

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 10th January, 2013.

Present: Councillors Minhas (Chair), Bains, Bal, Carter, Dar, Plenty, Wright (Vice-Chair), Conroy and Royal

Non-Voting Co-optees: Terry Conroy (Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents) and Vivianne Royal (Customer Senate)

Also present under Rule 30: Councillors Sohail Munawar and James Swindlehurst

Apologies for Absence: Councillor O'Connor and Sohal

PART 1

79. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bal stated that his daughter was an employee of the Council.

80. Minutes of the last meeting held on 15 November 2012

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 15 November 2012 were approved as a correct record.

81. Member Questions

Councillor Wright submitted three questions, with responses circulated at the meeting:

Question – Why does the ‘green light’ at 30mph not work anymore?

Response – The signal co-ordination when it was first implemented in 2010 was to look solely at peak periods i.e. a.m. eastbound and p.m. westbound. Outside of these times, specifically the late evening period, the signals have reverted to an all red phase and are then activated by vehicle detection. It is possible that at some of these junctions there has been a detector fault resulting in longer than expected delays. However, in short-term we will look at improving the staging so that regardless of a fault the signal timing will be quicker.

Question – What improvement plan has been set up for Walpole Road?

Response – The Council does not currently have the funds to make the changes at this location nor is there the need to alter the junction for improving traffic flow. Therefore at this stage we do not anticipate that this project will move forward in the near future.

Question – What impact has the implementation of temporary traffic lights on Tuns Lane made?

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Response – The part-time signals on Cippenham Lane at the junction of the Copthorne Roundabout have proven to be successful in terms of reducing queues on the A4 from the town centre. Surveys prior to the implementation indicated that the journey time from the town centre was around 20 minutes in the peak period and since implementing the part-time signals this journey time has been reduced by 6-7 minutes. The Council is now looking at further changes to reduce this time further.

Resolved – that the meeting of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel scheduled for March 2013 will be held to discuss the issue traffic congestion along the major routes in Slough, using the following terms of reference circulated at the meeting.

82. The Work of the Safer Slough Partnership

Louise Asby, Community Safety Manager introduced the report through a presentation, setting out the role of the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP), its aims and priorities, the work it had done to reduce crime across Slough, and the challenges it faces going forward. Detective Inspector Andy Shearwood, Slough Local Police Area representative was also in attendance.

The Panel questioned the reactive nature of the SSP target around maintaining the level of all crime at 16,759 and whether setting this target at the average level of crime between 2007 and 2012 would allow for the level of crime in 2013 to rise and the target still be met. Officers stressed the importance of setting realistic targets, but agreed that the wording of the target could be misleading and would be reviewed; but also confirmed that the level of crime was reducing year on year and this was the continued aim for the SSP.

The Panel discussed how we were performing nationally and against our statistical neighbours. Officers confirmed that in terms of the Thames Valley, the work in Slough was achieving above the force average for All Crime and Stealing but below average for Violent Crime (with injury) and Sexual Offences. When comparing performance against the Most Similar Group (MSG), the reduction in All Crime, Stealing, Violent Crime and Vehicle Crime and Burglary exceeds the MSG average.

The Panel considered whether the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010, which ranked approximately 40 of Slough's 78 Lower Super Output Areas as ranking with the top 10% for crime deprivation could provide any evidence of performance; but noted that this data, published in 2010, was from 2008 and therefore more recent data may provide a more accurate current picture through hotspot mapping and tasking.

Members raised the issue of Asian gold theft, and were informed that the level of this particular type of crime in Slough was similar to levels in other towns such as Ipswich, Reading or Trafford. Intelligence had provided assistance in combating this issue through allowing for the targeting of resources, a method used successfully by the SSP across all areas of crime in Slough.

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The Panel also discussed the issue of under-reporting of domestic abuse, and the programmes being put in place to drive reporting levels up.

The Panel questioned why the Thames Valley had half the officer levels of the London Metropolitan Police Force, and was informed that resource allocations were made based on crime levels and population, and lobbying was taking place with the Home Office looking at the similarities between Slough and the London Boroughs. The more limited resources placed more emphasis on focusing resources for maximum impact, something that the SSP and Police had been successful at. The issue was not purely about staffing numbers, but smart use of resources, and this approach meant that the levels of crime in Slough were going in the right direction.

Resolved – to note the report.

83. Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour in Slough

Louise Asby, Community Safety Manager, introduced the report setting out the issue of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Slough and the Safer Slough Partnership's actions to combat it.

The Panel noted that historical work to encourage reporting had led to a rise in the levels of reported ASB, but that this initial rise should settle down. Members were concerned, that while reporting numbers were increasing, there was still a lack of awareness specifically around the ASB Hotline, and that more needed to be done to reach those who most needed help.

Resolved – to recommend to the Cabinet that it direct officers to initiate another campaign to advertise the Anti-Social Behaviour Hotline and a budget to be identified for this purpose.

84. Member Call-In: Bus Station Communications

John Rice, Assistant Director for Regeneration and Estates, accompanied by Joe Carter, Head of Transport, Kate Pratt, Communications Manager and Councillor James Swindlehurst, Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal, introduced the report setting out the response to Councillor Plenty's call-in about the adequacy of communications relating to the bus station project.

The overriding theme of the call-in looked at why there had been a level of surprise at the outside nature of the new bus station facility, and whether more could have been done through consultation, use of the Citizen newspaper or communication with Members throughout the process.

The Panel was informed that a public exhibition had taken place in the Queensmere Centre, which had included a model of the proposed bus station, with pictures included in the Citizen newspaper, on the hoardings surrounding the site and on the outside of the old bus station. It was recognised that advertising inside the old bus station was not made use of as well as a lack of

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follow up articles in the Citizen specifically about the bus station after it's opening, and that including the bus station within the wider consultations and exhibitions for the whole Heart of Slough project meant that the individual elements did not receive focused attention.

These lessons had been learnt and changes had been made to how messages about The Curve were being handled, in particular greater focused engagement with users. However, users must also be willing to engage with consultations.

The Panel discussed the issue of keeping elected members informed of progress during major regeneration projects, and stressed the need to take a proactive approach to this so that correct information is given out to constituents.

Resolved – that the lessons of the communications relating to the bus station project have and were being learnt and improved for current and future regeneration projects.

85. Prostitution - Update and Future Actions

Resolved – to note the report.

86. Police and Crime Commissioner

Resolved – to note the report.

87. Forward Work Programme

Resolved – to note the report.

88. Date of Next Meeting

Resolved – that the date of the next meeting be confirmed as the 6 March 2013.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.50 pm)