

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 February 2007 in Dormer Place Conference Centre, Royal Leamington Spa.

Present:

Councillor John Appleton
" Richard Chattaway (Chair)
" Michael Doody
" John Haynes
" Heather Timms
" John Wells (Vice Chair)

Officers:

Richard Brooks, Divisional Trading Standards Officer, Adult, Health and Community Services.

Vicky Cooke, Group Assistant, Performance and Development Directorate.

Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.

Rakesh Hira, Administrative Officer, Performance and Development Officer.

Scott Moultrie, Community Fire Safety Manager, Community Protection Directorate

Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

Elizabeth Ross, Policy and Development Manager, Adult, Health and Community Services.

Julie Sullivan, Corporate Community Safety Manager, Community Protection Directorate.

Also present:

Mr. Goldstraw, Senior People's Forum

Dorothy Goodwin O.P.P.B, Bedworth

Brenda Hardy, O.P.P.B., Rugby

John Haywood and Lynne Price, Bedworth Neighbourhood Watch

Heather Lowe, Neighbourhood Watch

Chris Mitchell, Stratford on Avon District Council

Gill Russell, S.W. Carers Support Service.

Rena Sanders, Warwick District Senior People's Forum

Review of the Safety of Older People in Warwickshire to ensure that the mechanisms are in place to enable them to live independently.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Booth, Gordon Collett, Barry Longden, Councillor Richard Hobbs (Portfolio Holder for Community Protection) and Mark Pearce, (Age Concern).

Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

The following Members declared personal interests arising by virtue of them serving as district/borough councillors as listed below:

Stratford-on Avon District Council – Councillor John Appleton

Rugby Borough Council – Councillor Heather Timms

Councillor Richard Chattaway welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that presentations would be made by representatives of the County Council's Fire and Rescue Service, Trading Standards and Adult, Health and Community Services. The representative from Age Concern was unable to be present because of ill health.

(A copy of each speakers' presentation material can be accessed on the County Council's website).

Councillor Chattaway explained that the purpose of the meeting was the culmination of the review that the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee had commissioned into older people's safety. He highlighted that the review focussed on community safety issues that impacted on the safety of older people who lived independently and addressed the following issues –

- Fear of Crime
- Protection issues relating to housing (alarms and security)
- Bogus Callers
- Distraction Burglaries
- Fire Safety
- Road Safety
- Access to Information

Councillor Chattaway then introduced the first speaker, Scott Moultrie, representing Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Scott Moultrie explained that the aim of the Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) was to join up working within the County Council and partners to improve the outcomes for older people. He highlighted -

- (1) The changing role of the Service, from being a reactive service, to developing a wider proactive role, through the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), which included an education, intervention and prevention aspects to its work.
- (2) The risk reduction work which identified areas of the County, which were likely to be subject to greatest risk of accidental dwelling fires for older people and using historical data to build up 'risk maps'.
- (3) The victims profile.
- (4) The 'partnership' approach which involved sharing and combining information and knowledge and agreeing appropriate interventions mechanisms.

- (5) The Service's education role.
- (6) The contribution made by the Service to the South Warwickshire Opportunities for Older People (SWOOP) Scheme, the Home Fire Rescue Service, the Promoting Health and Independence through Low Level Integrated Support (PHILLIS) scheme and acting as an advocate for access to services.
- (7) The development areas, which included the championing of home domestic sprinklers, advice regarding the use of fire retardant materials on furniture and home fire safety (shutting doors).

In reply to questions Scott Moultrie explained that –

- through partnership work, advice was given about fire risks relating to furniture that was not made with fire retardant material and did not comply with national standards. Roger Brooks reported on a recent prosecution by Trading Standards on imported furniture which was fire hazard and which had been seized and destroyed.
- the Service, in Nuneaton, was becoming increasingly involved in Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and working with the Police to encourage other agencies to become involved also.
- arson was a massive issue and reported that the Service was setting up an Arson Task Force (ATF) together with the Police, to be located at the Criminal Justice Centre in Nuneaton. The ATF would be working with all district/borough councils. There was concern that the ATF could not identify culprits nor did it have any enforcement powers, this was being addressed.
- Promoting the availability of support to older people was undertaken through the schools' education programme, Age Concern and Partner Agencies.
- The importance of maintaining smoke detectors and ensuring that they were positioned in the correct places was important, to ensure the early warning of a fire during the night when people were asleep.
- That all the fire deaths in the last 5 years were alcohol related.

Chris Mitchell, Stratford District Council, referring to the victim profile, said he welcomed use of the Council tax database to target households at risk.

Councillor Chattaway thanked Scott Moultrie for his presentation and introduced Elizabeth Ross, Adult Services.

Elizabeth Ross highlighted the work done through Adult Services for older people in relation to –

(1) Adult Social Care

- Telecare – Implementation of telecare in Warwickshire ('Smart Flats' in Stratford and Dunchurch – Members were invited to a visit and demonstration)
- The Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA)
- The PHILLIS preventative service
- Elder Abuse

(2) Libraries and Heritage

- Community safety initiatives for Older People were promoted in libraries in a number of ways.
- Crime stopper leaflets distributed to over 800 housebound readers who received Home Delivery Services and available from Community and Rural Mobile libraries.
- Warwickshire's Older People's Partnership Board

(3) Warwickshire's Strategy 'Quality of Life for an Ageing Population.

