

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE
BOURGES & VIERSEN ROOMS, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

15 JUNE 2011

Present: Councillors Todd (Chairman), S Day, G Casey, C Burton, JR Fox, and M Jamil

Co-Opted Member: Ansar Ali – Cambridgeshire Police Authority

Also Present: Councillor Sandford Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Officers in Attendance: Adrian Chapman Head of Neighbourhood Services
Sharon Malia Housing Programmes Manager
DCI Gary Goose Community Safety Strategic Manager
Leonie McCarthy Social Inclusion Manager
Peter Gell Strategic Regulatory Services Manager
Paulina Ford Senior Governance Officer, Scrutiny
Amy Brown Solicitor

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillor Simons.

2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Declarations

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2011

The minutes of the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 March 2011 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Call In of any Cabinet, Cabinet Member or Key Officer Decisions

There were no requests for Call-in to consider.

5. Strong and Supportive Communities: Introduction, Overview and Work Programme

The Head of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report and informed the Committee that the report would be supported by additional information in the form of a presentation. Officers attending with the Head of Neighbourhood Services gave the Committee information on their various services areas which included key issues, achievements and priorities for 2011/2012.

Key areas of the presentation covered:

- National context including the Localism Bill.
- Local context including
 - the Single Delivery Plan which consisted of Seven programmes of work:

1. Creating jobs through growth and improved skills and education
2. Supporting the most vulnerable families and tackling causes of poverty
3. Safeguarding adults and children
4. Helping people and organisations live more healthy and sustainable lives and reducing energy consumption
5. Empowering people and creating cohesive communities
6. Reducing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour
7. Using our resources more efficiently and effectively

Members were informed that Programmes 5, 6 and 7 fell within the remit of the Committee.

- Neighbourhood Management which included:
 - Tackling quality of life issues in communities, the delivery of which was led by Neighbourhood Managers.
 - Housing, regeneration, growth, environment, cohesion, social capital, service design, value for money, community safety, ASB, education, employment, community facilities and many more.

The priorities for 2011-2012 for each service area were:

Safer and Stronger Peterborough Team:

- Implement the Neighbourhood Committee review outcomes
- Deal with the outcomes of the 'Citizen Power' programme review
- Develop the integrated approach to offender management (tackling those small number of offenders who commit the most crime)
- Continue the work in making roads and users of roads safer

Strategic Housing Team:

- Homelessness Strategy
- Peterborough Homes Allocation Policy
- Supporting People Commissioning Strategy
- Empty Homes Strategy

Regulatory Services Team:

- Tackling age restricted sales (e.g. alcohol, tobacco, fireworks, knives etc)
- Rutland CC Shared Service delivery
- Verge parking

Cohesion Team:

- Implementing a new community cohesion strategy focussed on:
 - Tackling hate crime and reducing tensions in the city
 - Engaging young people who are not in education, employment or training
 - Improving access and take up of services in deprived neighbourhoods
 - Promoting better understanding and harmony between Travellers, Gypsies and the wider community

Social Inclusion Team:

- Financial Inclusion
- Voluntary and community sector
- Gypsies and Travellers

City Centre Team:

- Investigate the feasibility of creating a BID (Business Improvement District) for Peterborough City Centre, collating evidence of whether or not a BID could work for Peterborough

- Secure income/sponsorship for city centre activities. Continue to build on established relationships and capitalise on new leads
- Remodel Women's Enterprise Centre, transforming current offer to an Enterprise Centre accessible to all, this will include a procurement exercise to source new provider
- Olympic 2012 - Produce in partnership with City stakeholders an Olympic 2012 campaign

Suggested topics for the Committee to Scrutinise were:

- Progress and performance in delivering relevant Single Delivery Plan priorities:
 - Empowering people and creating cohesive communities
 - Reducing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour
- Neighbourhood Committee review outcomes
- 'Citizen Power' programme review
- Integrated offender management implementation
- Road safety strategy
- Community cohesion strategy
- Homelessness strategy
- Peterborough Homes Allocation policy
- Supporting People commissioning strategy
- Empty homes strategy
- Financial Inclusion
- Work with the Voluntary and community sector
- Services for Gypsies and Travellers
- Tackling age restricted sales (e.g. alcohol, tobacco, fireworks, knives etc)
- Rutland CC Shared Service delivery
- Verge parking
- Investigate the feasibility of creating a BID (Business Improvement District) for Peterborough City Centre
- Secure income/sponsorship for city centre activities

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Members requested a copy of the new guide that had been published on the Big Society.
- Why is delivery across the neighbourhoods different across the City? *There were several reasons. The length of time it had taken to recruit some neighbourhood managers and the fact that some parts of the City enjoyed better engagement than others. The Rural issues had also dominated some areas but had now been resolved.*
- The Council do not have any housing stock therefore how do the Council influence and control housing. *There was a long history of contract with Cross Keys Homes and therefore the Council were able to influence decisions.*
- Was the Citizens Power Programme a genuine review? *Yes there was a core team undergoing the review and it was an in depth review.*
- Members commended the work undergone by Neighbourhood Managers and felt that they had made a real difference across the City.
- The job of Neighbourhood Committees was to listen to people. With only a few people attending how would this be achieved? *There would need to be a significant cultural change and this would be achieved through the Localism Bill. Change was starting to happen and the first stage of this was the development of the Community Plans.*
- Members wanted to see a better relationship between Councillors and the different Housing Associations. Once a house was taken up by a new tenant the relationship between Councillors and the constituent ended and Councillors had no influence after that point. *The Head of Neighbourhood Services suggested setting up a forum to resolve this. This would be discussed at the next meeting of the Operations Board which consisted of the representatives from the main social landlord associations within the*

City. The Head of Neighbourhood Services would report back to the Committee on the outcome of any discussions.

- *Did the Fire Service and the Police share information and data? Yes the Fire Service and Police were both signed up to the data sharing protocol.*
- *Members raised concerns about the night time economy and the number of off licences. It had been noted that in one particular area of Peterborough there had been an increase from 16 off licences to 73. It was apparent that residents were unaware of the licensing process. There were issues with licensed premises and under age drinking. A lot of work was being carried out to address these issues. The problems of Anti Social Behaviour relating to alcohol abuse and the saturation of off licences in one area were being looked into and were being taken seriously. The Strategic Regulatory Services Manager advised that the legislation for licensing was that providing the applicant met the criteria and there were no objections against the application the applicant would receive the licence.*
- *Were there any areas of crime that had increased? Each of the three policing areas in the City had seen reductions in crime during 2010 and there had been no specific areas of crime that had experienced an increase.*
- *What were the Council doing to advertise the Care and Repair Service? The service had been widely advertised. It had been advertised on the Council website and the Care and Repair Manager had attended lots of groups of elderly people, work was also being done in close partnership with adult social care and the occupational therapy service. It had been a very successful service.*
- *Was the trend up or down with regard to the number of empty properties. It had remained static at about 700 properties that had been empty for about six months. A new officer had recently been recruited to address this and would be bringing the Empty Homes Strategy to the Committee for scrutiny later in the year.*
- *Officers had mentioned that work was being done to promote energy conservation but no mention had been made about the Governments new initiative Green New Deal. Had there been any discussions with the Department of Climate Change and Energy about this. Nothing had been done yet as the detail around the Green New Deal was still very sketchy but it was being monitored closely.*
- *Was there a database for graffiti so that tags could be identified? Yes the police were aware of known tags.*
- *Do you have control over the water quality in Cathedral Square and is this checked. No this was the responsibility of Vivacity.*
- *Verge parking was an issue but another issue was around city centre area parking where there were more cars than spaces. The houses around the City were not built to accommodate the number of cars that people now had. The solution was not just about putting in traffic restrictions it was more about a local affordable design solution.*
- *Had the down turn in the Economy over the past few years given rise to an increase in rogue traders? Yes there had been an increase in rogue traders. Internet rogue trading was one particular source that had increased and this area was being concentrated on this year. The Trading Standards team worked closely with a range of services both locally, regionally and nationally to tackle rogue traders. There was an Intel Database in place locally and across the region.*
- *Members noted that grass verge parking was on the increase and in particular vehicles for sale were being parked on grass verges. There was a need to work more creatively with the various service areas and local residents to identify offenders. The Licensing, Business Regulation and Enforcement teams which included parking enforcement were now working together in the same service area which would allow improved working to resolve these issues.*
- *Members requested that a report on Grass Verge Parking be brought to the Committee at a future date.*
- *Members raised the issue of irresponsible dog owners and dogs being allowed off their leads. Dog Control Orders were being looked into and a report would be brought to the Committee at a future date.*

- The Social Inclusion Manager informed the Committee that there would be a Conference held in the City in July to tackle poverty.
- Members felt that there was a lot of fear within the Voluntary Sector about the reduction in their funding. *The Social Inclusion Manager advised that going forward she would be working with the various groups and getting them to work together to look at ways of sharing their resources and look at innovative ways of using the limited resources they had.*

ACTION AGREED

- i. That the following reports be brought to the Committee at a future meeting:
 - Grass Verge Parking
 - Dog Control Orders
- ii. Members to be provided with a copy of the new guide that had been published on the Big Society.
- iii. The Head of Neighbourhood Services to look into setting up a forum to engage with Housing Associations and Councillors to promote better working relationships. The idea to be taken to the next meeting of the Operations Board for consideration.

6. Review of 2010/2011 and Work Programme for 2011/2012

The report provided information on the work undertaken by the Committee during 2010/2011 and recommendations made. The Committee were asked to identify items for monitoring during 2011/2012 and any new items for the work programme.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Councillor Burton requested that there be a standing item on the agenda for an update report on Neighbourhood Committees.
- Members agreed that as a large number of items had been identified for Scrutiny during the presentation from the Head of Neighbourhood Services and his team that all suggested items for the work programme should be discussed at the next Group Representatives meeting.

ACTION AGREED

That a list of suggested topics highlighted for inclusion into the work programme for Scrutiny by the Committee be brought to the next Group Representatives meeting to discuss which items should be included in the 2011/2012 work programme.

12. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Committee received the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan, containing key decisions that the Leader of the Council anticipated the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would make during the course of the following four months. Members were invited to comment on the Plan and, where appropriate, identify any relevant areas for inclusion in the Committee's work programme.

ACTION AGREED

The Committee noted the Forward Plan and agreed that there were no items for further consideration.

The meeting began at 7.00 and ended at 9.45pm

CHAIRMAN