



Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities held at the  
Bourges/Viersen Room - Town Hall  
on 11 January 2016

Present: Councillors: Harrington (Chairman), Murphy (Vice-Chairman), Sanders, Rush, Okonkowski, Stokes and J R Fox.

Also Present:	Henry Clark	Independent Co-opted Member
	Keith Lievesley	Independent Co-opted Member
	Joe Dobson	Independent Co-opted Member
	Philip Nuttall	Independent Co-opted Member

Officers in Attendance:	Adrian Chapman	Service Director for Adult Services and Communities
	Karl Bowden	Deputy Manager Safer Peterborough Partnership
	James Collingridge	Amey Partnership Manager
	Debbie McQuade	Assistant Director Adult Operations
	Gary Perkins	Head of School Improvement
	Karen S Dunleavy	Democratic Services Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brown. Councillor Rush was in attendance as substitute.

**2. Declaration of Interest and Whipping Declarations**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping declarations.

**2. Minutes of Meeting Held on 3 November 2015**

The minutes of the meeting were approved a true and accurate record.

**4. Environmental Aspect of Rural Areas**

The Deputy Manager Safer Peterborough Partnership introduced the report which provided the Commission with an overview of the activities that could be delivered in the rural areas of Peterborough to ensure that environmental issues within the rural community remained relatively low. The report described what levels of environmental pollution existed, what activities were in existence in order to tackle the issues and explored some sustainable alternatives that would empower the rural community. Key issues highlighted within the report included:

- Fly Tipping Issues and Activities;
- General ASB Issues and Activities;
- Vehicle Nuisance ASB Issues and Activities;
- Current Key Activities;
- Sustainable Alternative Activities which included:
  - Rural Watch Patrols;

- Wildlife cameras; and
- Rural Specials.

The Commission was asked to prioritise the schemes contained in the report or identify alternative schemes. Officers would then develop the business cases for these schemes further to inform a debate at a future Commission meeting ahead of any recommendations being made.

Questions and comments were raised around the following areas:

- Members asked where the 76 cases of hare-coursing incidents had occurred and if it had been a specific issue to the rural areas? *The Deputy Manager, Safer Peterborough Partnership advised that he believed that the figures related to the wider Peterborough area.*
- Members asked which areas of Peterborough would receive support of the special constables and what areas would be covered? *The Deputy Manager, Safer Peterborough Partnership confirmed that special constables would be deployed across wider Peterborough area;*
- Members asked who the members of the Police Service Volunteers were? *The Deputy Manager, Safer Peterborough Partnership confirmed that the members consisted of community residents that undertook similar responsibilities to a Speed Watch scheme. The Police Service Volunteers also had use of a CCTV van, which had acted as a deterrent.*
- Members asked whether the 54 incidents of fly tipping in the rural detailed within the report were accurate? *The Deputy Manager, Safer Peterborough Partnership confirmed that this would be checked and confirmation provided to the Commission.*
- Members also commented whether it would be possible to consider CCTV covert monitoring in rural fly-tipping hot spot areas?
- Members asked about the progress to introduce the use of covert cameras placed in coke can tins. *The Amey Partnership Manager confirmed that Amey were working with a company over the coke can covert camera technology. Members were also advised that the Council was required to adhere to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) regulations in respect of the use of covert monitoring activities.*
- Members commented that money could be saved in the long run if covert camera monitoring was utilised more by the Authority, which would act as a deterrent.
- Members commented on the remit of the report and commented that there were a number other environmental impacts, which included noise and traffic issues that had not been highlighted as an issue. *The Deputy Manager Safer Peterborough Partnership confirmed that the report alluded to the impact of ASBs and other environmental impact issues, such as rowdy behaviour. The Service Director for Adult Services and Communities also advised that a future report would encompass all the issues and comments highlighted by Members.*
- Members raised concerns about the number of fly tipping incidents in dykes and why these had not been monitored and asked why these had not been cleared by Amey on a regular basis? *The Amey Partnership Manager confirmed that fly-tipping incidents would be cleared from Council land and that there had been some issues experienced with health and safety for some teams undertaking the tasks.*
- Members raised concerns over animal cruelty and commented that they were glad that the police were tackling the issues.
- Members asked how the police resources had been reconfigured in rural areas and what the impact would be following the restructure by the Authority and Police. *The Deputy Manager Safer Peterborough Partnership advised Members that the restructure of the policing in Peterborough and the capacity on how they deal with rural issues had remained the same for the police force.*
- Members asked about the use of cameras to detect or deter fire crimes. *The Deputy Manager Safer Peterborough Partnership advised that the fire service deployed cameras*

