

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 February 2008.

Present:

Councillor John Appleton
" David Booth
" Richard Chattaway (Chair)
" Gordon Collett
" Chris Davis
" Bob Hicks
" Katherine King
" Dave Shilton
" Heather Timms
" Barry Longden
" Mike Perry

Also Present: Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Protection.

Officers:

Emma Curtis, Political Group Assistant, Performance and Development Directorate.
Monica Fogarty, Head of Change Management, Performance and Development Directorate.
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.
Kate Nash, Head of Community Safety, Community Protection Directorate.
Alwyn McGibbon, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.
Nick Gower-Johnson, County Partnership Manager, Performance and Development Directorate.
ACC Bill Holland, Warwickshire Police.
Glen Ranger, Deputy County Fire Officer, Community Protection Directorate.
Louise Richards, Policy and Partnership Co-ordinator, Performance and Development Directorate.
Balbir Singh, Head of Policy and Performance, Community Protection Directorate.
Gereint Stoneman, Corporate Planning Manager, Performance and Development Directorate.

Public: Lynne Price, Secretary, Bedworth Neighbourhood Watch and 3 other representatives.

1. Appointment of Vice Chair

Resolved that Councillor Barry Longden be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

2. General

(1) Apologies for absence

None

(2) Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Katherine King declared a personal interest in connection with agenda item 4, Local Area Agreement, as a Member of the Police Authority.

(3) (a) Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed subject to the work "day" being added to the end of the sentence of sub-paragraph (2) minute 3 "Protecting our Communities Together".

(b) Matters Arising

Minute 8 LAA – Six monthly performance report

A member asked why the current Quarter 3 report did not include a statement of how the Health Authority fitted into the LAA process. Alwyn McGibbon undertook to ensure that this information was provided to Members.

3. Public Questions

Question from : Lynne Price, Secretary, Bedworth Neighbourhood Watch

We the members of Bedworth Neighbourhood Watch are concerned that the police reactive team are now based in Nuneaton. That means when we call 999 the team has to come from Nuneaton meaning a serious problem can take a lot longer to be attended. In some circumstances time is the main factor.

Bedworth has a fully equipped police station and yet our Sergeants and even the Bedworth inspector are based in Nuneaton.

How do residents of Bedworth have chance to speak to a higher-ranking officer if they are all based in Nuneaton.

Yes we have the safer neighbourhood's team in Bedworth but the residents have a strong fear this is the first step to Bedworth police station being closed down.

We are aware the police have gone to a 9hr system from a 12hr system. But again it is the people of Bedworth who suffer. We knew that when the justice centre was built it was obvious there would be some changes to the working practices at Bedworth police station but not to the extent that has now happened.

We the members of Bedworth Neighbourhood Watch request that this committee take a hard look at this situation and to make sure the residents of Bedworth are not put at risk through the lack of officers in Bedworth

Written reply: provided by Michael Naughton, Borough Commander of Nuneaton and Bedworth as follows augmented by comments from ACC Bill Holland -

“It is correct that the response teams for the Borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth now report for duty at Nuneaton Justice Centre. This is part of implementing a revised shift system for these officers. We have moved away from a 12-hour system to a 9-hour day. This means officers have fewer rest days, and it gives us more flexibility to bring more officers on duty at the busiest times of the day and night. To make this work best, officers have to work as a single response team, rather than being split across the Borough.

The situation would be monitored and anyone experiencing problems as a result of this change would be to advised to alert the District Commander of the circumstances.

The Safer neighbourhood Teams are not affected by these changes, and the Force has no plans to move out of Bedworth Police Station”.

ACC Bill Holland added that the new shift system meant that, at the start of the shift the duty officers paraded at Nuneaton but were then deployed to the Bedworth area. Response to emergency calls would be from officers on duty patrolling at Bedworth but the new duty system meant that more officers were on duty at critical times. This system would not undermine the service to Bedworth residents. He acknowledged, however, that communication between the local commander and the community could be improved. If it were proved that the new system meant that performance suffered then this would be addressed.

In reply to questions he said that the new duty system had been introduced on 31 January 2008 and would be reviewed after three months.

The Chair thanked Lynne Price for her question and for attending the Committee and advised that, if she or other representatives from Bedworth Neighbourhood Watch, had any further queries that they should raise them with Councillor Bob Hicks, who was a Member of the Police Authority, ACC Bill Holland or the new Bedworth Commander.

Councillor Bob Hicks added that, from his work in the control room at Warwick University, which covered the West Midlands, irrespective of where a 999 call came from a response would be from which ever force was in the vicinity, particularly, when demand was greatest.

During discussion Members –

- (1) welcomed the question about which they sympathised and which provided a snapshot of what was happening in other areas of the county and reflected similar concerns about the thin spread of police resources in rural areas.
- (2) raised concerns about the long-standing issue of inconsistency of police communication and the need for improvement in this area.

The Chair said he had been encouraged by the improvements in Police communication that had been noted at the previous two meetings of the Committee and said he hoped that this improvement would continue.

4. Local Area Agreement – Quarter Three Performance

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development outlining the performance of the Local Area Agreement over the first six 9 months.

Kate Nash expressed concern that 53% of indicators were forecast to miss targets and referred to Appendix 2 of the report outlining the remedial action proposed. She highlighted issues around two indicators, namely -

- (1) the overall crime target which was predicted not to meet the 15% imposed target but had achieved 11%, and
- (2) surprise about the perception of the “fear of crime” increasing by 4% whereas it had decreased by 2% in previous years.

During discussion concern was expressed about targets not been met, about whether targets were reasonable, the loss of £1m reward grant and how the Committee’s might scrutinise Police performance.

In response Kate Nash–

- (1) acknowledged Members’ concerns about the absence of a formal process for scrutinising police performance but said that the anticipated Government legislation to enable this scrutiny to take place had been deferred.
- (2) Said that, in connection with the lost reward grant, this related to police policy about its approach to domestic violence and violent crime, which had been reflected in the increase in the number of violent crimes reported.

ACC Bill Holland added that –

- (1) the Chief Constable could be held to account by the Police Authority if it was challenged about the Force’s performance. Current legislation meant that the relationship between the County Council and the Police was constructive, challenging and in the spirit of transparency, whilst taking account the need for confidentiality about aspects of police work.
- (2) With regard to targets not met he confirmed that this related to changes in police policy/procedures particularly in relation to domestic violence and victimless prosecutions, which had resulted in an increase in the number of violent crimes recorded. Overall, one-third of violent crime was related to domestic violence. He said that the Force carried out its operational duties as

an independent body and as it thought fit with the overriding aim of “protecting people from harm”. He suggested that this independence should continue but acknowledged that this might not necessarily fit with the LAA targets and, in this particular instant, had resulted in the loss of reward grant money.

Councillor Richard Hobbs explained that following re-organisation of the Police Authority each County Council member had taken on the responsibility for attending district performance committee. These meetings had only recently been established and the reduced performance had been discussed with the District Commanders. He suggested that, as only 2 of these meetings had been held to date, Members should give them time to impact on performance improvement. He reminded Members of the County Council’s duty to ask the Police Authority to report to the County Council twice a year and, whilst this had not happened recently, he hoped this would be resurrected for the 18 March 2008 meeting. In this connection he hoped Members would focus on the strategic countywide issues in Warwickshire and not day-to-day ward problems. He accepted that there was a need to improve communication between the Police Authority and the County Council.

During discussion the following comments were noted –

General

- (1) The Chair questioned how Members could be satisfied that the indicators and targets met were the best results that could be achieved and also be satisfied that the County Council’s partners were doing their best. He expressed disappointment that the Government had not yet brought in legislation to clarify how the partners to these targets could be scrutinised.
- (2) Councillor Katherine King suggested that Members should be sent a copy of the independent Review of the Police by Sir Ronnie Flanagan on improving communication.
- (3) That there should be better Member involvement in setting targets and that any member representation should be cross party.
- (4) That many Members had concerns that were not connected with the Police performance but related to poor parental control, the community and environment in which families lived, standards in schools, the way in which families were supported and offenders dealt with.
- (5) That the increase in the number people in “fear of crime” was recognised in one area, in particular, as a result of anti-social behaviour by children as young as 7/8 years of age and below the age where police action could be taken. The difficulty of judging whether this was a problem in one area or across the whole of the county was highlighted.
- (6) That the increase in young people entering the criminal justice as a result of the police sanction detection rate was of concern.

New LAA Targets

- (7) That the new targets were sensible, addressed the issues raised during discussion and should be endorsed with the addition of older peoples safety and domestic violence being included in the Safer Communities Block as individual targets and not generic ones.

In conclusion the Chair referred to the many positive outcomes in the report and commended the officers on their work but highlighted the concerns expressed at this and the last meeting about the lack of Member involvement in setting indicators. He said that Members would have the opportunity to raise their concerns at the County Council meeting 18 March 2008 when the indicators would be brought before all Members for approval.

Resolved that the Committee—

- (1) Welcomes the comprehensive performance management information contained in the report.
- (2) Agrees to consider further what information it might need to carry out its scrutiny role.
- (3) Asks for a monthly progress report on the new LAA indicators to be emailed to Members.
- (4) Ask that the Cabinet be asked to consider including separate indicators for “Older People Safety “ and “Domestic Violence” within the Community Safety block.
- (5) Seeks clarification about how partner organisations can be involved in scrutiny.
- (7) Request that the Committee’s spokespersons be involved in setting the Community Safety Block indicators.

5. Corporate Business Plan 2008-2011 (1st Draft)

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, which outlined the first draft of the Corporate Business Plan 2008-11 and the updated Corporate risk register following consideration by Cabinet. It was intended to submit a final version to the Council on 18th March 2008.

In reply to concern expressed about Members’ role and how it fitted into this process Monica Fogarty referred to Fig 1 The “Golden Thread” and the Performance Management Framework, page 4 of 22 , and said that the Committee had a very strong pro-active scrutiny role and, as such, would receive quarterly progress reports. Additionally, the LAA targets were reflected in partner agency’s business plan.

The Chair suggested that a statement about “protecting our community” should be included in the business plan and said that Members would have a further opportunity to comment on the business plan at Council on 18 March 2007.

Following which the Committee -

- (1) noted the 1st draft of the Corporate Business Plan 2008-11, prior to its consideration by Full Council on 18th March 2008
- (2) noted the key corporate risks facing the County Council
- (3) suggested that the key corporate risks should include “protecting the community and making it a safer place to live.”

6. Fire and Rescue Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Community Protection and County Fire Officer following the 2007 Fire and Rescue Authority CPA covering the Use of Resources and Direction of Travel assessments.

Balbir Singh highlighted –

- (1) that progress overall had been sustained and positive since the 2005 corporate CPA and he referred to the involvement of the Chair and spokespersons in this process.
- (2) The work put in place to ensure the continued improvement and engagement with the LAA process and the ongoing key piece of work on gaining better understanding of best value performance indicators in relation to other similar FRAs.

During discussion the following comments were noted -

- (1) That the Committee welcomed the Audit Commission's expression of satisfaction with the positive improvements of WFRA.
- (2) The improvements proposed in paragraph 3.2. of the report were welcomed
- (3) That the WFRS had done exceptionally well with the resources available to it, provided an excellent service and should be commended.
- (4) That the score of 2 for Value for money did not reflect public perception about the good performance of the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Committee commended and thanked the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Authority on its performance and the related improvement planning activity.

7. Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report

Members considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development presenting the Committee's Annual Report and outlined the work undertaken by the Committee over the last 12 months and detailing the future work of the Committee

During discussion Members suggested minor drafting amendments and, in response to comments the Chair said that, in his presentation to Council, he would acknowledge the good work undertaken by Mark Ryder, Trading Standards and also that of other officers.

The Committee agreed the Annual Report of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee subject to the minor amendments highlighted and agreed for the report to be forwarded to Council.

8. Provisional Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items Relevant to this Committee

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

The Committee considered the provisional items for future meetings. With regard to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group Members suggested that the items put forward for inclusion in the core work programme, whilst acceptable, should not exclude specific ideas for select committee/ scrutiny meetings on items of particular interest to the Committee.

Following discussion the Committee agreed –

- (1) That the additional meeting to consider the progress on implementing the recommendations on Older People’s Safety would be held on Monday 17 March 2007 at 2:15 p.m.
- (2) That the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group were considered acceptable for inclusion in the 2008/09 Core Work programme for Overview and Scrutiny subject to each Committee being able to bring forward particular issue of their own choice.

(b) Forward Plan – Items Relevant to this Committee

The Committee noted Forward Plan items relevant to the work of this Committee as follows -

Cabinet 3 April 2008

Integrated Risk Management Plan – Action Plan 2008/09

Council – 18 March 2008

Community Protection O&S Committee – Annual Report 2007/08

9. Any Other Items

Mini-Tour of Warwickshire Justice Centre, Nuneaton.

Members were informed of an invitation to all Members of the Council to take part in a min-tour of the Warwickshire Justice Centre, Nuneaton for an insight into the Criminal Justice System in Warwickshire. Jean Hardwick undertook to circulate details to all Members and a selection of dates for the tour.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 4:45 p.m.