

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities held at 3.00 pm on Thursday, 26 July 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor A Khan (Cabinet Member)
Councillor A Andrews (Shadow Cabinet Member)
Councillor P Akhtar (Deputy Cabinet Member)

Other Members: Councillor F Abbott
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor C Thomas
Councillor D Welsh

Employees (by Directorate):

People N Hart
Place D Blackburn, G Carter, G Hood, M McHugh, T Miller
W Ohandjanian, M Rose

Invited: Sergeant Sherrie Kimberley

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th March, 2018 were agreed as a true record.

3. Gambling Act 2005 - Revised Statement of Licensing Policy 2019 - 2022

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which sought Members views and approval to consult on the draft revised Statement of Licensing Policy 2019-2022 under the Gambling Act 2005. The report was due to be considered by Licensing and Regulatory Committee on 14th August, 2018.

Under the terms of the Gambling Act 2005 the Council's Statement of Gambling Policy had to be renewed every three years. The current Statement of Gambling Policy came into effect on 31st January 2016 and a review must therefore be completed. There was a requirement in the Act for the Council to publish and advertise the revised Statement of Gambling Policy at least 4 weeks before, by 3rd January 2019.

The Gambling Policy produced by the Licensing Authority under the Gambling Act 2005 was relevant for all licensing decisions taken by the Council as the Licensing Authority over three years commencing on 31st January 2019.

The general principles of the Gambling Policy remain the same and the document was still centred around the Gambling Act's three licensing objectives, namely:

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime;
- Ensuring that gambling was conducted in a fair and open way; and
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

Before amending the policy for a further three year period, licensing authorities were required to carry out a wide consultation process. In addition to those it must consult by law, the Council had authority to include in the process any individuals or organisations it deemed appropriate.

The Responsible Authorities (statutory consultees - Gambling Commission, West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service, Planning, Environmental Health (functions in relation to pollution to the environment or harm to human health) Safeguarding Children Board, HM Revenue & Customs), Community Safety team and Public Health would be consulted on the draft revised policy.

The public consultation exercise would begin on the 7th August 2018, for a 6 week period and finish on the 18th September 2018 and would include the following elements:-

- Mail shots to representatives of the licensed trade, clubs and key partners;
- Formally writing to the Chief Officers of the responsible authorities;
- Mail shots to businesses and organisations; and
- Wider public consultation through the City Council Web Site

The revised policy complied with updated Gambling Commissions guidance and regulations. It had been developed with all 6 Warwickshire Licensing Authorities (Warwickshire County Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Stratford on Avon District Council and Warwick District Council), although each authority had adapted the policy to suit the needs of their area and profile.

A copy of the draft revised policy was attached as an Appendix to the report. There were no proposed significant changes to the policy only minor amendments and additions. These were highlighted in grey in the draft revised policy.

The Licensing and Regulatory Committee was requested to consider the draft revised Statement of Gambling Policy and forward any comments as part of the consultation process.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities approve the draft revised Statement of Gambling Policy and authorise the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) to carry out the consultation as detailed in the report.

4. **Response to a petition regarding concerns over environmental issues, anti-social and criminal behaviour and a lack of police assistance in the vicinity of Winchester Street**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which responded to a petition bearing 15 signatures, sponsored by Councillor O'Boyle, a St Michaels Ward Councillor, which had been submitted to the City Council on 20th May, 2018. The petition was regarding concerns over; environmental issues, anti-social and criminal behaviour and a lack of police assistance in the vicinity of Winchester Street. The petition specifically mentioned acts of criminal damage to vehicles by persons unknown and the presence of litter throughout the area as a result of the activity of sex workers. Councillor O'Boyle and Councillor Welsh attended the meeting and spoke along with the petitioners in attendance. The Police were also in attendance and spoke to residents regarding the petition.

The report stated that the main issue concerned a spate of incidents between 18th and 19th May 2018 during which a large number of local resident's vehicles were damaged. Residents felt that the police could have done more on this occasion. Another issue of concern was that the area was affected by litter which often included condoms which were believed to emanate from sex workers within the area. Residents wanted to know what could be done to ensure the area was kept in a clean state. Residents felt that the activity of the sex workers in the area make it an unsafe place for young children to play and grow up. This made the area look dirty and untidy and discouraged the children from playing outside. Residents were keen to have the issues addressed at the earliest opportunity.

