

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities) held at 1.00 pm
on Thursday, 31 July 2014

Present:

Members: Councillor Townshend (Cabinet Member)
Councillor Fletcher (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor A Andrews (Shadow Cabinet Member)
Councillor D Galliers
Councillor D Skinner
Councillor D Welsh

Employees:

S Brake (People Directorate)
S Hutt (People Directorate)
L Knight (Resources Directorate)
H Lynch (Resources Directorate)
B Massey (People Directorate)
M Metcalf (People Directorate)
L Nagle (People Directorate)
C Parker (People Directorate)
S Roach (People Directorate)
N Woollorton (People Directorate)

Others Sgt T Roberts (WM Police)

Apologies: Councillor J O'Boyle

Public Business

8. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

9. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 relating to the private reports in Minute 19: "Coroner's Service Update" on the grounds that the report involved the likely disclosure of information defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as it contained information relating to an individual and the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and that in all circumstances of the cases, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

10. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd July 2014 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

11. **Report in response to petition regarding anti-social behaviour in Thompsons Road, Keresley, Coventry**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director, People which provided a response to a petition requesting that action be taken by relevant agencies to address anti-social behaviour, particularly nuisance from off road motorbikes, taking place in Thompson's Road, Keresley.

The petition bearing 7 signatures was submitted on 14th August 2013 by Councillor Galliers, who attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners. The petition organiser was unable to attend the meeting.

It was acknowledged that despite difficulties arising in relation to the land in question due to the mixed ownership of the land and the need to maintain access to a large bridle path running alongside the entire length of the land, a number of steps to address the problem had already been undertaken by the Community Safety Team and the Local Police Team. However, it was proposed that action to address the anti-social behaviour be continued.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities):

1. **Noted and endorsed the measures implemented by partner agencies to address the issues outlined in the petition and identified through further investigation by officers.**
2. **Requested Officers to monitor and review the effectiveness of initial actions taken and continue to work with residents and the wider community to improve the security to areas of land facilitating the nuisance behaviour, whilst taking action against the perpetrators.**
3. **Requested Officers to explore the most relevant legislation that may compel landowners to take or at least permit action to prevent access to their land and subsequent nuisance to residents.**
4. **Requested that the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team continue to meet with Councillor Galliers and the local residents affected, to continue to address the challenges identified within the report and to provide appropriate community reassurance.**
5. **Requested that the Community Safety Team consider the possibility of the urgent installation of mobile CCTV in the relevant area during the months of August, September and October 2014.**

6. Request Officers to provide a report back on the outcome of recommendations 2 and 3 to the Cabinet Member meeting scheduled for 6th November 2014 in order to ensure the outcome of monitoring during the Summer months can be included in the report.

12. Progress report in response to a petition regarding the amount of dog fouling and littering in the Westwood Ward

Further to Minute 93/13 of the former Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities), the Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director, People, which provided a progress update following the submission of a petition regarding the amount of dog fouling and littering in the Westwood Ward.

The petition bearing 32 signatures had been submitted on 11th December 2013 by Councillor Skinner, who attended the meeting. The petition organiser was unable to attend the meeting.

It was noted that work had been undertaken to identify the 20 most affected streets within the Ward and a Local Environment Quality Survey (LEQ) was undertaken of these streets in an attempt to provide a baseline evaluation to determine the effectiveness of works being carried out in the area. Over the following three months, officers patrolled these hot spot areas, erected 'no dog fouling' signs on lamp posts in the streets and stencilled pavements with 'no dog fouling' signs. In addition doors were knocked and postcards hand delivered requesting information from residents and seeking information on who was causing the problem.

