

CLEANER GREENER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4th September, 2013

Present:-	Councillor Mrs Gillian Williams – in the Chair
Councillors	Councillor Mrs Hilda Johnson, Councillor Miss Chloe Mancey and Councillor Miss Marion Reddish
Officers	Dave Adams (Operational Director – Executive Services) Sarah Moore (Partnerships Manager) Trevor Smith (Community Safety Officer) Martin Stevens (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hailstones, Cllr Plant, Cllr Simpson, Cllr Tagg and Cllr Wemyss.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

4. PORTFOLIO HOLDER (S) QUESTION TIME

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Ann Beech gave an overview of her portfolio. She stated that one of her main projects she was working on was the Cabinet Panel on the Waste Strategy. She was hopeful that this would conclude at the end of the calendar year. A number of site visits had taken place within different Council areas, to determine the practices carried out by other Councils.

She considered apprenticeships to be an important part of her portfolio. There were ten across the Council and six of these fell within her portfolio. Apprenticeships were something she was trying to actively encourage. She was pleased to report that the talks with Bateswood Local Nature Reserve were proceeding well and she was enthusiastic that the club would be up and running for next seasons fishing. The process for clearing and bringing back into use another smaller pool on site was underway and the intention was to use this pool for teaching young people how to fish. There had been two meetings recently regarding how the Council could assist with the management of Silverdale Allotments.

A New Urban Tree strategy was being compiled for the Borough, the Council was currently awaiting a response from Aspire. New vehicles were being procured for weed spraying. The Borough Council cut some grass for the County in urban areas, which they were looking to expand into rural areas. A Member asked if there was anything which could be done to prevent the cutting down of hedges, as hedges in driveways were being replaced with walls across the Borough. In response the Executive Director for Operational Services stated that there was little action the

Council could take in urban areas. In rural areas, the Council did have some powers to put protection orders on hedgerows, which were mainly targeted towards farmers. A Member stated that she had sympathy with elderly residents who replaced hedges with walls due to the ongoing maintenance required.

A Member asked about the current status of the Allotment Working Group. In response the Executive Director for Operational Services stated that the work was currently ongoing. It was clear that parts of some allotments needed to be brought up to a suitable standard and that the procedure for applying for an allotment needed to be streamlined.

In response to a question regarding Trade Waste, the Executive Director for Operational Services stated that a trial was currently taking place on trade food waste, which it was hoped would be rolled out wider in the future. The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder for her presentation and for answering Members questions.

The Chair invited, Portfolio Holder, Cllr Tony Kearon to speak on his Portfolio. He stated that a main part of his time was currently spent on the Police and Crime Plan. He was in direct discussions with Staffordshire Police and had raised some concerns about the plan in general, particularly on the areas of community policing and the lack of definable targets within the plan in general. The Police Crime Commissioner was under no obligation to equally divide the money across the District and Borough areas within Staffordshire. He was concerned that some of the work currently being carried out would have no guarantee of future funding. He was particularly pleased with the Borough Council's record on combating anti social behaviour and low levels of disorder. 75 – 80% of complaints had been resolved within three months. He was intending to have a meeting with the Commissioner to discuss the importance of maintaining funding for initiatives which had showed to have clear beneficial outcomes. He was trying to encourage the reporting of anti-social behaviour, which he realised would cause a spike in the figures, but it was important to know about the incidents in order to best combat the problem. He wanted to encourage Councillors to also report incidents.

A Member stated that when she reported anti social behaviour to the Police, she had been informed that the residents should call them. She was pleased to report on the success there had been in dealing with the anti social behaviour relating to Mini-Motos. She stated that it was important to inform residents of the good work taking place. In response the Partnership Manager confirmed that she did see this as part of the Council's role to give reassurance to residents.

The Portfolio Holder stated that he was trying to encourage some genuine partnership work with the Police within the Borough and he was intending to meet the new Commander in the near future.