The report detailed the recorded data regarding litter and refuse complaints from June 2017 to June 2018 which showed 30 reports directly related to Winchester Street. Of those reports, 18 were as a result of council officers logging the issues.

Another notable street in the area was that of Colchester Street, due to the proximity of the 2 streets it is difficult to treat both in isolation, and over the same period June 2017 to June 2018, 68 reports were directly related to Colchester Street. Of those reports, 44 were as a result of council officers logging the issue.

Both streets were patrolled regularly, at least once a week by officers from the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team and referrals were made to ensure the area was kept clean. Officers also visit the area as a result of specific complaints as and when they were reported. The operatives also visit the neighbouring Raglan Street and Vauxhall Street every Friday and would pick up additional litter as and when they see it. In addition, specific visits were undertaken to collect reported fly tipping from council land. All cases of littering and fly tipping were investigated, with the appropriate course of action depending on any evidence found at the scene and witnesses to the offence(s).

Police data for the same period showed a total of 49 logs for Winchester Street and 69 logs for Colchester Street. A large proportion of these logs related to one individual who had been evicted from the area earlier this year. Other logs related to regular Police business and were not relevant for the purposes of this report. Police undertake targeted operations to educate those involved in sex work and enforce against those sex workers and the associated antisocial behaviour that it brings.

In response to the petition, officers from the Council and the Police had made contact with the lead petitioner. West Midlands Police and the Council were monitoring the situation. Extra patrols took place as duties allow and individuals found to be causing issues were challenged and appropriate action taken. The issues around the specific incidents on the 18th to 19th May 2018 form part of an ongoing police investigation and therefore the police were unable to comment further at this moment in time.

The report recommended ways to take this matter forward including monitoring the area, encouraging the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch and temporary deployment of cameras to the area.

The Ward Councillors and many of the residents present all provided further detail regarding the concerns of local residents. Their quality of life was being affected by the sex workers using the area, fly tipping, criminality in the area and their fear of crime. Examples were provided and included gardens being used by sex workers, a bottle thrown at children, observing drug use, children too scared to use gardens, fear for property damage, litter including condoms, needles and clothing.

The police sergeant present agreed to continue to monitor the area and to work with residents. They were taking action in the area however evidence was required.

Council officers agreed to visit the area and consider lighting and where to sight the CCTV and signage and to provide a contact for assistance with Neighbourhood Watch.

The Cabinet Member discussed contacting Whitefriars and timescales.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

- 1) Request West Midlands Police and Council officers to continue their monitoring of the area and respond accordingly to residents requests for assistance.**
- 2) Encourage residents to set up a Neighbourhood Watch in the area and report incidents of concern to Police and the Council as soon as they occur.**
- 3) Approve the installation of CCTV and signage within the area to deter antisocial and criminal activity.**
- 4) Councillor Khan to write to Whitefriars regarding liaising with Council officers about concerns within the area, relating to the behaviour of its tenants and a row of garages owned by them, as well as any other matters.**
- 5) Officers to explore the possibility of increasing lighting in parts of the area.**

5. **Petition - Upgrade of the Caludon Castle Park Play Area**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which responded to a petition bearing 41 signatures, sponsored by Councillor Abbott, a Wyken Ward Councillor, which had been submitted to the City Council on 12th April, 2018. The petition requested that the Council upgrade the children's play area located within Caludon Castle Park. Councillor Abbott attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of the petitioners.

The report noted that the petition stated "As a mother of two very lively boys, I would like to ask if there is possibility for upgrade of the Caludon Park Play Area. The actual place is very poor and apart from the huge area for football there is no proper space for older kids to burn some energy. We were at Allesley Park on Sunday and it was so busy and noisy (in a positive meaning). There is a big slide, spider web climbing frame (it was the main attraction), a lot of swings and few other attractions to entertain kids. I live in Wyken area and seen a lot of families with small kids suffering from lack of space to keep the kids busy. Apart from St Margaret Road and Caludon Park poor play areas, there is no place to spend the time with kids. Is there any possibility at least for one more attraction (spider web frame) to place in Caludon?"