In reply to questions Elizabeth Ross said that –

- Whilst there was a lot of work being done across the Council the Partnership Board would ensure that there was no duplication of services.
- PHILLIS was non-means tested and based on the quality of life. The eligibility threshold (income level) for other services was based on a criterion that was not dependant on where an applicant lived or what type of house they lived in.
- Discussions were currently taking place with the Telecare Board about the future of the community alarm service when the Regional Control Centre became operational.

The Chair thanked Elizabeth Ross for her presentation and introduced Julie Sullivan, Community Safety Manager,

Julie Sullivan in addressing the Committee on distraction burglary –

- Explained the definition of distraction burglary.
- Outlined the national picture (the level of offences were low – 4% of all burglaries – but many were unreported – only 12% reported).
- Outlined the local picture (5% of all burglaries) (vulnerable older people in Warwickshire – average age of 81 years).
- Reported that the Local Area Agreement (LAA) Safer Communities Block would include targets for preventing older people becoming victims of crime.
- About the work of the Distraction Burglary Group – set up 4 years ago and now disbanding.

In reply to questions she said that there many ways of communicating to older people about safety and security but it was difficult to address other than by keep repeating the message.

During discussion Members commented that there was an inconsistency in the way that information was being sent out to groups (Older People's Organisations and Neighbourhood Watch) and that the Safer Neighbourhood Community Teams might better route for making information available. The Chair referred to

the Nuneaton and Bedworth Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators meeting, which was a useful source of making information available.

The Chair thanked Julie Sullivan for her presentation and introduced Richard Brooks from Trading Standards

Richard Brooks highlighted Trading Standards Service in relation to –

- Doorstep crime
- Rogue traders
- Tradeline
- Consumer education
- Electric blanket testing
- Consumer advice
- Partnership working

In reply to questions Richard Brooks explained that –

- The Police now acknowledged that doorstep crime was deception whereas, previously, they had not seen this as a crime.
- Trading Standards was training the new intake of Police Community Safety Officers (CPSOs) on doorstep crime. The training was aimed at empowering older people by raising awareness of doorstep crime without increasing the fear of crime.
- Traders who wished to be included in the accredited traders list were vetted and references sought and this list was reviewed every 3 years.

The Chair thanked Richard Brooks for his presentation. He referred to the vast amount of work being done by all services but considered that the main issue was communicating the availability of the services.

The Chair then opened the meeting up for discussion and comments noted on the following issues –

What does the County Council do Well?

Trading Standards was considered to be providing a good service but there was a feeling of disappointment that the service was less accessible to the public since the setting up of the Contact Centre in Coventry.

Concern was expressed that people did not know how to use the Contact Centre. It was suggested that the services provided by Trading Standards and the Contact Centre should be promoted and better publicised.

What could the County Council do if it had more money?

It was considered that the Older Peoples Board had made improvements but if there was more money then this should be spent on care and repair and home safety checks.

Communication was an issue and it was felt that there was need to consider how this might be improved. It was noted that only a very few elderly people used

mobile phones or had access to email. Methods of communicating needed to cover all fields and should include leaflets to all households and through the radio.

Fire Safety

Reference was made to the Fire and Rescue Service IRMP in addressing risk management and involving key partners. It was hoped that this work would enhance the lives of the people of Warwickshire and, in particular, would help older people.

Scott Moultrie pointed out that the Fire and Rescue Service was using its resources efficiently to target and help the most vulnerable groups whilst still carrying out its core fire and rescue work.

Reference was made about the need for education and publicity about the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning and to promote the use of alarms. Scott Moultrie commented that this was being addressed through the links made by the Area Risk Teams. He advised that whatever type of detector used it should be BSA accredited.

The use of a uniformed officer in giving advice about health and safety was acknowledged as an important method of getting the message across to the elderly. This was also considered particularly important in liaising with BEM community groups. Reference was made to the work undertaken by the Community Safety Team and its close working with the PHILLIS Service, the Fire Service, Trading Standards and using the expertise from these services to link with the charity and voluntary services.

Bogus Callers

The Chair enquired about the possibility of using the Young Fire Fighters to engage with older people. In response Scott Moultrie explained that the Service was actively involved in work with young people about bogus callers but this was through its education work (schools) rather than through the Young Fire Fighters. Julie Sullivan reported that there was some intergeneration work being initiated through the LAA Safer Communities Block and acknowledged the importance of this work.

With regard to "No Cold Calling Zones" Richard Brooks explained that this would need the agreement of the whole of the community but could be effective. Consideration could be given to appropriate areas where it might be trialled.

Fear of Crime

During discussion concern was expressed that the level of crime was not as bad as it was perceived to be and that press coverage of crime tended to exaggerate the issues and generate this fear. Suggestions were made about how this perception might be changed and suggestions included having a greater/more visible police presence on the streets, local Police Stations opening 24hours and PACT teams being encouraged to consider how to engage with the older members of the community in addition to PACT meetings which were held in the evenings when older people did not want to go out.

Access to Information

It was considered important that improvements to communications should be made to ensure that information and knowledge of the services available were publicised, particularly to those elderly people who did not attend community groups or who did not have access to the usual channels of communication.

The Chair thanked the speakers and everyone for attending the meeting. He said that there was much work being done but it was important to ensure that there was a co-ordination of effort. A summary of the Committee's findings would be reported to the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee's July meeting.

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Chair

The Committee rose at 2:55 p.m.