

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Wednesday, 7th April, 2010.

Present:- Councillors M S Mann (Chair), Coad, Davis, A S Dhaliwal, Pabbi and Walsh

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Buchanan

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Cryer

PART I

81. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

82. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 25th February, 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th February, 2010 were approved as a correct record subject to an amendment to the third bullet point of Minute 75 to read as follows -

‘A Member asked for further information on the ‘investigate alternative IT solution in the event for self service’ and was advised that it was hoped that a self service option would be made available through an upgrade to the Seibel system as there had to-date been questions over security. It was hoped that a new version would address these issues.’

83. Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) - Update

The Assistant Director, Economic Development and Inclusion, presented a report to the Committee on the work of the LSP and in particular, the current activities to deliver NI 35, ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’. The report outlined the context for this work, the overview of the national framework, key activities being pursued in Slough and future work planned.

The Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda formed one part of the Government’s wider Council terrorism strategy, CONTEST. Active since 2003, CONTEST involved four main ‘work streams’ namely Pursue, Prevent, Protect, and Prepare. PVE formed part of the Prevent work stream, the main concern of which is ‘stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism’. The PVE delivery strategy paper outlined six key priorities for preventative work which had been translated into NI 35. This National Indicator measured the performance of local authorities against 4 separate, yet inter-related criteria, as follows:-

- Understanding of and engagement with Muslim communities.
- Knowledge and understanding of the drivers and causes of violent extremism and the Prevent objectives.

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- Development of a risk based prevent violent extremism action plan, in support of delivery of the Prevent objectives.
- Effective oversight, delivery and evaluation of projects and actions.

The Committee was advised that an important facet of the national work was the explicit focus on the Muslim community. Consequently, the funding formula used to determine the level of grant that the Local Authority area would receive was linked to the size of the local Muslim population.

NI 35 was a key priority for the LSP and this was reflected in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Delivery of the Slough Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) agenda against the LAA was stretched over a three year period and aimed to both meet overarching objectives and address localised priorities. A project had been commissioned to formally assess the impact of SAVE and its delivery thus far. It was emphasised to the Committee that measuring the outcomes of SAVE was likely to be problematic due to the subjective nature of the outcome.

In the subsequent discussion Members raised several issues including:-

- A number of concerns were raised by Members regarding a parliamentary report on the Prevent agenda emphasising a lack of accountability and the issues involved with focussing upon a specific community. Members emphasised the need for integration and tolerance. The Assistant Director advised the Committee that the decision to focus upon the Muslim Community was one that was embedded within the performance framework and not one which could be influenced locally. However, the need for all communities to work together was acknowledged as highly important. A significant amount of work was currently taking place in schools to further integration amongst young people and statistically, the proportion of the community who get along well with others of different racial origin, had improved for Slough relative to the rest of the UK.
- With regard to the funding received for SAVE, a Member queried whether there were any implications arising from the existing underestimates of Slough's population. The Assistant Director noted that whilst the official statistics based on 2001 census would be used, this would be consistent across the country.
- A Member queried what the Prevent agenda was achieving and was advised that it was a difficult outcome to measure. However, NI 35 would continue to be developed and the Council would modify its response accordingly.
- Returning to the issue of integration, a Member queried what work could be done to further improve this. The Committee was advised that the Borders and Immigration Agency was currently testing which interventions appeared to deliver the best results and that this would inform future work. This initiative was funded by the European

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Integration Fund. The Assistant Director also highlighted that the Council could stipulate the way in which the resources for the SAVE agenda were allocated.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

84. Presentation by the Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police

Sara Thornton, Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, accompanied by Superintendent Richard Humphrey, Local Area Commander (LAC) for Slough, made a presentation to the Committee outlining the strategy for Policing in Thames Valley 2010 /11 and referring in particular to the Slough policing area. There was a clear focus on continuing to improve public confidence and awareness of the police role in line with the Policing Pledge. For the Slough area, all the targets set for the 2009/10 period, bar 2, had been achieved. Targets for 2010/11 for the Slough area focussed upon improving detection rates and reducing the level of serious acquisitive crime.

On completion of the presentation, the Chair advised that two questions had been submitted by members of the public for the attention of the Chief Constable. After a brief discussion on these questions, it was agreed that answers would be provided direct to the individuals. Following this, Members raised several issues including: -

- A Member queried whether additional funding was available in consideration of Slough's proximity to Heathrow and the 'poor' rating received in relation to the detection of serious crime. The Chief Constable advised that the Inspectorate Constabulary had assigned this rating; however, 3 out of 4 measures for this category had been rated as 'fair' and only 1 as 'poor'. In the previous year, no specific targets had been set with regard to detection; this was now being focussed on in the targets for 2010 – 2011. With regard to funding for the policing of the Slough area, approximately 2 thirds of the total funding was drawn from a government grant and 1 third from the Thames Valley Police precept, agreed locally. This issue had been raised by the Committee previously and a letter had been sent by the Chief Executive to the Chief Constable to request further elucidation of the matter. A response had been sent which set out the details of the funding arrangements.
- Following this, a Member sought further clarification regarding the specific criteria used to determine funding across authorities and was advised that there were several categories on which force budgets were allocated. The TVP Authority received a grant for the Berkshire East area, which was then allocated between the various policing areas. The formula used to determine the funds for each area related to their respective crime statistics.
- A query was raised in relation to staffing issues resulting from sharing a boundary with the Metropolitan police area. The Chief Constable

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informed the meeting that previously TVP had been losing approximately 80-90 staff per year to the Metropolitan Police, although this figure had fallen to circa 30 in the past year. This followed considerable work carried out by TVP to counter this trend. Such work included reaching an agreement with the national negotiating board to allow an increase in the South East allowance from £2000 to £3000, although this increase, when implemented, would have to be funded via the local area budget. It was highlighted to the Panel that there was a concern that the number of transfers to the Metropolitan Police could rise in the lead up to the Olympics as there would be an increased need for specialist officers.

- A Member enquired whether the pledge to have police spending 80% of their time on the beat related to all police or whether it included PCSOs. The Chief Constable advised that this related to neighbourhood teams which included Neighbourhood Sergeants, Constables and PCSOs.
- A query was raised regarding what arrangements were in place to cope with cross boundary issues, particularly in relation to funding and the provision of resources. The Committee was advised that liaison with the Metropolitan Police occurred primarily at two key levels; at force level via the intelligence bureau, and through liaison between Local Area Commanders. The latter of these tended to focus on specific issues. A joint force intelligence ICT system was planned but an implementation date had not yet been set. With regard to funding and provision of resources, the area in which an incident occurred would be responsible for addressing the issue, unless it was deemed an emergency situation in which case other forces would respond as necessary. The Local Area Commander further advised that a sophisticated tactical assessment took place on a weekly basis which allowed resources to be directed as needed.

The Chair thanked the Chief Constable and the Area Commander for attending the meeting and responding to Members' questions.

85. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report to 28th February, 2010

The Committee was advised that the Strategic Director of Resources was unable to attend the meeting and it was subsequently agreed that any issues regarding the Revenue Budget Monitoring report be highlighted at the next meeting of the Committee.

86. Annual Report of Scrutiny 2009/10

Members of the Committee were advised to send any comments or amendments to the Draft Annual Report of Scrutiny 2009/10 to the Scrutiny Officer as soon as possible.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

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87. Forward Agenda Plan

The Forward Agenda Plan was noted.

88. Attendance Record

The Attendance Record was noted.

The Committee passed a vote of thanks to the Chair for his service during the municipal year now ending. The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their support and contribution during his year of office.

89. Date of Next Meeting - 7th June 2010

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)