5. MINI MOTOS

The Partnerships Manage stated that some good examples of joint working had taken place with the Police and Social Services dealing with the anti-social behaviour created by Mini Motos when used inappropriately. Questionnaires had been sent to a number of residents. All complaints and concerns were dealt with on merit. Deterrent measures had been put in place and a number of Mini Motos had been seized. An operation was about to commence in the area around Bradwell Woods.

A Member stated that it was important to inform residents of the good work taking place, so they were aware that their concerns were being acted upon proactively by the Council. In response the Partnership Manager stated that she would speak with the Communications team.

6. PURPLE FLAG SCHEME

The Community Safety Officer stated that the Purple Flag accreditation scheme was governed by the Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM). It was a very successful scheme and was the award which the majority of cities and Towns wanted to achieve. The Council had considered trying to obtain the status in 2010 but at the time it was felt that Newcastle was not in a position to successfully obtain the accreditation and plans were put on hold for a later date. In April 2013 the decision had been taken to resurrect the Purple Flag accreditation. There had been several meetings to discuss the accreditation. He was looking to expand the membership of the working group and so Members were welcome to become more involved. They were currently working on collating information and data to incorporate into a Snapshot Chart, which essentially was a status report on the Town. The next step was to complete a Self-Assessment of the Town based on four key themes over three key time bands from 5pm until 3am. This would be taking place on Friday, 4 October. Once the snapshot and Self-Assessment had been completed, the ATCM would be undertaking their own overnight self-assessment. The intention was to submit the main application before Christmas.

An area which required further work was the early evening economy in Newcastle. A Member asked if the Town Centre LAP had been involved. In response, the Community Safety Officer stated he would undertake to meet with them to discuss the project. There was a discussion about involving all the LAPs within the Borough due to the significance of Newcastle's Town Centre. The Partnerships Manager stated that she welcomed all Members contribution on the project. It was important not to omit any information which would be helpful to obtain the accreditation.

A Member asked if the Council was awarded the status, when the next review would take place to continue having Purple Flag Status. In response, the Community Safety Officer stated that an assessment was completed on a yearly basis.

The Community Safety Officer stated that an objective for the Town Centre was to increase footfall in the early evening and night time. It was important to attract the right people to the Town and improve the offerings for young families. Purple Flag accreditation would attract inward investment to the Town from Business which was apparent from other areas which had received the accreditation.

The Community Safety Officer agreed to let all Members of the Council know what they could do to help the Council obtain Purple Flag accreditation.

7. WORK PLAN

The Community Safety Officer in reference to the Working Plan, stated that the Magistrates Working Group had identified a need for some extra CCTV within the Town, which would cost in the region of £15,000. Consideration was being given to approaching the Court to help fund the initiative.

The Community Safety Officer on noticing that the Alcohol Strategy was on the work programme for the future, gave an update on the Alcohol in Schools programme. An

Ofsted Report released in July of last year had stated that nationally the curriculum was not fit for purpose in this area. A number of schools within the Borough had signed up to the programme, but a number of other schools had not. He was working with Entrust to try and get all the schools to sign up to the programme. Progress was however not as good as expected. Funding was only available until Christmas for the programme and so it was important to try and sign up as many schools as possible. The programme could be flexible to each school. He believed that some schools were reluctant to sign up to the programme because of resources within the school being limited and demands on the limited time available in the school day. The Partnerships Manager stated the Alcohol in Schools programme was about preventing problems in later life and was therefore a crucial preventative programme for the Borough.

In reference to Disabled Access / A Frame Obstruction to Pavements in Towns, the Partnerships Manager stated that she could have a discussion with the Town Centre Partnership about alternatives to A-Frames such as Town Maps. Cllr Kearon stated that he would speak to Partners and the Chamber of Commerce on the subject and in addition to the Leader and the relevant Portfolio Holder. There was a discussion about who was responsible ultimately for the pavements in Towns. The Executive Director for Operational Services stated that it was ultimately the legal responsibility of the Highways Authority.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no urgent business within the meaning of Section 100 B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

COUNCILLOR MRS GILLIAN WILLIAMS
Chair