

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 29th October, 2014.

Present:- Councillors Plenty (Chair), Coad, N Holledge, Malik, Mansoor, Shah, Sohal and Wright (Vice-Chair)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Vivianne Royal (Slough Customer Senate)

PART 1

20. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were given.

21. Minutes of the last meeting held on 4th September 2014

The Panel requested that the fourth point resolved under agenda item 14 (waste collections) be amended. This would be to clarify the issue with the target levels of 0.00001%.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes were approved.

Resolved – That, subject to this comment, the minutes of the meeting on 4th September 2014 be approved as a correct record.

22. Member Questions

No written questions were submitted by panel members before the meeting.

23. Enforcement of littering, fly tipping and enviro-crime

The report presented the current service provision and future aspirations for the future. Neighbourhood Services would provide out of hours services.

The report also evaluated partnership working, both across teams within Slough Borough Council (SBC) and with external partners. A joint approach with anti social behaviour (ASB) was also being pursued, as were communications with the public to ensure that the responsibilities of all parties was clarified.

At present, orders on dog nuisance and maltreatment were being issued. In terms of fixed penalty notices, SBC's recovery rate of 86% was above the national average; SBC was also committed to the quality of such notices (e.g. enforceable, targetted on important matters) rather than the quantity.

The recommended future pilot project had been discussed with faith groups and other community representatives. In addition, companies could be

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involved and the pilot would be self-financing; similar pilots were being delivered in Merton and Blaenau Gwent. Timelines for the next 12 months had been constructed, and would target key areas identified in the report.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

- Residents would be involved through consultation and communications. The communications team at SBC would be involved, whilst existing channels (e.g. Streets Ahead) would also be used. The costs of the campaign would be accommodated within existing budgets.
- Advice would be sought as to how the message could be communicated within schools.
- The abuse of animals was acknowledged as an indicator of other dangerous behaviours. Whilst there had yet to be an example of this in Slough, the safeguarding issues were recognised.
- Schemes with similarity to witness support would be in place for those seeking to bring complaints forward. Legislation relating to ASB allowed for anonymous evidence to be used, meaning that witnesses would not have to reveal their identity.
- Dogs in the care of SBC could only be put down under the instruction of Neighbourhood Services. Kennelling and rehoming were the preferred solutions, with dogs only put down on humane or behavioural grounds. In addition, SBC was legally obliged to put down banned breeds.
- Non payment of fixed penalty notices could arise for a variety of reasons. Individuals pleading the case, the involvement of outside agencies or cases in which pursuing the fine would cost more than the fine itself would be amongst examples of such. The pilot scheme may have a lower recovery rate than the existing SBC average.
- A roving team would work on enforcement of matters such as the areas behind shops. The target areas would be identified by SBC as would enforcement, whilst partnerships would also be used to assist with this identification process. Whilst communications would also be part of this strategy, in many cases those involved were aware of the legal implications of their actions and were simply hoping to evade detection.
- There were a variety of CCTV options (e.g. pole camera, mobile units). However, issues such as the view, access to power or need to justify intrusion could limit SBC's ability to install CCTV.
- The campaign would need to involve other groups (e.g. Thames Valley Police) to maximise its audience. Community groups would also assist with communications and providing intelligence to SBC.
- The low number of notices for dog fouling (3) had a variety of contributing factors. Dog control orders were only adopted in 2012, and dog fouling was classified as a criminal offence; as a result, the burden of proof was for it to be 'beyond all reasonable doubt'. In addition, some owners seemed only to pick up mess if others were around to observe them, but would leave the mess behind if alone. Issues such as toxocariasis had been highlighted, but it was imperative that notices

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issued by SBC needed to be actionable. Equally, whilst CCTV could observe instances of dog fouling, it may have greater difficulty in identifying those responsible.

- At present there were no licensed dog breeders in Slough. However, there were plans to establish a system on this matter.
- Neighbourhood Services were responsible for fly tipping enforcement, even where the offence may seem to involve an external party (e.g. on the highway).
- The issue of other animals fouling public areas (e.g. cats) could be tackled by the provision of plastic bags. This had been piloted in Lynch Hill Valley, whilst littering could also be tackled by the use of restorative justice (e.g. 'Community Payback') or other initiatives.

