

MINUTES of the meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 September 2010 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors Pauline Tolson (Chair), Diane Revell, Stephen Veryard, Sue Gray, Mike Stone and Steve Liddiard

In attendance: L. Magill – Head of Public Protection
D. Spring – Street Services Manager
S. Reddick – Assistant Waste and Recycling Manager
A. Murphy – Head of Environment
P. Moor – Essex Police
M. Boulter- Principal Democratic Services Officer

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) Interests

No interests were declared.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

7. FLY-TIPPING

The Committee was informed that fly-tipping was tackled every day in Thurrock and though the Council worked to prosecute offenders it was very difficult to achieve this due to offenders not leaving any evidence in the fly-tip to incriminate them. The Council had not prosecuted anyone for fly-tipping this year but two cases were ongoing.

Once Community Protection Officers had visited the fly tip to check and secure any evidence they would work to get the fly tip cleared. Fly-tipping on the street or highway repairable at the public expense was dealt with by the Environment services. Private land owners were responsible for removing fly-tips on their land and the Council would notify them of their obligations to do so. One of the issues around fly tipping was their occurrence in back alleys, which tended to be the responsibility of the surrounding houses (who generally owned the alleyway between them). There were powers to get all the owners to clear this, however the Council take a pragmatic approach to clearance versus the costs of cost recover.

Officers explained that Community Payback (unpaid work, previously known as Community Service) was used to clean the back alleys but

this was on an *ad hoc* basis. It was clarified that people on the community payback programme only cleared fly-tips irregularly (due to their nature) when there had been a referral for the work to be carried out. The offenders could not undertake jobs that the Council employed people to do. Therefore, they could not collect waste bins or clear regular fly-tips on Council land. Officers agreed that the offenders could be utilised more.

Members of the Committee raised a number of ward issues that concerned private landlords and their duties to provide adequate waste facilities that discouraged fly-tipping or littering, as well as issues relating to flats.

Following a question, Officers confirmed that the Council had some covert cameras which were deployed to fly tipping hot spots where appropriate. The Council's performance in relation to fly-tipping was currently in the top grade and this performance was aimed to be maintained by developing technology to allow people to better report incidents.

RESOLVED: that:

- i) **The Committee endorse the Council's approach to dealing with fly-tipping.**
- ii) **The Committee endorse the methods outlined in the report to raise awareness of this approach.**

8. POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS (PCSOs)

The Council match funded 14 PCSO posts. This was a discretionary service that was currently being considered as a budget saving. Chief Inspector Moor explained to the Committee that a PCSO was different to a police officer but the two roles complimented each other well. The PCSO was employed to support the community and be a visible uniformed presence. Their primary role was not to enforce and they were instrumental in visiting youth clubs and community forums. In essence, they were the eyes and ears of the community and their effectiveness and coverage had been improved through the introduction on push bikes.

The performance indicators and acronyms contained in the report were explained to the Committee and Councillors Tolson and Stone spoke of their experiences on their research day into PCSOs. Councillor Stone said the feedback from residents in Grays was fantastic and praised the work of PCSOs. Councillor Tolson explained there was a mixed reaction in the Homesteads ward with people saying they never saw them and other businesses and residents describing the good work the PCSOs had already done.

There was a brief discussion on the moving of PCSOs around the borough. It was explained that PCSOs were attached to a specific area but were sometimes used in other areas across Essex where greater support was needed, for example, during outdoor events or major police operations.

Members were assured that PCSOs from South Ockendon would not be posted inside Lakeside for the Christmas period. Lakeside paid for its own compliment of Police and PCSOs but during Christmas, the police naturally concentrated its efforts on the Lakeside/ West Thurrock area as this was a major area of criminal activity. Regular police officers were posted to this area more than PCSOs but because of a new training regime for new recruits, which delayed them from starting active duty, there would be a need for some PCSOs to be present in the Lakeside area over Christmas. However, this would not be for the entire Christmas period and only in a supporting role to regular officers. During the discussion it was highlighted that Thurrock had a low crime rate compared to the national picture and although Lakeside impacted on figures, it was not as big a problem as public opinion believed.