*to detect arson crime, however, the farmers would usually tell people in the community, which had also been a deterrent. Members were also advised that the cameras had helped to deter fly-tipping issues.*

- Members asked about the wildlife cameras and how they worked? *The Deputy Manager Safer Peterborough Partnership advised that the wildlife camera had a motion sensor installed that would detect and capture movement, which was aimed to protect and detect as opposed to a covert camera deployed by the fire service which would detect and take pictures.*
- Members asked whether there had been an option to increase litter bins in rural areas in order to act as a deterrent for fly-tipping issues? *The Amey Partnership Manager advised that litter bins were owned by the council which had incorporate a reoccurring cost to empty as part of the maintenance contract. Members were also advised that there may be scope to review the location of bins in rural areas to place them in a more effective location in order to deter fly-tipping.*

## **ACTION AGREED**

The Commission noted the report and agreed for the Service Director Adult Services and Communities to provide a briefing note on how many covert cameras were used in rural areas to detail:

1. How many times the covert cameras had been deployed;
2. How many convictions had been sanctioned as a result of covert camera deployment; and
3. Who had controlled where the covert cameras were deployed.

## **The Commission Also Agreed:**

That the Amey Partnership Manager would:

1. Check whether the figure of 54 incidences of fly-tipping within the rural area was accurate;
2. Compile and send a letter to the Highways Agency to ask what their plans were to tackle the littering issues in laybys and dykes maintained by them within the Wansford area; and
3. Investigate if all the Authority's maintained dykes were being regularly checked and cleared by Amey, the Authority's maintenance contractor.

That the Deputy Manager Safer Peterborough Partnership would:

1. Provide confirmation on the number of hare-coursing incidents and crimes reported in rural areas.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Commission recommended that the areas of priority for the Alternative Activities Business Case should focus on the following areas:

1. Rural Watch Patrols;
2. The implementation of the Wildlife Camera proposals; and
3. Incorporate measures to be put in places to improve environmental aspects within rural areas, such as the litter and fly-tipping issues currently being experienced.

The Commission also recommended that consideration be given to implement within the forthcoming proposals for the Joint Community Enforcement Team, a permanent resource for a dedicated Rural Warden to patrol rural areas.

## 5. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Head of School Improvement introduced the report to the Commission, which outlined the primary and secondary examination results for 2015 and reviewed how the schools were currently graded by Ofsted.

The Commission was asked to review the information presented and request further explanation / information if required.

Questions and comments were raised around the following areas:

- Members thanked the Officer for the report and commented that they expected the education attainment for rural areas to be higher in the future.
- Members raised concerns over the loss of Eye and Thorney children's and preschool centres and what had happened to ensure that the early years education provision would be covered in the future.
- Members asked for clarification over the variations in figures for Barnack School and queried whether the education attainment and progress figures were valid? *The Head of School Improvement confirmed that the figures had to be taken in context and that all aspects of a school's circumstances were taken into consideration.*
- Members felt that the performance data within the report for some rural schools could be misleading to parents wishing to move into any rural area and want to choose a perspective school for their child. *The Head of School Improvement confirmed that he would advise any parent to visit a prospective school to see how the teachers operated and not just base their decision on performance figures, as the variation in data from one year group to another could be misleading.*
- Members asked the Officer to explain what EAL referred to on page 18 appendix 3 of the report. *The Head of School Improvement advised that EAL related to the proportion of children, according to census information, would speak English as an Additional Language.*

7.56pm at this point Councillor Sanders joined the meeting.

- Members commented that it was advantageous to the success of a school where there had been long standing teachers employed.
- Members asked whether there were additional teaching staff to support children with learning difficulties? *The Head of School Improvement confirmed that Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils would attract additional funding which would accommodate their individual needs.*
- Members asked for clarification over how the averages in the report had been calculated? *The Head of School Improvement confirmed that the average for attainment was a score achieved by children across the cohort, so the calculation was based on all outcomes divided by the number of children in the cohort. An additional factor taken into account when calculating a school's attainment level, was whether children had made the expected rate of progress. It was also confirmed that the national average was ascertained using the same methodology.*
- Members commented that there seemed to be very little opportunity for teachers wishing to develop their career to a management level. *The Head of School Improvement advised Members that there were varied opportunities for teachers to advance in their career, remain in the classroom and receive the respective higher pay grade.*

### ACTION AGREED

The Commission reviewed the information presented and requested further information on the following actions:

1. The Head of School Improvement would provide a briefing note on what had been introduced to mitigate under performance figures following the loss for the early years education provision at Eye and The Duke of Bedford Primary School within Thorney area; and
2. The Head of School Improvement would provide figures on the teacher vacancies within rural schools.