The report noted that Caludon Castle Park Play Area was located in the south east of the City and contained a number of items of equipment designed to be appropriate for both the younger age group, aged 4 to 7 years and the senior age group, 8 to 13 years. These play items included rockers, swings with both junior and toddler seats, Multi Use Play Units, dish roundabout and cable runway. In addition the play site also included items for informal sports play such as a basketball net and court and a Multi-Use Games Area. Infrastructural elements associated with the play site included fencing, wooden posts, seating, bins, tarmac footpaths and safer surfacing. Items of existing equipment were shown in the appendix to the report.

The park was under the control of the Parks Service within the Place Directorate. It was the Area Park for the South of the City and was submitted annually for a Green Flag award, which it had achieved for the last 6 years. Play facilities in the City were inspected on a weekly basis and repairs/replacements were undertaken as and when necessary to maintain the equipment and associated infrastructural features in a safe and usable condition.

During 2010/11 the play area was refurbished at a cost of approximately £105,000. This was financed from funding secured from the Governments Play Builder Initiative. Since that time a further £7,000 had been spent undertaking general refurbishment works. Recent inspections however had found that most of the equipment was nearing the end of its practicable life. Some items were showing signs of wear and tear, and an element of vandalism. In addition the sand-filled safer surfacing would require attention in the near future.

When external or internal inspections were undertaken, consideration was also given to the serviceable life expectancy of the facility, usually on an item by item basis as not all equipment needs to be replaced at the same time. In these cases, recommendations were made as to what items should be considered for

replacement or improvement and the works were then included in the play area maintenance programme.

The option to remove and not replace items of equipment deemed to have reached the end of its practicable life had been considered, however this would result in the gradual further and overall reduction in the play value and benefit of the facility over time and lead to its eventual removal. A full refurbishment of this play area had also been considered however, would cost approximately £100,000 to complete and the Parks Service does not have the existing resources to undertake this proposal.

The nearest other play facility was located at St Margarets Park and Caludon Castle Park falls outside its catchment area. The eventual removal of this play facility would leave the local community without any play provision within a reasonable distance. Removal of the play area would also potentially lead to its loss of Green Flag status. It was therefore recommended that the Councils Park Service retain the facility and it continued to explore and exploit all funding opportunities, both external and internal to replace items which reach the end of their practicable life with dynamic and high play value items of equipment and when possible, install additional items to provide an exciting and stimulating play environment.

Councillor Abbott provided further detail about the anti-social behaviour experienced at the park and a need for a mixture of equipment to challenge different age groups. Councillor Abbott asked about timescales and consultation with local people about the new equipment.

The Shadow Cabinet Member suggested that a 'friends of the Park' group may be able to access funding.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

- 1) Note that inspections of the play area have identified that much of the equipment is reaching the end of their practicable life.**
- 2) Note that Caludon Castle Park falls outside the catchment area of the nearest equipped local play facility.**
- 3) Agree that Caludon Castle Park play area be retained and that items of the existing play equipment be replaced as and when it reaches the end of their practicable life and be funded through a combination of external funding and existing budget provision.**

6. Report of the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities - Disability Equality Advisory Panel (DEAP)

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which reported achievements of the Disability Equality Advisory Panel (DEAP) over the last 3 years and sought approval for the continuation of the Disability Equality Advisory Panel for a further 3 years. The Chair of the DEAP was present at the meeting.

The report noted that the Disability Equality Advisory Panel (DEAP) was appointed at the Annual Meeting of the Council with Terms of Reference. The panel meets three times a year and representatives of various groups were invited by the chair to attend, DEAP was not open to the public. The aim of the panel was to improve services, enable, empower, involve and educate various community organisation's representing persons with disability, who would otherwise struggle to put across their views, thereby improving the quality of life for people from the particular "communities of interest" they represent. The panel dealt with different issues at every meeting as well as providing updated information on on-going issues.