Some Members expressed their approval of PCSO performance but stated that there should be a closer relationship between the councillors and the PCSOs. The Chief Inspector agreed that councillors should be part of a PCSO's key individual network (KIN). It was generally agreed that young people and the elderly were the people in a community who would interact with a PCSO the most.

In response to a query on why PCSO turnover was high in some areas it was explained that a portion of PCSOs became regular police officers and also there were a few who had gone on maternity leave.

The Chair felt that the PCSOs could do more to enforce laws on dog fouling and littering and that their attendance at public meetings may not serve the community in the best way. The Chair also wondered whether it was possible to increase the powers of the PCSO to include fining people for not wearing seatbelts. The Chief Inspector responded that the PCSOs were only given certain powers by the law and they could not be changed, however, he agreed that it would be helpful to increase PCSO powers. Essex PCSOs had most of the powers allowed under law. In respect of PCSOs attending meetings, to which the Chair highlighted that PCSOs had attended 65 community meetings in August, the Chief Inspector stated that the PCSOs did whatever the community wanted them to do and if that was to issue more fines, then they would do that. It was suggested that the PCSOs could perhaps have a more structured work schedule that included patrol plans and targeted actions in defined geographical areas.

In relation to public spaces it was added that Essex Police had successfully piloted a scheme in Ockendon to prevent littering and anti-

social behaviour in parks which would be extended to the rest of Thurrock.

The Chair asked a number of ward specific issues relating to Corringham police station and the use of scramble bikes. It was responded that only the front office hours of Corringham police station had been reduced. This reduction had little impact on the reporting of crime as the majority of this work came through telephone and email, rather than face to face contact at the station. The use of PCSOs to tackle scramble bikes was improved since push bikes were introduced but this remained an issue for the police across Thurrock.

A brief discussion was had on the viability of the Council maintaining the funding for PCSOs. The Chief Inspector speculated that Thurrock was a key area in Essex that the Police would not be inclined to reduce frontline services but budget pressures were a reality. The Committee generally agreed that PCSOs were useful in their communities, even though they were utilised in different ways across Thurrock.

RESOLVED: That:

- i) The committee recognise the important role PCSOs play in the community and where possible this service should remain.**
- ii) Following the budget consultation, if PCSO funding is to be reduced, then the Council and Police work together to ensure that what limited resources are available are used to the best effect.**
- iii) If PCSOs are reduced due to future budget decisions that a staggered reduction in posts is undertaken so as to limit the impact.**

9. RECYCLING AND WASTE SERVICE- REVIEW OF THE THREE BIN ROLL-OUT PROJECT

The Committee's attention was drawn to the conclusions of the Member led review into the three bin roll-out. Councillor Liddiard, who was part of the review, highlighted that feedback on the three bins had been incredibly good although he noted that a number of residents complained about the bins but not in a formal or official capacity to the Council. He also stressed the importance of residents not using bags in the blue bins as this would cost the Council a lot of money through the waste contract. It was clarified that the issue was not that bags were the problem but that the bags were being used to hide waste that should not be in the blue bins.

The Committee considered efficiencies within the waste collection service and were informed of a number of options including collecting residual waste every fortnight as opposed to weekly, introducing

alternative collection and suspending brown bin collections during the winter. Members felt that if fortnightly collections were introduced then it should only apply to residual waste. One Member highlighted that bigger families filled all their waste bins all the time so efficiencies might not be so easy to implement. The Committee agreed that encouraging residents not to put their bins out if they were not full was a good idea as it would save time and money. One Member suggested getting residents to volunteer to have their bin collections reduced if they did not require weekly collections.

It was clarified that efficiency savings in waste collection would have an impact on agency staff and the number of vehicles needed to provide the service.

RESOLVED: that:

- i) The conclusions of the review be noted.**
- ii) The Committee agree that efficiency savings are possible within the service and that if made, a good service could be maintained.**

10. WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That:

- i) A report on Community Payback be received at November's meeting.**
- ii) DAAT Update be provided to the Committee as a briefing note.**
- iii) Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy be removed from the work programme.**

The meeting finished at 9.18pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact

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