

The **CRIME & SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** met at **WARWICK** on the **5 APRIL 2005**

Present:

Councillor Richard Hobbs (Chair)  
" Alan Cockburn (Vice Chair)  
" Cliff Cleaver  
" Chris Davis  
" Eithne Goode  
" Barry Longden  
" Dave Shilton  
" Dot Webster  
" John Wells

Also Present: Councillor Martin Brassington, Portfolio Holder for Supporting Communities and John Haynes, Portfolio Holder for Public Information and Safety.

Officers:

Anthea Davies, Assistant Head of Trading Standards.  
Sarah Duxbury, Principal Solicitor, Chief Executive's Dept.  
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Member Services.  
Martin Lake, Corporate Review Team, Chief Executive's Dept.  
John Usher, HR Manager, County Fire & Rescue Service  
Dennis Musgrove, Senior Pensions Officer, County Treasurer's Dept.  
Chief Inspector Mike Slater, Warwickshire Police  
Gerient Stoneman, Corporate Review Team, Chief Executive's Dept.  
Oliver Winters, Deputy County Treasurer.  
Andrew Lawrence, Head of Community Support, Chief Executive's Dept.

**1. General**

The Chair welcomed –

1.

- Gerient Stoneman to his first meeting of the Committee and explained that he would be providing support for the Committee in place of Martin Lake, Corporate Review Team.
- Dennis Musgrave and Chief Inspector Mike Slater.

**(1) Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bryan Levy and Peter Fowler.

**(2) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

The Chair, Councillor Richard Hobbs, and the Vice Chair, Alan Cockburn declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 4, "Food Law Enforcement Plan", in matters relating to farming.

**(3) Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 January 2005 and Matters Arising**

Resolved –

That the minutes of the Crime and Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee's meeting held on 11 January 2005 be approved and signed by the Chair.

**Matters Arising.**

Minute 1 (3) (2) Warwickshire Youth Offending Service

Members were informed that the request for representation on the Youth Justice Management Board (YJMB) to be expanded to include liberal democrat and conservative members had been reported to the last meeting of the Board. The view of the Board was that this would be resolved when the YJMB was subsumed into the Children's Strategic Partnership Board and that this would be achieved during 2005.

**2. Public Question Time**

None

**3. Future Work Programme**

**(a) Work Programme**

The Chair invited comments on the Committee's future work programme. The issue of truancy and its impact on crime was suggested as future item for scrutiny. Andrew Lawrence advised that this issue was included under the

Action Plan of the Crime and Disorder Strategy, minute 5 below, which would be brought forward for discussion for the Committee's October 2005 meeting.

Members agreed the future work programme subject to the deletion of the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board from the agenda of 7th June 2005 meeting because the Board would not be meeting again before that date.

#### **(b) Forward Plan Items Relevant to this Committee**

Members noted the Forward Plan items relevant to this Committee.

#### **Cabinet – 28 April 2005**

Consumer Direct (Exempt)

### **4. Services for Children and Young People**

Anthea Davies presented the report of the Director of Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards detailing the services provided for children and young people together with the purpose, targets and outcomes. She explained that the report brought together aspects of Trading Standards' work that were directed at protecting and informing children and young people in relation to consumer matters and explained how the service was addressing young people's needs and preferences in service delivery. She invited Members' comments.

Members commended the work undertaken by Trading Standards in relation to the services provided for children and young people. During discussion Members -

- suggested that the Committee be provided with the detail of the Service action plan 2005/06 relating to this work;
- asked to be provided with detailed information on work done and action taken to date in relation to underage alcohol sales test purchasing;
- expressed concern about problems caused by the continued sale of alcohol to under age young people from off-licence premises, in some areas of the county, and the resultant increase in anti-social behaviour.
- expressed the view that Magistrates and the Police were dealing too leniently with off-licence premises owners who were being prosecuted for selling alcohol to under-age young people.

Anthea Davies said that –

- an action plan had been prepared by Trading Standards and this included an increase in underage sales test purchasing as well as the promotion of the text messaging advice service following the soft launch in 2004.

- the Police and Trading Standards worked in partnership, Trading Standards dealing with off-licenced and the Police with on-licensed premises.
- not all offences resulted in prosecutions because, in some cases, all reasonable steps might have been taken by the licensee to safeguard against the selling of alcohol to young people, thus establishing a defence. All the circumstances needed to be investigated before deciding to proceed to prosecution in order to ensure a good chance of a conviction.
- subject to capacity, consideration could be given to including some test purchases for the sale of fireworks to under 18s in the future.
- any details of particular complaints about individual off-licences should be forwarded to her at Trading Standards so that it could be used to inform the programme of test purchases.

