerns of the landowners within the proposed area and it was established that a partnership approach to the conservation of the heritage within the area, without adversely affecting the regeneration of the area, was the agreed way forward.

A further meeting of the group was planned to agree an approach to the issues.