

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,
KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 3RD DECEMBER 2009 (6:00PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), J Phillips (Vice-Chairman), G H Eeles, J Greener, P V Hayward, M B Kelly, D J Millis, M Price, M A Salter, M J Shellie, D R Sheppard, S J Williams, and G C Yarranton.

Observer

Councillor A T Hingley.

C&R.66 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: M A W Hazlewood, and K H Prosser.

Apologies for absence were received from the co-opted Member Colonel Tony Ward OBE.

C&R.67 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor J Greener was appointed as a substitute for Councillor K H Prosser. Councillor M A Salter was appointed as a substitute for Councillor M A W Hazlewood.

C&R.68 Declaration of Interests

Councillors J Greener, M B Kelly, M J Shellie, and G C Yarranton declared personal interests in agenda items numbers 5, 6 and 7, due to being Board Members at the Community Housing Group.

Councillor H E Dyke declared a personal interest in agenda items numbers 5, 6 and 7 due to being the Chairman of the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership.

Councillor M J Shellie declared a personal interest in items 5, 6 and 7, due to being a member of the Friends of Broadwaters park.

C&R.69 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C&R.70 Section 17 Audit - November 2009

The Chairman of the Committee advised Members that the meeting was held in order to meet a requirement of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), specifically to hold an annual meeting to scrutinise crime and disorder issues.

The Committee considered a report from the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer which outlined to Members details of the Council's seventh Section 17 Audit, and the progress of the Council in meeting this statutory duty as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act (1998).

The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer informed Members that the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) required the Council to consider crime and disorder and crime reduction across all areas of service.

Members were advised that the Council's Section 17 Audit had been carried out in November 2009, and a summary was attached as Appendix 1 to the report (copies of which had been circulated)

The Chairman subsequently asked for questions and comment upon each page of the appendix.

A Member asked how performance had been assessed in the audit. The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer responded that page 18 of the appendix detailed the definitions of the categories used to judge success in the audit.

A Member asked whether there was any additional guidance to the audit such as a moderating scheme. The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer advised that this had been identified as a gap in practice and was being worked towards.

A Member suggested that positive aims could be included to address gaps identified in the audit. The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer responded that Directorates might not wish to set definite development goals if there was a likelihood they might not be achieved, and advised that the audit was simply a consideration of progress.

A Member questioned the rating given to efforts to deal with dog fouling, as per items 53/4 on page 40 of the appendix, and requested that it be taken back to the relevant Directorate to be looked at again, to which the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer agreed, and also agreed to feed the results of this back to the Committee.

A Member queried what processes individual Directorates had followed in order to reach their ratings. The Chairman responded by suggesting that for the 2010 Section 17 Audit, the Directorates could be requested to provide background information to their ratings.

A Member queried the claims made in item 58 on page 41 of the appendix, relating to the removal of abandoned vehicles, and requested that it be taken back to the relevant Directorate. In response the Director of Community and Partnership Services agreed to take both this and item 53/4 to the Corporate Management Team to be resolved.

Agreed:

i) The comments made relating to the progress of the Council in meeting its Section 17 statutory duty, as reported in the appendix to the report, (copies were circulated) be noted.

ii) The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer, and the Director of Community and Partnership Services to refer item 53/4 and item 58 to the Corporate Management Team to be rechecked.

C&R.71 Statutory Responsibilities of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships – Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership

The Committee considered a presentation from the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer which outlined the responsibilities of the Community Safety Partnership and specifically the statutory duties of the responsible authorities.

The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer advised Members that the District Council was classed as a responsible authority under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), in addition there was a distinct responsibility for the relevant Cabinet Member. Furthermore, Members were advised of the responsibilities for the strategic partners of the Community Safety Partnership, such as cascading information through their own organisations.

A Member asked what the initials CDRP stood for, in response the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer advised that it was “Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership”.

In response to a question from a Member the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer advised that the Worcestershire Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) was a partnership similar in operation to the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership. Furthermore the team operated out of Worcestershire County Council, and brought together various agencies in order to tackle the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse.

A Member enquired about the Council’s contribution to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) in relation to crime and disorder issues. The Chairman advised that the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership was responsible for the community safety contribution to the LAA, and that these contributions were monitored against national LAA indicators.

