

MINUTES of the meeting of Community Services Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday 26 February 2010 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor TM James (Chairman)
Councillor KG Grumbley (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: DJ Benjamin, DW Greenow, KS Guthrie, B Hunt, RH Smith and RV Stockton

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors GFM Dawe, BA Durkin and MAF Hubbard.

46. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor R H Smith	6 – Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters	Personal, as Council Representative on the West Mercia Police Authority; Member, Local Neighbourhood Watch; Campaigner for Road Safety on the A49.
Councillor B Hunt	6 – Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters	Personal, as Council Representative on the West Mercia Police Authority

48. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes for the meeting held on 7 December 2009, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

49. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

There were no suggestions from members of the public.

50. SCRUTINY OF CRIME AND DISORDER MATTERS

(Councillor Smith and Councillor Hunt declared a personal interest)

The Committee received a report on a number of issues in response to the duty on the Council to scrutinise crime and disorder matters.

The Committee Manager (Scrutiny) reported that there were three main issues that concerned the Committee in its role as the designated Committee with responsibility for scrutinising the work of the Crime and Disorder Partnership known as Safer Herefordshire. These were the question of co-option of members onto the Committee, the development of both a protocol with Safer Herefordshire and a work programme for the Committee.

He went on to say that under the Regulations governing the Committee, co-option was currently limited to certain specific groups. As reflected in paragraph 14 of the report, the guidance stated that one member of the Crime and Disorder Committee should be a member of the Police Authority. Both the Council's current representatives on the Police Authority served on Community Services Scrutiny Committee, and it was considered that this therefore met the expectation in the guidance. It was not proposed that there should be any further co-option. The Constitution provided that the Committee could involve people in its work and invite people to provide evidence as seen fit.

The Committee Manager (Scrutiny) went on to say that the Home Office guidance for the Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Matters suggested that consideration should be given to developing a protocol which outlined the mutual expectations of the Committee and Safer Herefordshire. A draft was appended which reflected the provisions in the legislation and guidance.

He went on to comment on the development of the work programme for the scrutiny of crime and disorder matters and highlighted that the Committee should include in its work programme a list of issues which it needed to cover during the year. This should be agreed in consultation with the relevant partners on the community safety partnership. The Council's Constitution contained provisions that required the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to oversee and approve the work programmes of the scrutiny committees. It had therefore been proposed that the Review Group should submit a proposed work programme to the next meeting for recommendation to the OSC.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

A Member made a number of comments, that:

- there was no provision for inclusion of the public in this process, and as this had been an issue for this Committee, suggested that a member of the public or of the Neighbourhood Watch Association be considered for co-option.
- that there should be greater emphasis on holding the Partnership to account, rather than individual partners.
- that he believed that the timescale for receiving reports back from the partners, as laid out in the draft protocol, was unrealistic, and suggested that this section should be qualified by saying that reports would generally be expected within 15 days.
- it was inappropriate that an informal Review Group should conduct the business of crime and disorder reduction partnership scrutiny, and that it should be undertaken by the Community Services Committee as a whole.

The Vice Chairman replied that he believed that it was more efficient that the Work Programme for crime and disorder should be carried forward by the Committee, and that a small sub group would be more capable of carrying out the task. A regular Agenda item to update the Committee on progress would be included on future Committee Agendas.

Superintendent Purcell replied that, as far as the role of the Police was concerned, the Committee would be provided with as much support as would be possible. He did not believe that the timescales for reports were too aspirational, but it should be borne in mind that any requests that involved discussions at regional level might take longer.

Resolved:

That

- (a) It was agreed that, subject to point (b) below, there would be no formal co-option in respect to crime and disorder matters, and that the Committee should invite other people to participate in its work as circumstances required;
 - (b) Council be recommended to approve the co-option of a member of the public to the Committee;
 - (c) the protocol for the scrutiny of crime and disorder matters as appended was approved in principle, subject to the agreement of Safer Herefordshire; and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic) was authorised to finalise the protocol after agreement with Safer Herefordshire and in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee;
 - (c) Councillors KG Grumbley, KS Guthrie and RH Smith should be appointed to serve on the Review Group and a further member would be sought and approved in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman;
 - (d) Councillor KG Grumbley should be appointed as Chairman of the Review Group;
- and;
- (e) a proposed work programme be submitted to the Committee's next meeting for approval.

51. THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY AND DRUGS PARTNERSHIP (SAFER HEREFORDSHIRE)

The Committee received a report which provided an introduction to the Safer Herefordshire strategic assessment process and performance for 2009 and presented the priorities for 2010-11 as agreed by the Safer Herefordshire Strategy Group.

The Partnership Manager reported that Safer Herefordshire (formerly Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership) was formed as a result of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, which was later amended by the 2002 Police Reform Act. The Partnership undertook regular reviews to identify concerns and local priorities and monitor performance against both local and government targets. The Partnership also facilitated multi-agency working groups to ensure a joined up approach for tackling crime and disorder issues across Herefordshire.

The Safer Herefordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) priorities for 2008-11 were laid out in the report, and were linked to a number of other indicators in the Corporate Plan that were reported to the Committee. Some of the additional targets were yet to be finalised as Safer Herefordshire was awaiting data from national information systems and some partner organisations.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- In reply to a question from a Member, the Consultant (Health Protection) said that a social marketing campaign would be implemented in order to help reduce drug abuse and engage with drug users. It was noted that there was capacity to meet the demand for detox and rehabilitation and there were a number of facilities available for care in the County which ranged from the drugs advisory service (DASH) in Commercial Street, Hereford, detox beds in the Stonebow Unit, to residential rehabilitation and community detox, which kept people in their own community and was usually the best way forward. The Service was regularly

performance managed by the National Treatment Agency. The numbers of people going into rehab in the County were in single figures, and there was a stringent process in order to ensure that those that did were committed to the process before entering into it.

- In reply to a further question, Superintendent Purcell said that the already low level of crime in the County was still going down. There were no more than fifty prolific offenders in the County, and the success rate of crime reduction compared favourably with the rest of the Country.

Resolved:

That

- (a) **The strategic direction and performance of Safer Herefordshire be noted; and;**
- (b) **Those areas of activity pertinent to the Partnership are used as the basis of reporting to the Committee.**

52. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted its Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be approved and reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

The meeting ended at 11.25 am

CHAIRMAN