

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 24 September 2015

Present:

Members: Councillor Townshend

Other Members: Councillor J Clifford
Councillor J O'Boyle (for item 16)
Councillor R Ruane (for item 15)

Employees (by Directorate):

Chief Executive's: N Brook
C Dear, Chief Executive's Directorate
People: S Hutt, People Directorate
S Mangan, Resources Directorate
Resources: B Massey, People Directorate
I Merrifield, People Directorate
L Nagle, People Directorate
S Nagra, Chief Executive's Directorate
U Patel, Resources Directorate
H Shankster, Chief Executive's Directorate

Apologies: Councillor A Andrews and R Auluck

In attendance: P Evans, WATCH Charity (for item 16)
Alderman Gazey
J Haywood, St Peter's Centre (for item 16)
Inspector Mason (for item 16)
J McAllister (for item 15)
P McNamara (for item 17)
Sergeant Mercer (for item 16)
W Overfield, UHCW NHS Trust (for item 15)
D Powell, UHCW NHS Trust (for item 15)
R J Wilsen (for item 16)

Public Business

13. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

14. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet Member meeting held on 23 July 2015 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

15. Report in response to a petition regarding smoking in Hall Lane

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which responded to a petition regarding smoking in Hall Lane.

A petition bearing 322 signatures was submitted to the City Council by Councillor Ruane on 7 July 2015. The petition outlined residents' concerns in relation to customers and employees from the University Hospital, Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust at Walsgrave, smoking on the street and generally causing a nuisance with noise and litter.

The residents' requested that the Council make Hall Lane a smoke free street and that the hospital takes responsibility for the results of their no smoking policy.

Councillor Ruane, a Henley Ward Councillor and the petition spokesperson attended the meeting and spoke in support of the petition. The petition spokesperson stated that the residents had been in discussions with the hospital for over nine months without any progress and the problems appear to have worsened since the Caludon Centre adopted the same no smoking policy. It was reported that staff and patients sit on bollards, fences and curbs and were often disrespectful to the residents.

Representatives of the hospital also attended the meeting to listen to the residents' concerns and discussions and would report back to the hospital's management board.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

- 1. Defers the review of the implications of making Hall Lane a smoke free street and approves the officer recommendation not to proceed until the matter is referred back to the hospital for further consideration and an update report is submitted to the Cabinet Member meeting on 10 December 2015.**
- 2. Requests that the petition be passed onto University Hospital, Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust for a formal response and also Coventry and Warwickshire Primary Trust and Meridan Hospital for their consideration together with a copy of the recommendations.**
- 3. Requests that Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers are allocated to the area on an intermittent basis, as resources permit, to enforce any littering caused by smokers in Hall Lane.**

16. Progress report on the Hillfields Community Safety Action Plan

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of People which provided an updated action plan and progress against additional recommendations made by Cabinet Member at the meeting held on 23 July 2015 in response to a petition submitted about street drinking in the Hillfields Village Square. The petition bearing 70 signatures was submitted by Councillor O'Boyle, a St Michaels Ward Councillor on 17 June 2015.

Officers developed a strategy and action plan to address these issues to provide a more proactive approach to prevent recurrence of the same problems. The action

plan (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) had been updated and revised by the Community Safety Officer and the relevant officers responsible for implementing the actions following the meeting on 23 July 2015.

The report provided year on year comparison of incidents of crime and nuisance reported to the police and City Council and this showed a marked decrease in reports during the comparable timeframe.

The report further stated that tackling nuisance behaviour and street drinking in Hillfields remained a key priority for all agencies in the area. This was further helped by having excellent working relations between the Neighbourhood Policing Team, the Community Safety Team and Registered Social Landlords.

A monthly schedule of Community Payback work was developed by Council Officers in conjunction with the Community Rehabilitation Service. Work had already commenced in the area and would Council Officers continue to work with partner organisations and residents to complete the schedule of works.