Although very little intelligence was received from local people during the initiative, two fixed penalty notices were issued for dog fouling. A further LEQ was carried out on the same streets and the average grade given had risen, indicating that the action taken had been worthwhile. It was therefore proposed that officers continue to patrol the areas and take action when appropriate.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities):-

- 1. Acknowledge and endorse the work carried out in Westwood Ward to reduce incidences of dog fouling and littering.**
- 2. Instruct officers to continue patrols in these areas and to take action as appropriate, including enforcement and publicity.**

13. Progress report on action being taken in Hillfields to address Community Safety Issues highlighted by a number of petitions previously submitted over the last eighteen months

Further to Minute 94/13 of the former Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities), the Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director, People, which provided a performance update on the measures implemented against an action plan drawn up following the submission of a number of petitions during 2012/13 relating to public place nuisance behaviour and problematic households.

The report set out the locations and hot spots for particular issues, including anti-social behaviour, criminal/offending behaviour, sex working, alleged drug dealing,

street drinking, environmental and street cleaning, parking, nuisance from residential premises, noise, chaotic lifestyle and scrap dealing. Further information was provided on the action undertaken in each of the areas for the issues identified, the lead agencies involved and the progress made to date.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member:-

- 1. Noted and endorsed the measures taken by Officers to date as outlined in the report and progress against the action plan attached as Appendix 1.**
- 2. Requested members of the St Michael's Safer Neighbourhood Group to continue to deliver against and monitor, regularly review, and update the action plan in accordance with local issues identified and reported incidents.**
- 3. Requested Police to continue to dedicate patrols to hotspot locations within the Hillfields area, responding swiftly to any issues raised or identified and to take appropriate action including use of their powers to obtain identities and disperse individuals in groups that are likely to cause public nuisance and/or offending behaviour, should it become necessary.**
- 4. Requested officers of the Council and the West Midlands Police to continue to contact and communicate with relevant community leaders and invite them to meet with professionals and Ward Members, with a view to reviewing tactics and approaches being applied.**
- 5. Acknowledged that a monthly schedule of Community Payback work has been agreed with the Probation Service and requested that these efforts be applied principally to the cleaning up of alleyways, entries and public spaces.**
- 6. Requested the Head of Community Safety to draft a letter to be sent from the Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities) to Licensing opposing all and any applications for 24-hour licensing in the Hillfields area.**
- 7. Requested the Deputy Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities) to oversee an up to date assessment of work undertaken by the Council and West Midlands Police and other Statutory and Voluntary Agencies to address issues of the presence of sex workers in the Hillfields area.**
- 8. Formally recorded thanks to Council officers, Ward Councillors and West Midlands Police for the work carried out to date to address these problems.**
- 9. Requested a report back in respect of the additional recommendations to the Cabinet Member meeting scheduled for 6th November 2014.**

14. **Proposed Continued Authorisation of the West Midlands Scambusters Team**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Assistant Director Communities and Health, which set out proposals for the continued authorisation of the West Midlands Scambusters Team to investigate rogue traders operating across the West Midlands regarding matters that arise in Coventry.

Through the National Trading Standards Board, Birmingham City Council receives funding from the Department for Business, Innovations and Skills for a project aimed at targeting rogue trading and scams that operate across the 14 local authorities of the Central England Region. Known as CEntSA Scambusters, a regional Trading Standards team was set up to tackle issues relating to dishonest traders who operate across local authority boundaries in the West Midlands using fraud, dishonesty, high pressure selling and other deceptive practices to the detriment of both consumers and honest businesses.

It was necessary to delegate enforcement powers to officers from Birmingham City Council to allow CEntSA Scambusters to investigate any offences that were committed in Coventry.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member:-

- 1. Approved the delegation of authority to Birmingham City Council to enforce (save for the prosecution of certain offences) the legislation specified in the Appendix to the report submitted by virtue of Regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012 and/or Sections 9D to 9EB of the Local Government Act 2000 until further notice;**
- 2. Authorised officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities), to negotiate and sign the terms of any protocol and ancillary legal agreements with Birmingham City Council to facilitate the arrangements in accordance with the Council's Constitution.**

15. **Community Grant Fund - Round One Award Decisions**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director, People which provided recommendations on applications received during round one of the Community Grant Fund.