In reply to Members' concerns CI Mike Slater said that –

- dissatisfaction and complaints about the Police response to incidents should be brought to the attention of the District Commander.
- the transferral of responsibility for the granting of liquor licences from the Magistrates' Court to the district councils would enable Members to deal with the renewal of off-licence applications using their local knowledge.
- Trading Standards and the Police worked in partnership, in particular, in dealing with test purchases of alcohol.

The Committee resolved to –

- (1) commend the work of Trading Standards on the Services provided for Children and Young People;
- (2) agree that the Service action plan be reported to a future meeting of the Committee for information;
- (3) ask for details of the results of the prosecutions of under-age sales be circulated to Members;
- (4) request that, after the May election, the new Committee be asked to consider all the underage alcohol sales enforcement work as a future item for scrutiny, after two years of operation.

#### **4. Food Law Enforcement Plan 2005/2006**

Anthea Davies presented the report of the Director of Libraries, Heritage and Trading Standards requesting agreement to the Food Law Enforcement Plan and invited Members' comments.

In response to questions Anthea Davies said –

- the consequence of not achieving the 50% target set by the FSA for visiting medium risk premises would mean Trading Standards would get further behind in its inspections and find more problems when visits were made;

- with regard to imported beef, Trading Standards made sure that labelling was in place but were not responsible for controlling its importation. Additional resources had, however, been made available by the FSA and this might mean that a further programme of sampling imported foods could be undertaken.
- details of the FSA's work relating to imported meat were not immediately available but copies of the FSA's Strategy could be obtained and she would make enquiries as to what work was currently being undertaken in this regard.

The Committee resolved to –

- (1) recommend Cabinet support the Food Law Enforcement Plan and work programmes subject to the inclusion of a reference to imported meat of the Plan under the heading Service Delivery;
- (2) ask Anthea Davies to obtain copies of the FSA Strategy for Members for their consideration.

## **5. Crime & Disorder Strategy – Action Plan.**

Andrew Lawrence presented the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive outlining the proposed Action Plan for 2005/6 to deliver the County Council's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.

Discussion followed during which some concern was expressed about the lack of evidence and information on the Strategy and its impact on crime reduction.

In response to Members' comments and concerns Andrew Lawrence said that –

- Partnership funding (Social Care and Health) had been made available to expand the work of the Drug Action Team by commissioning a project on the problems caused by alcohol.
- Police statistics indicated that crime figures were decreasing and this was supported by the British Crime Survey and, in some areas, had revealed substantial reductions. The only area where crime incidents had increased related to violent crime.
- The Police arrest referral scheme for drugs and alcohol was part of successful partnership working/cultural change;
- All Area Committee's would be considering the Crime and Disorder Strategy. Every area, except Rugby had already agreed its Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.
- Whilst crime rates were reducing it was acknowledged that the number of anti-social behaviour incidents were increasing and, whilst not a criminal activity, did increase the public's fear of crime.

Councillor Martin Brassington did not accept that there was no evidence of the impact of the Strategy and referred to the many examples of new initiatives and examples of “good practice” and partnership working. He supported the Strategy, which he considered provided a sound basis for the Action Plan. The Area Committees had a role to play in discussing the action plans and their impact on the districts.

The Committee endorsed the Crime and Disorder Reduction Action Plan for 2005/06.

## **6. Government Proposals for New arrangements for Financing Firefighters' Pension**

Oliver Winters presented the report of the County Treasurer, which set out Government proposals to change the financing arrangements for firefighters' pensions.

During discussion Members expressed support for the changes proposed for Firefighters' Pensions.

The Committee resolved to –

- (1) note the proposed changes to the arrangements for financing firefighters' pensions;
- (2) recommend Cabinet agree the response to the Government's consultation on the proposed changes as set out in Appendix B of the report.

## **ITEM FOR INFORMATION**

### **7. Minutes of the meeting of the West Midlands Regional Management Board (WRMB) meeting 25<sup>th</sup> January 2005**

The minutes of the WRMB meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2005 were noted.

### **8. Any Other Items**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **9. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information**

Resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting for the agenda item mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in paragraph 11 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## 10. Fire and Rescue Service - Ill Health Retirements

John Usher presented the report of the County Fire Officer detailing ill-health retirements and changes to the ill-health retirement procedures introduced by the Firemen's Pension Scheme (Amendment) Order 2004.

Following discussion the Committee resolved, 5 Members voting in favour and 2 against, to –

- (1) note the changes in procedure for dealing with ill-health retirement from the service;
- (2) note the reduction in the number of ill-health retirements over the past year;
- (3) support the proposal not to undertake a review of existing ill-health retirement cases at this time;
- (4) request that all future ill-health retirement cases are formally reviewed by an independent medical advisor on a two/three yearly basis;
- (5) agree to undertake a review of injury award pensions in 2005 and thereafter at three yearly intervals.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 1:00 p.m.