A Member asked how far the Partnership could deal with specific problem areas. The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer advised that the Partnership had a number of ways of dealing with problems. Members were advised that some concerns would be dealt with by the Officer, without necessarily involving the Partnership. In response to a question from a Member, the Officer reiterated that specific resident concerns, or concerns relating to specific families would most likely be addressed by the Council rather than the Partnership.

The Chairman advised Members that the public could raise issues relating to specific crime and disorder problems with the Officer, but that where these became ongoing problems reflected by evidence such as recorded crime statistics; they would then be likely to be addressed by the Partnership.

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The Oldington and Foley Park Neighbourhood Manager commented that the Partnership was underselling its achievements, and that much had been achieved through cooperation enabled by the Partnership.

Agreed: The information be noted.

C&R.72 Interim Performance of the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership 2009/10

The Committee considered a presentation from the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership Co-ordinator, Analyst and Project Officer, which outlined to Members the Partnership's performance management framework, the impact of projects and looked ahead to the future.

The Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership Analyst informed Members that statistics for specific offences had been analysed for the period January to June 2009, and then compared to the figures for the same period in the previous year.

Members were informed of the following:

- Incidences of criminal damage had reduced by 14%
- Vehicle offences had reduced by 22%.
- Assaults had reduced by 3%.
- Robberies had reduced by 2%.
- Arson offences had reduced by 3%.
- Attempted burglaries had fallen by 5%.
- Theft offences had fallen by 20%.

The Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership Project Officer informed Members of a series of events which had been held, including Bike Safety, and Purse security events.

Furthermore, the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership Project Officer informed Members of a campaign called "Freeze out Crime this Christmas" which involved advertising vans being used to display crime prevention posters, (which were displayed in the presentation), and two radio adverts (which were played to the Committee as part of the presentation).

The Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership Analyst informed Members that the team were currently analysing the "Place Survey" to identify concerns and priorities. Strategies to combat these concerns and policies would then be devised.

A discussion subsequently ensued, and a summary of the key points raised is listed below:

- A Member asked whether the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership Officers were satisfied with the level of police staffing and response times in the District. The Chairman responded that this did not fall within the remit of the Partnership and that specific questions could be passed to the Partnership's representative of West Mercia Police.
- A Member asked whether any actions were taken if Local Area Agreement targets were not met. The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer advised that targets and performance were constantly monitored, and that

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unmet targets were referred back to the Partnership.

- In response to a question from a Member, the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer advised that credit card crime was not addressed by the Partnership, as it was not one of its priorities.
- A Member asked whether the Partnership would report back to politicians if local political decisions caused problems. The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer advised that the political framework within which the Partnership operated was focused mainly around national rather than local politics, and relevant concerns were fed back through Government Office for the West Midlands. In response to this the Chairman advised that the Cabinet Member for Community and Partnership Services was the District and County Council's representative on the Partnership.
- The Chairman outlined to Members that the Partnership was not funded by the District Council.
- The Director of Community and Partnership Services commented that it was an important challenge for the Partnership to communicate their efforts to the public, and to reassure the public, and suggested that Members might wish to aid in communicating these messages. Furthermore, the Director commended the efforts and successes of the Partnership.
- The Partnership, Performance & Policy Adviser from Government Office for the West Midlands commented that the Partnership's performance had been incredibly pleasing, and felt that good progress was being made despite being a relatively small Partnership with finite resources. In addition the Officer perceived that there was no complacency at the Partnership, and reiterated the suggestion of the Director of Community and Partnership Services, that Members might wish to communicate the Partnership's message to the public.
- A Member thanked the entire Partnership for their efforts.

Agreed: The information be noted.

C&R.73 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The information be noted.

C&R.74 Work Programme

The Chairman commented that the Work Programme was becoming quite full, and that in the light of additions and changes to the programme, the Assistant Scrutiny/Committee Officer could meet with the Principal Solicitor to review the remainder of the Work Programme ahead of the next meeting of the Committee.

Agreed: The information be noted.

C&R.75 Press Involvement

No items were identified.

The meeting ended at 7:36 pm.