## 6. CARERS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AND THE CARE ACT

The Assistant Director Adult Operations presented an update to the Commission on the Council's responsibilities, which related to carers within the Care Act 2014, and to update on the progress so far. The report also outline some detail around the quality of life for carers in rural wards as reported within the bi-annual carers survey carried out in late 2014 prior to the Care Act implementation in April 2015.

Questions and comments were raised around the following areas:

- Members asked how carers in rural areas had been identified as carers? *The Assistant Director Adult Operations confirmed to Members that carers were usually a relative or friend and was not the same classification as someone that provided support through a voluntary organisation. The service would encourage people to put themselves forward if they were caring for a friend or relative.*
- Members asked whether there had been one forum for carers or whether there were different forums that people from a specific rural area could contribute or subscribe to? *The Assistant Director Adult Operations confirmed that the access for carer forums was something that had been undertaken with a voluntary sector organisation to take the opportunity forward and discuss whether there could be a forum set up locally to specific rural areas. Members were advised that there had also been a carers forum that met on a quarterly basis at the Fleet Community Centre.*
- Members commented that most carers were female relatives or children and asked whether there had been any progress made to provide cover for one another in order to prevent the isolation felt by some carers in rural areas? *The Assistant Director advised that there were 4000 eligible care users and the team had actively encouraged them to identify their carers in order to arrange emergency support and implement a plan to provide a carer with respite cover, rolling respite cover or a carer sitting service as required.*
- Members asked whether any cooperative scheme existed to enable three or four carers to access a single payment package to share care duties? *The Assistant Director advised Members that this had been an idea that the Authority could explore through the direct payment route. However, some adult care users were reluctant to accept care from outside their normal routine.*
- Members asked about the statutory survey of all carers and what period the figures had covered? *The Assistant Director of Adult Operations advised that the figures had been from April 2015 and was reflective of the number of responses received.*
- Members commented that the results of the carer survey implied that there could be a misrepresentation of data and asked whether this had been due to the lack of surveys completed by carers in each rural area? *The Assistant Director advised that the survey was in its early stages and the team would work to understand what common themes were in relation to each rural area.*
- Members commented that the information for carers could be included in a Parish Council (PC) newsletters. *The Assistant Director Adult Operations advised that it was intended to work with PCs to engage with them to identify carers in rural areas.*
- Members asked whether there had been an overarching picture and a reoccurring theme of where carers had struggled to look after their elderly relatives, such as in times of inclement weather? *The Assistant Director Adult Operations confirmed that there had been a struggle to identify the issues within the survey in the most appropriate way.*

*Members were also advised that if there were issues such as inclement weather or where a carer becomes unwell, the team had tried to promote the support available through the carers pack.*

- Members asked whether there were reasons for the poor outcome of the carers survey for Northborough and whether there were reasons behind the results? *The Assistant Director confirmed that the low response had been incorporated into an action plan to explore what the potential issues were.*

#### **ACTION AGREED**

The Commission considered the information provided and commented on how carers in rural communities might be best supported both within those communities and more widely.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Commission recommended that the Adult Social Care team work with Parish Councillors to consider how local carer forums for rural areas could be established.

8.25pm At this point Councillor Sanders left the meeting

### **7. Forward Plan of Executive Decisions**

The Commission received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, which contained key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the forthcoming month. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Commission's work programme.

Members commented that a number of decisions due for December 2015 had moved to January 2016 and concerns were raised about deadlines moving.

#### **ACTION AGREED**

The Commission noted the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and requested further information and to be kept informed on the following:

- Review of Emergency Stopping Places – KEY/25JAN16/02
- Real Time Passenger Information – KEY/10JUL15/02

### **8. Work Programme**

Members considered the Commission's Work Programme for 2015/16 and discussed possible items for inclusion.

#### **AGREED ACTION**

The Commission noted and agreed the 2015/2016 work programme and asked for the following to be included:

- A report on the alternative governance system to outline the impact for the Commission and future of its Co-opted Members.
- To be kept informed on the progress of the Peterborough Local Plan, which would be placed on the Work Programme for 2016/17 to monitor.

### **9. Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair advised the Commission that the next meeting was scheduled for 7 March 2016.

*The meeting began at 7.00pm and ended at 8:40 pm*

CHAIRMAN