The report outlined progress made and work still outstanding since the Cabinet Member meeting held on 23 July 2015.

Councillor O'Boyle and the petition spokespersons attended the meeting and spoke in respect of the problems being experienced by Hillfields residents. Their main concern was that none of the recommendations made at the last meeting appear to have been progressed as the problems still remained.

West Midlands Police officers also attended the meeting and reported on the work undertaken by them so far. It was reported that the Police had received training relevant to the problems being experienced in the area and as a result were better equipped to deal with the issues. And with the help of key partners, the police would be able to proactively target issues highlighted in the report.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

- 1. Notes the updated action plan which now includes the recommended actions from the meeting on 23 July 2015 and progress towards the same, and agrees that the work on this continues. Endorses the actions in the plan that also covers the underlying social issues which cause problems in the area.**
- 2. Requests officers continue to engage with local community groups and businesses to continue to identify local issues (especially those related to street drinking and problematic individuals in the Village Square and surrounding area), deliver action, monitor reported incidents, and generally review and update the action plan.**
- 3. Requests Police to:**
 - Continue to dedicate patrols to hotspot locations within the Hillfields area, responding swiftly to any issues raised or identified;**

- Exercise their powers to obtain identities and disperse individuals in groups that are likely to cause public nuisance and/or offending behaviour, ensuring individuals are challenged about their behaviour where appropriate, but also have the opportunity for treatment and support.
4. Requests that officers continue multi-agency case management through relevant forums to monitor behaviour and the effectiveness of interventions to support change.
 5. (a) Requests that the Tree Preservation Officer and Arboriculture Services Officer prepare a written report within 14 days of today's meeting in relation to the tree situated in Hillfields, Adelaide Street, identifying amongst other matters whether the tree is currently subject to a Tree Preservation Order; whether it can be pruned and if so, within what timescale; and whether it can be removed completely without causing structural damage to neighbouring properties. Such report to be distributed to the three Hillfields Ward Councillors, lead petitioner and the Cabinet Member.

(b) Requests the Assistant Director of Highways Services, to prepare a written report within 14 days on whether or not the wall surrounding the tree can be removed without causing damage to neighbouring properties and if so within what timescales and at what expense. The report to show good reasons why the wall should not be removed.

(c) Requests the Assistant Director of Safeguarding Performance and Quality to submit a written report providing an update on the position regarding the outstanding work to be undertaken by Waites.

(d) Copies of all of the above mentioned reports to be sent to Inspector Mason, West Midlands Police, for information.
 6. Any further decisions in relation to recommendation 5 above be deferred to Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities in consultation with the three Hillfields Ward Councillors and the Executive Director of Place.
 7. Requests that a further progress report be submitted to the Cabinet Member meeting scheduled for 10 December 2015.

17. Progress report on improvements made to the environment and security of the Hearsall area of Coventry

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Place which provided an update on improvements made to the environment and security of the Hearsall area of Coventry.

A petition bearing 184 signatures was originally submitted on 25 March 2014 by Councillors Howells and B Singh, Whoberley Ward Councillors.

The petition requested the Council to implement a variety of measures to address environmental issues which if addressed would likely to improve the security of the Hearsall area, Whoberley Ward.

The report stated that the only remaining issue is the obstruction caused by wheelie bins stored on pavements was dealt with by way of additional measures as recommended by the Cabinet Member at his meeting held on 23 April 2014 (Minute 104/14 refers).

The petition spokesperson attended the meeting and reported that the problem of bins left outside on the street still remained in certain streets and that warning letters were being ignored.