As a working proactive panel the DEAP had always been well attended by invited members. Councillor Christine Thomas has been Chair for two years. Each year the panel had been reassessed to ensure that new people were invited that represent a diverse cross section of Coventry residents, Charities/Voluntary Organisations and service users who meet to work together as an effective, proactive, working panel.

The report noted that the Chair of the Disabled Equality Action Partnership (DEAP) Councillor Thomas, had been encouraged by the way that this panel had raised and in certain circumstances been able to support community initiatives in relation to equality issues brought to the panel by members. One example was that a panel member raised the issue of pavement parking with regard to the difficulties it caused him and others due to his sight loss. The panel discussed the issue which was then picked up by the students of Hereward College who then took it forward with support from officers, the Chair, and the Cabinet Member Councillor Abdul Khan. The students of Hereward College had now developed and launched a pavement parking initiative with a campaign highlighting the problems all people with disability had due to thoughtless pavement parking. This and other initiatives undertaken by the panel confirmed, the best value of this panel.

DEAP had also supported and publicised the 'near miss' survey of cyclists, skateboarders and mobility scooter users having had near misses with pedestrians as part of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). Over the past year the DEAP had worked very effectively as a conduit for information and discussion about Coventry City Council's aspirations for the City. Members had been consulted on the masterplan of the redevelopment of the train station, bus services, and taxis and more recently Coventry City Centre South redevelopment.

Councillor Thomas attended the meeting with officers and discussed with the Cabinet Member the work of the Panel, representation and inviting members. Councillor Thomas thanked all those who supported the effectiveness of the DEAP.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

- 1) Following the successful format, approve the continuation of the Disability Equality Advisory Panel (DEAP) for a further 3 years from July 2018 to July 2021, to act as a formal advisory panel to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for equalities.**
- 2) Accept and note the DEAP work and achievements as set out in the Report over the last 3 years.**

7. Social Media Protocol for Members

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) which sought approval of the social media protocol, appended to the report and to confirm that it should be shared with all elected members. The report had been considered by the Ethics Committee.

The report noted that social media was a powerful communication and networking tool which had become increasingly part of our everyday life. Social media was used to describe any kind of on-line tool that you could use for sharing information, including blogs, photo sharing, video sharing, social networks, mobile phone applications, texting, digital TV services and collaboration tools. Unlike a telephone conversation or email, it was a broadcast medium meaning messages had the potential to be viewed by a wider range of people than just the intended recipient.

Although it was not a requirement for elected members to use social media to fulfil their job as a councillor, an increasing number did so in an attempt to share information and to give and gauge opinions. As a result, a first-ever social media protocol for Coventry City Council's elected members had been created. It was designed to offer basic help and advice, as well as highlighting good practice and helping to avoid potential pitfalls. The protocol also complemented the general rules under the Code of Conduct for Members. The protocol highlighted potential legal issues when using social media including libel, copyright and data protection. It also raised awareness of how members' use of social media could leave them at risk of falling foul of the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Ethics Committee fully supported the recommendations to the Cabinet Member and further recommended that the Protocol be "launched" with appropriate training sessions provided for all Elected Members. The Committee made the following comments to the Cabinet Member:

- They welcomed the Protocol, recognising the importance of providing guidance for Elected Members
- They commended the officers for the extremely well written and user friendly style of the Protocol
- They indicated that, for some Elected Members, it may be more appropriate to receive the Protocol in a hard rather than electronic version
- They recommended that the Protocol be "launched" with appropriate training sessions provided for Elected Members.
- They requested that a final version of the Protocol be circulated to all Members of the Ethics Committee

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities:

- 1) approve the Social Media Protocol and confirm that it should be shared with all elected members.**
- 2) following the suggestion during consideration by the Ethics Committee, the protocol be "launched" with appropriate training sessions provided for Elected Members.**

8. **Outstanding Issues**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) that contained a list of outstanding issue items that would be submitted to future meetings and summarised the current position in respect of each item.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities approves the dates for future consideration of matters relating to the outstanding issue items listed in the report.

9. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

(Meeting closed at 4.05 pm)