The Community Grant Fund was launched in September 2013 and was managed by the Community Development Team within the People Directorate. The process for managing the fund had evolved over recent months and had built upon lessons learned from a previous evaluation of processes and procedures and amendments to the criteria for the Fund were approved by the Cabinet Member in May 2014. These amendments included dividing the funding into two distinct rounds with clear closing dates for applications; a decision making process requiring the Cabinet Member to approve all grant wards; and a maximum grant award of £5,000 with organisations restricted to one award per funding round.

It was noted that allocating funds via two rounds ensured that the process was clear to applicants who wanted to plan for events or projects over the year. It also enabled the Council to allocate funds to those projects that most closely met the criteria and objectives, through being able to scrutinise all applications that met the deadline.

The report set out the grant awards proposed and Appendix 1 of the report detailed the criteria used to assess applications.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Approved payment of grants as recommended by the Panel.**
- 2. Requested a further report on the recommendations for the second round of grants at the Cabinet Member meeting scheduled for 22nd January 2015.**

16. Coroner's Service Update

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, which provided an update in relation to the new arrangements within the Coroner's service for Coventry.

A corresponding private report detailing confidential commercial aspects of the proposal had also been submitted to the Cabinet Member for consideration.

In May 2014, changes to the delivery of the Coroner's service in Coventry was approved. This included the recruitment of Assistant Coroners solely for the Coventry area and the transfer of the Coroner's office from the West Midlands Police to the Council, along with interim arrangements until the transfer was formally concluded. In addition, the setting up of an out of hours rota was agreed using those Assistant Coroners who were already retained by the Council.

It was noted that a recruitment process had been set up for the appointment of four Assistant Coroners with interviews scheduled for 18th September 2014. All new Assistant Coroners would be required to take part in the out of hours rota. In addition, whilst some of the existing Assistant Coroners had undertaken some out of hours service cover, this had not been on a formal basis. The Cabinet Member was advised that letters were to be sent to all current Assistant Coroners asking for their support for a rota and their responses would be collated. It was not anticipated that there would any cost implications as a result of the proposed out of hours provision but this would be reviewed and a further report submitted once the financial implication of the level of support have been considered.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Noted the transfer of staff from the West Midlands Police to the Council which became effective on 1st July 2014**
- 2. Noted the up to date position on the recruitment of new Assistant Coroners to support service delivery in Coventry and the out of hours service rota.**

3. Recommend that Council endorse the appointments of the new Assistant Coroners.

17. Outstanding Issues Report

The Cabinet Member noted a report of the Executive Director, Resources that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested and were outstanding, so that progress could be monitored.

18. Any Other Business

Councillor Galliers advised the Cabinet Member of an incident which had occurred the previous evening in respect of a public nuisance on the Birmingham Road. Upon contacting the out of hours service to request the attendance of a Noise Abatement Officer, a member of the public had been told there was nobody on duty at that time. Councillor Galliers expressed concern regarding the lack of service provision, particularly during the early hours of the morning.

The Cabinet Member indicated that, as a resident of Birmingham Road, he would not be able to investigate this matter but requested that the Head of Community Safety investigate the matters identified and, in consultation with the Deputy Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities), make appropriate recommendations for urgent implementation. It was noted that, should these recommendations require formal approval, that a report be prepared for submission to Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member requested the Head of Community Safety to investigate the matters identified and, in consultation with the Deputy Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities), make appropriate recommendations for urgent implementation.

(NOTE: This matter was considered as urgent business, the reason for urgency being the need to investigate the lack of service provision at the earliest opportunity.)

19. Coroner's Service Update

Further to Minute 16 above, the Cabinet Member considered a report of the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, which provided confidential and commercially sensitive information in relation to an update on the new arrangements within the Coroner's service for Coventry.

RESOLVED that, the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Noted the transfer of staff from the West Midlands Police to the Council which became effective on 1st July 2014, including the signing of the contract transferring the service**
- 2. To note the up to date position on the recruitment of new Assistant Coroners to support service delivery in Coventry and the out of hours service rota.**
- 3. Recommend that Council endorse the appointments of the new Assistant Coroners.**

20. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of private business.

(Meeting closed at 2.35 pm)