The Head of Environmental Services Communities and Health reported that changes in legislation meant that perpetrators could no longer be prosecuted; however, they would endeavour to work with the local residents' group to stay on top of the problem.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

1. Requests officers to :

- **Continue to monitor the area to ensure that the progress made in removing wheelie bins from the street is maintained.**
- **Continue to work with the local residents' group and support them when and where required.**

18. Annual Report on the use of the Covert Surveillance of Employees Policy and Procedure and Processing CCTV Footage: Alleged Employee Misconduct Procedure

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Resources which provided an update on the use of the Covert Surveillance of Employees Policy and Procedure and Processing CCTV Footage: Alleged Employee Misconduct Procedure.

When these procedures were approved (i.e. Covert Surveillance of Employees Policy and Procedure in March 2013 and the Processing CCTV Footage: Alleged Employee Misconduct Procedure in January 2015); it was agreed that the relevant Cabinet Member would receive an annual report of activity through these procedures. Given the limited number of requests received, it was determined that a combined report would provide a better overview of both proactive and reactive approaches used by the Council in response to potential employee misconduct through these procedures.

Over the last year, only two applications were made under the Covert Surveillance of Employees Policy and Procedure. And under the Processing CCTV Footage: Alleged Employee Misconduct Procedure, five applications were made over the last year. The report provided a summary of the applications made.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

1. **Notes the position outlined in the report;**
2. **In light of the limited use of these procedures, to request that the Monitoring Officer provide a report to the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities on an annual basis identifying the number of applications made through these procedures and any other relevant issues, which report will be considered in private if necessary where data and information about individuals is referenced in the report.**

19. **Equality Strategy - end of year progress report 2014-15**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Public Health which provided the Equality Strategy - end of year progress report 2014/15.

The Council's Equal Opportunities policy states the Council's belief that everybody should have an equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from society; and a diverse community is a positive asset to the city.

The current equality strategy was approved in March 2013, the strategy sets out how the Council would deliver the equal opportunities policy and also how it would comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

The report provided an overview of progress in relation to the equality strategy for 2014/15 and included a summary of progress in relation to the Council's equality objectives (appendix A) which are linked to the priorities in the Council Plan.

The Council's current equality strategy is valid until March 2016 and it was hoped to review this with the intention of adopting a revised strategy by the end of March 2016.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equality:

1. **Notes the progress made on implementing the equality strategy;**
2. **Approves the end of year 2014/15 progress on the Equality Objectives; and**
3. **Requests a review and update of the Council's equality strategy to be published by March 2016.**
4. **Directs that a copy of the report be sent to all Directors, Assistant Directors, all Cabinet Members and Deputy Cabinet Members within the course of the next 14 days.**

20. **Invasive non-native plant species**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director of Place which provided information on invasive non-native plant species namely Japanese Knotweed and the Giant Hogweed and the extent of the Council's powers in dealing with these.

Japanese Knotweed and the Giant Hogweed are two of the most prevalent invasive non-native plants that were introduced into Britain in the 19th Century. Both can colonise an area and very quickly dominate a habitat so as to exclude other plants from growing.

The report stated that from a nuisance point of view, Japanese Knotweed's root system can cause structural damage to buildings, whilst the Giant Hogweed can lead to human skin irritation. Furthermore, eradication of these plants is not straightforward.

Research suggested that the control and eradication of these plants is both costly and lengthy and could hinder securing a mortgage on affected land.

Whilst it is not an offence to have these species on land, owner/occupiers would have a duty to prevent their spreading to neighbouring properties.

Until recently, these non-native invasive species were the sole responsibility of the Police, although their powers were limited and most people used civil legislation. However, recent legislative changes to the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 made clear that local authorities now also had suitable powers to deal with these plants. The report provided further information on the options available and the proposal to adopt a three stage approach in an attempt to deal with these plants.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities endorses the three stage approach suggested by officers in assisting residents in dealing with the encroachment onto their land of non-native invasive plant species.

21. **Outstanding Issues Report**

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

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities approves the deletion of item 9 on the outstanding issues list headed "Local Democracy Week" as this would now be considered by the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities Electoral Arrangements Advisory Panel.

22. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.50 pm)