(At this point of the meeting, Cllr Mansoor arrived).

Resolved –

- 1) That the Panel allow Neighbourhood Services to proceed with a 12 month pilot project.
- 2) That the Panel receive an agenda item providing an update on progress on the pilot scheme after 6 – 9 months.

24. Slough bus station

The report addressed the questions raised by Panel members. The first question regarded the lease of the café and the disabled toilet. The café had changed ownership in June 2014 and was a separate unit from the office areas let to First Bus. Periodic checks on the facility had been initiated and some aspects of the lease were not being observed (e.g. goods were being stored next to the disabled toilet. SBC was working with the tenant on resolving this.

The second question related to First Bus not being given maintenance responsibilities for the disabled toilet. It would be contentious to allow First Bus to access the café whilst its operator was not in attendance, the café operator is in the best position to manage access to the facility and First Bus had declined when asked to take on additional responsibility for the facility. In addition, the café operator had health and safety requirements to fulfil in relation to the toilet and clarity of ownership helped define liability in the case of accidents.

Lastly, work on increasing the width of the overflow drop off area would start in early 2015. This, however, was later than originally intended and was subject to planning and feasibility.

The Panel raised the following points in discussion:

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- The Bus Station had been open for 2 years; members of the Panel expressed concern that a satisfactory resolution had still not been reached in this time.
- An automatic public toilet (APT) had not been included in the original plan due to costs. The initial cost of the APT would be £195,000, and the APT in Brunel Way could be moved to the bus station at a far lower cost.
- The APT had been closed for a period of time after pump failure and power difficulties. The pump had to be procured from Sweden and took 3 months to obtain. Clear Channel had now been contacted to arrange alerts to be provided when the APT was closed, and the reason for closure.
- The APT formed part of the Clear Channel contract, and Clear Channel had been informed that the facility needed to be regularly available.
- The APT was 9 years old. As well as age, a contributing factor to the problems had been its use by other facilities for waste disposal. Whilst this was allowed within certain limits, these had been exceeded; the last incidence of this had cost £15,000 to fix and taken a considerable time to resolve. Thames Water was responsible for punishing any businesses who had exceeded the levels of waste disposal allowed using the APT.
- Members questioned the decision not to spend £195,000 on the APT given the overall budget for the bus station. In response, officers informed the meeting that the need to repair any damage would mean that the overall expenditure would be higher than this, and had arrived at the decision to use the Brunel Way facility after studying the options.
- Some potential users of the APT were wary of it given the time limit it imposed on use. However, the sensors in the facility and the ability of Clear Channel to monitor the APT and talk to the user if a problem arose had led to its selection. SBC did not have figures on the usage of the APT, although could obtain these if requested.
- First Bus could not be made to take on responsibility for the facility; this could be reviewed at the time that the contract was renewed. However, advice on this could be sought within SBC.
- The APT did not currently have a log of cleaning work. Requirements on this matter would be checked.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Panel made the following decisions.

Resolved –

- 1) That the door of the toilet in the café should have a sign, including a contact telephone number.
- 2) That a log of cleaning work, with a list of future cleaning work accompanying this, to be kept in the APT.
- 3) That a survey of users be undertaken in direct consultation with Cllr Strutton.
- 4) That First Bus be made aware of the views of Councillors on this matter.

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The item was taken for information. On the basis of the information given, the Panel requested that a substantive discussion on the matter should be received by the Panel at a future meeting.

26. Forward Work Programme

The work programme was arranged as follows.

Resolved –

- 1) That an additional meeting be arranged for December 2014.
- 2) That the December 2014 meeting include items on street cleaning and real time passenger information.
- 3) That the January 2015 meeting include items on garages and voids contract performance, in addition to the existing items.
- 4) That the February 2015 meeting include items on prostitution and SBC activity to support NAGs, in addition to the existing items.
- 5) That the March 2015 meeting include items on the Transport Working Group, waste strategy and road safety strategy.

27. Attendance record

The attendance record was noted.

28. Date of Next Meeting - 7th January 2015

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.31 pm and closed at 8.39 pm)