

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Tuesday 28 February, 2012 in a Conference Room at the Council House

- Panel members present:** Councillor L. Harrison (Chair)
Councillor C. Creaney (Vice-Chair)
Councillor I. Azam
Councillor S. Coughlan
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor K. Sears
Councillor I. Shires
Councillor F. Westley
Councillor A. Young
- Co-opted member present:** Mr. Philip Holmes MBE JP - Police Authority
- Officers present:** Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)
Chris Holliday - Head of Leisure and Community Health
Graham Hood - Head of Green Spaces
Sue Grainger - Head of Heritage, Libraries and Arts
Gareth Perrins-Seedhouse - Green Spaces Improvement Manager
Tracey Evans - Lead Accountant
Craig Goodall - Scrutiny Officer
- Others present:** Jackie Cocken - Arboretum User Group
Jo Leicester - Arboretum User Group

131/12 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L. Rattigan.

132/12 Substitutions

Councillor B. Douglas-Maul substituted for Councillor L. Rattigan.

133/12 Declarations of interest and party whip

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

134/12 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January, 2012, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

135/12 Future Greenspace Strategy in Walsall

The Panel considered the final report and recommendations of the Working Group appointed by the Panel to consider future Greenspace Strategy in the Borough.

The Chair introduced the report, 'Future Greenspace Strategy in Walsall', to the Panel. She highlighted the activity that the Working Group had completed in undertaking the review and the six priorities which the Working Group wished to recommend to Cabinet for inclusion in the next Greenspaces Strategy.

The following were the principal points from the ensuing discussion:-

- Members were pleased to see that safety was a key priority in the Working Group's report. It was felt that measures to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in parks were critical to increasing users;
- The Working Group's recommendations around creating a Borough-wide country park and improving the ecological and environmental diversity of green spaces provided an opportunity for Walsall to improve and become a leading player in the development of green spaces nationally;
- It was important that the provision of green space was respected in the development and planning process. In particular, development agreements which include land swaps need to be equal, fair and achievable;
- The role of Friends Groups with local parks was recognised as exceptionally important to the development of local green space. However, it was recognised that Friends should be treated as partners and not be expected to pick up work which the Council did not wish to do;
- A Member requested further information regarding Walsall Rugby Clubs potential relocation to Aldridge Airport.

In closing the item, the Chair thanked Members of the Working Group, in particular, the Working Group's Co-opted Members from the Arboretum User Group and officers who had all contributed to putting the report and its recommendations together.

Resolved

That:-

- (1) the conclusions and recommendations of the Greenspaces Working Group be approved and forwarded to Cabinet for consideration;
 - (2) the Panel consider a report before August, 2012 detailing Cabinet's response to the Working Group's recommendations;
- and
- (3) further information be provided to Members on the proposed relocation of Walsall Rugby Club.

136/12 **The Introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners**

The Panel were informed of the latest situation with regard to the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods) explained to Members that in November, elections for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) would take place and these officials would effectively replace Police Authorities.

He highlighted the following issues:-

- The key responsibilities of PCCs;
- The effect and implications of PCCs;
- The potential risks of PCCs;
- Regional and local preparation for PCCs.

The following were the principal points from the ensuing discussion:-

- There were fears that the PCC could prioritise Birmingham over the Black Country. This fear was further enhanced as the PCC for the West Midlands could be influenced by the proposed Elected Mayor for Birmingham;
- It was suggested that Local Authority Community Safety Teams work collaboratively to safeguard the interests of each area and begin preparing to work with the PCC once elected;
- As well as a potentially different geographical focus, Members were afraid that a PCC would have priorities which did not match the wishes of local communities. Therefore, work needed to continue to ensure that the interests of Walsall were still met moving forward;
- Concerns were expressed of how one person could represent an area as large and diverse as the West Midlands;
- It was important that good relationships with the Police were maintained;
- The Police Authority Member handed out some information from the Police Authority website to Panel Members for further information on PCCs (annexed).

In closing the item, the Chair requested that the Panel be kept fully informed of any developments regarding PCCs.

Resolved

That the Panel be kept informed of developments with regards to the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners.

137/12 **Quarter 3 Financial Monitoring Position for 2011/12**

The Panel was informed of the predicted revenue and capital position for 2011/12 based on performance for Quarter 3. 1 April to 31 December, 2011 (for services within the remit of the Panel).

The Lead Accountant reported that for services under the remit of the Panel, a net revenue underspend of £31,000 was currently predicted. The Capital Programme was forecast for an underspend of £2.687 million for which £2.260 million was likely to slip into the new financial year. She highlighted reasons for the revenue variances and provided a summary of the Capital Programme.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

138/12 Rehabilitation of Offenders Working Group - Terms of Reference

The Panel considered the establishment of a Working Group to consider the rehabilitation of offenders in Walsall.

The Scrutiny Officer reported that the Working Group had met on 22 February, 2012 to discuss and agree its draft Terms of Reference. At this meeting, the Members present resolved to recommend that the Panel defer commencement of a Working Group to consider this area to the new Municipal Year. This was because the subject area was so large and in order to do it justice, a suitable period of time was required.

Resolved

That the Rehabilitation of Offenders Working Group be deferred until 2012/13.

139/12 Agree Membership for Short Investigation into the New Art Gallery

The Panel considered membership and scope for a one-off one day investigation into the operation of the New Art Gallery.

Resolved

- (1) That the New Art Gallery Working Group consider the following issues at the Gallery:-
 - (a) Achievements;
 - (b) Challenges;
 - (c) Community engagement;
 - (d) Finance and funding.
- (2) That the following Members be appointed to the New Art Gallery Working Group:-

Councillor I. Azam
Councillor S. Coughlan

Councillor L. Rattigan
Councillor I. Shires

140/12 Work Programme 2011/12 and Forward Plan

The Panel considered its work programme and the latest version of Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

It was requested that an item be added to the work programme around the development of the Big Society.

A Member requested that the report on illegal travellers include information regarding the impact of the development of new traveller sites.

Resolved

- (1) That the Forward Plan be noted;
- (2) That the following item be added to the Panel's work programme 2011/12:-
 - (a) Big Society.

141/12 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the date and time of the next meeting was 6.00 p.m. on 10 April, 2012.

The meeting terminated at 6.51 p.m.

Signed:

Date: