

Minutes of the meeting of the Community Protection Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 April 2008.

Present:

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| Councillor | Richard Chattaway (Chair) |
| " | David Booth |
| " | Gordon Collett |
| " | Chris Davis |
| " | Bob Hicks |
| " | Katherine King |
| " | Barry Longden (Vice Chair) |
| " | Mike Perry |

Also Present: Councillor Richard Hobbs, Portfolio Holder for Community Protection, Councillors June Tandy and Dave Shilton and David Whitehouse, Warwickshire Police.

Officers:

Paul Coldicutt, Team Leader, Animal Health, Adult Health and Community Services Directorate.

Simon Coupe, Senior Trading Standards Officer, Consumer Protection, Adult Health and Community Services Directorate.

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

Jeremy Lee, Manager of the Emergency Planning Unit, Community Protection Directorate.

Michelle McHugh, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

Kate Nash, Head of Community Safety, Community Protection Directorate.

Jane Pollard, Scrutiny Manager, Performance and Development Directorate.

Mark Ryder, Head of Trading Standards, Adult Health and Community Services Directorate.

1. General

(1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Appleton and Heather Timms.

(2) Members' Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillors Katherine King and Bob Hicks declared personal interests in minute 1 (3) – Press release from Warwickshire Police – as Members of the Warwickshire Police Authority.

(3) (a) Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2008 were agreed as a correct record and signed subject to the following amendments -

- (i) Minute 4, Local Area Agreement – Quarter 3 Performance, fourth paragraph, sub-paragraph (2) – the deletion of the word “police” before the word “policy”, and
- (ii) in respect of Minute 5 Corporate Business Plan 2008-2011 (1st Draft) fourth paragraph, sub-paragraph (3) Councillor Barry Longden proposed that the word “risks” should be replaced by the word “priorities”. Other Members said they were unsure about their recollection and whether sub-paragraph (3) was discussed or suggested. The Chair proposed the following –

(3) Suggested that the key corporate priorities should include “protecting the community and making it a safer place to live”, and this was agreed without dissent.

Jane Pollard advised that in future, to avoid confusion, Members should take time to decide what was agreed, even if it meant that the Committee had to wait 5 minutes to agree a form of words.

(b) Matters Arising

Councillor Richard Hobbs, referring to minute 4, resolution (4) Local Area Agreement – Quarter 3 Performance, said he was happy to support the inclusion of separate indicators for “Older People’s Safety” and “Domestic Violence” within the in the LAA delivery plan.

Press Release – Warwickshire Police Performance for 1st April 2007 – 31st March 2008.

David Whitehouse circulated copies of the press release on the Police performance from 1st April 2007 – 31st March 2008. He said that in this period 39,982 crimes were recorded which represented the lowest number of recorded crime since 2000/01 and equated to a 11.6% reduction in crime across Warwickshire last year as compared to 2006/07.

Kate Nash added that £1.5m reward grant had been received in respect of the Local Agree Agreement LPSA 2 – Safer Communities Block.

3. CDRP Changes: Community Safety Agreement – Implications for Warwickshire – Verbal Presentation by Kate Nash, Head of Community Safety.

Kate Nash outlined the implications of the review of CDRP and regulations. (presentation material attached and circulated to Members).

Councillor Barry Longden –

- (1) Expressed concern about how Members' fitted into the process.
- (2) Recognised the good work of the CDRPs at district level but questioned how this would fit in at county and national level (i.e. marrying up local, county and national expectations and aspirations).
- (3) Questioned the role of the PCTs.
- (4) Expressed concern that linking the community safety agenda with the LAA process excluded backbench members. In particular he was concerned that he would have little influence in setting targets and priorities and he represented the second most deprived area in the county.

Other Members expressed concern about lack of Member involvement at a local level, a feeling of detachment from the process and concern about the setting up of more levels of bureaucracy and quangos.

Kate Nash acknowledged Members' frustrations and concerns. She referred to the Government's proposal for "Councillor Call for Action" and, although the implementation had been delayed, it would be a mechanism for individual councillors to address issues at Ward level.

Councillor Richard Hobbs also accepted Members' comments and concerns and commented that Member involvement had improved over a relatively short period of time. Members were now involved in the LAA safer block groups whereas previously there had been no Member involved in the Community Safety Partnership. Guidance was awaited on the scrutiny of CDRPs and the "Councillor Call for Action". The LAA had been brought to this Committee in several ways and enabled Members to feed in their priorities. He accepted that there needed to be improvements in communication between Members.

With regard to improving involvement of Members he had contacted Councillor Ken Browne, Chair of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, asking for this Committee to be included in the Seminar on the Review of Speed Camera Criteria, which related to the LAA Community Safety Block.

In reply to a question from Councillor Barry Longden, Kate Nash said that the CDRPs were the Community Safety Theme Group within Local Strategic Partnerships.

The Chair –

- (1) Thanked Kate Nash for an excellent, interesting and informative presentation, which highlighted the importance of the community safety agenda within all local authorities.
- (2) Considered that the Government had recognised the importance of the community safety agenda even though the proposals were more bureaucratic.

- (3) He referred to Councillor Hobbs' comments and said that Member involvement had improved over the last 5 years, although there was still some way to go yet.
- (4) Asked for details of the funding formula for the LAA targets to be circulated to Members.
- (5) Suggested that, following the discussion of the LAA indicators at the 26 February 2008 meeting, the LAA should include indicators relating to -
 - Domestic violence
 - Older People's Safety
 (He believed that Cabinet would support these also).
- (5) Also commented that, whilst the majority of the responsibility for improving road safety fell within the remit of Councillor Martin Heatley and the Environment and Economy Directorate, he considered that it was also a shared responsibility with the Community Protection Directorate and the Police. How everyone worked together to deliver this area of responsibility was an issue that needed to be addressed.

Kate Nash undertook to –

- (1) circulate details of the LAA funding formula and money allocated to each block.
- (2) confirmed that domestic violence and older people's safety would be included in the delivery plan.
- (3) place copies of the Community Safety Agreements in the group rooms.
- (4) circulate to the Group Assistants and spokespersons minutes of the Safer Block meetings

4. Status Report on Animal Welfare and Disease Control Measures by Trading Standards Service.

Mark Ryder presented the report of the Strategic Director of Adult Health and Community Services, which gave full details of the scope, resources and outputs of the Trading Standards Service in this area of work. He introduced Paul Coldicutt who managed the Service and would answer Members' questions.

Mark Ryder highlighted the following points –

- the work of the unit varied in volume and type
- disease outbreaks were big issues, although there had not been any outbreak in Warwickshire, there were massive implications in terms of enforcement and information distribution relating to disease outbreaks elsewhere.

- Trading Standards had a framework agreement with Defra for the delivery of animal welfare services. Funding was allocated for posts to deliver these services, although funding had recently been reduced.

During discussion Members commented on –

- (1) The excellent work undertaken by Trading Standards Service.
- (2) Whether the Service had enough staff to carry out its work and whether they should be working regionally and pooling resources.
- (3) The use of temporary staff was of concern because it was considered that they might feel undervalued. It was suggested that these staff might be protected if they were subject TUPE.
- (4) The training up of staff in areas outside their specialist areas for use in emergency situations was of concern in the event that they might forget what they had learnt when an emergency situation arose.

In response to questions Paul Coldicutt said that -

- (1) There was one establishment in Warwickshire that dealt with “ritual slaughter” and that was for white meat only. Halhal “red” meat was dealt with in Birmingham and the process was very closely regulated and monitored by colleagues in Birmingham City Council..
- (2) He agreed with Members’ concerns about smallholders’ lack of experience of looking after animals. He said that his officers monitored smallholdings, visited premises and gave advice.
- (3) Transporting animals to abattoirs had improved and the way in which they were treated at market was monitored.
- (4) With regard to cross boundary working, regular meetings were held with other authorities (16 local authorities and Defra’s State Vet Service) to ensure continuity of enforcement with neighbouring authorities and were part of the Midlands Animal Health and Welfare Panel and that fed into the National Animal Welfare Panel through to The Local Authority Regulatory and Related Services for the UK (LACORS).
- (5) Abattoirs were run by Defra’s Meat Hygiene Service and a vet was in attendance at all times and slaughtering monitored. Communication between Defra and Trading Standards was good.
- (6) Post 2001 a Framework Agreement was put in place to trace the movement of animals.

Mark Ryder said –

- (1) He would investigate what protection might be given to temporary employees if their posts were subject to TUPE and whether they might be transferred to become permanent County Council employees.
- (2) That Trading Standards worked closely with adjoining authorities but did not pool resources.

The Chair thanked the officers for their report and presentation. Referring to paragraph 8.3, Reduction of Defra Funding, the Chair proposed that the Committee should support a letter to Defra highlighting Members’ concerns

regarding the reduction of funding and asking that they pump prime the funding of posts.

Following which the Committee agreed -

(1) to support the recommendations set out in section 9 and of the report as follows -

“9.1 That the TSS continues with the commitment to train and develop staff, including, as a long-term strategy those currently outside of this specialist field. This will build capacity to cover staff sickness and provide capacity in the event of an emergency situation.

9.2 That the TSS continues to work closely with colleagues from Animal Health and DEFRA to get assurances around future funding; this has not yet been made clear for 2008/09 or beyond. This situation is not desirable for staff on short-term contracts or for managers when trying to plan for the future.

9.3 That the TSS continues to review, update and test emergency plans and to test our response in case of local, nearby or national disease outbreak.

9.3. That the TSS continues to commit to respond to all allegations relating to animal welfare and to pick this work up during routine inspection at market and on farms.”

(2) To suggest to the Strategic Director of Adult Health and Community Services that the above recommendations are taken on board and included in the Departmental Service Plan.

(3) That the Chair, Party Spokespersons and Portfolio holder write to Defra about pump prime funding of posts (as above).

5. Update on the work of the Trading Standards Service (TSS) in the area of restricting the sale of alcohol to Minors.

Mark Ryder presented the report of the Strategic Director of Adult Health and Community Services, which gave full details of the scope, resources and outputs of the TSS in the area of work restricting the sale of alcohol to minors. He said the report was a follow up to the report presented to the Committee 12 months previously. He introduced Simon Coupe who was responsible for the Service.

Mark Ryder highlighted the following points –

- This area of work was intelligence led and included a multi-agency approach with TSS working closely with the Police.
- Last year 247 test purchase visits were undertaken, this was larger than previous years and all visits were intelligence led

- Next year TSS would be pursuing two recommendations made by the Children, Young People and Families OSC during the Alcohol and Young People Review and would start to investigate how to tackle proxy sales.

The Chair said that despite retailers being more aware of the penalties relating to under-age sales, there still appeared to be more alcohol on the streets procured by adults for minors. He said that the community felt disappointed that the penalties for underage sales were not more severe. Other Members agreed with this comment and said that even though prosecutions were generally successful there still appeared to be more alcohol drunk on the streets and in parks. Where visits had been intelligence led and had led to a “sale” Members particularly felt that there should be greater punishment for traders. Concern was expressed regarding the 3 sales in 3 months policy and it was considered that a “one strike and out policy” would be a greater deterrent. TSS were congratulated on their work in this area but Members considered that procuring of alcohol for minors and the problems caused by under age drinking and drinking on the streets would remain a problem for many years to come.

Further comments were noted as follows –

- (1) That there was concern about “back-door” sales of alcohol and other “scams” that were still being reported.
- (2) That the Government should be lobbied to reduce the “3 strikes in 3 months” to 2 illegal sales in three months and increased penalties.
- (3) That publicity was being increased to raise public awareness about illegal sales.

Councillor Richard Hobbs suggested that there should be a national indicator about “reducing the harm of alcohol and drug misuse” which could then become a local indicator. Kate Nash explained that the current national indicator was limited to alcohol related hospital admissions and not appropriate for reducing harm from alcohol. The Chair suggested that when the local indicator was developed then it would fit into the business plan mechanism. Members supported this suggestion following which –

The Committee agreed that –

- (1) the Chair/Spokespersons and Councillor Hobbs should meet to discuss the way forward for developing a local indicator about “reducing the harm of alcohol and drug misuse”.
- (2) A letter should be sent to the appropriate Government Minister expressing concern about under-age sales of alcohol and suggesting that retailers should have their licences revoked if they have more than one prosecution a year.

6. Local Resilience Forum

Jeremy Lee presented the report of the Strategic Director of Community Protection and County Fire Officer, which contained a summary of the progress of the Warwickshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Forum and its role in

monitoring implementation of the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

He highlighted that –

- Local Resilience Forums were a national initiative.
- The agenda of the LRF was expanding rapidly
- Member involvement in the LRF was not clear
- Partners all had an equal responsibility and an agreement with the district and borough council had recently been developed.

In reply to questions Jeremy Lee explained that –

- (1) Mobile phone communications in future emergency situations would be improved by nominated officers being allocated special sim cards. Results of a national review of this Cabinet Office system were expected shortly.
- (2) the County Council's Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) co-ordinated and administered the LRF but was not sufficiently resourced or financed to sustain this role.
- (3) All district and borough councils were category 1 responders and contributed financially to the County Council on an annual basis under the terms of a recently agreed SLA.

During discussion the following areas of concern were noted –

- (1) The future capacity and funding of the Emergency Planning Unit to co-ordinate and administer the Local Resilience Forum.
- (2) The need for clarification about Member involvement and role during and after an emergency situation had arisen.

The Committee agreed –

That the effective operation of the LRF and EPU will be dependent on increased funding contributions from partners and that Cabinet should be recommended to look at the future capacity of the EPU.

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

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

Members considered the provisional items for future meetings and the forward plan items relevant to this Committee following which -

The Committee agreed that a meeting should be arranged with the Chair/Vice Chair and Spokesperson to consider the future work programme.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 5:00 p.m.