

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 15th September, 2011.

Present:-	Councillors Minhas (Chair), Dar, Munawar, Plenty, Sohal and Strutton
Non Voting Co-Opted Members	Sandy Malik, Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents
Apologies:-	Councillor Carter, A S Wright and Darren Morris

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 16th June 2011

The minutes of the last meeting held on 16th June 2011 were approved as a correct record.

3. Member Questions

Four questions had been submitted by members. Pat Kelleher, Assistant Director for Public Protection provided a response to one with the Joseph Carter, Head of Transport answering the second question. In the absence of the officers responsible, the Scrutiny Officer, Naveed Mohammed read out written responses to the other two questions posed.

A number of points were raised which included Members seeking further clarity on the catering for community centres policy and in particular the seeming disparity between the stated policy and the written answer provided. It was also agreed that the written response to the recycling question would be forwarded to interested Members. Following a series of questions concerning the Chalvey traffic calming measures, the Chair advised that a substantive paper was being taken to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Oct, and members were able to attend this and air views if necessary.

4. Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour in Slough

Louise Asby, Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager presented a paper on the key ASB related issues in Slough and what work is ongoing to address these. The officer confirmed that addressing ASB remains a priority for Slough and the team was structured in a way that it could tackle specific issues from working with challenging families (via the Family Intervention Project [FIP]) through to location based issues (via ASB project officers) through to low level ASB such as fly tipping and graffiti (via the neighbourhood Enforcement Team). This was in addition to the longer term work that the team had been involved in which included addressing more

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endemic issues such as prostitution, street drinkers and project work with communities and businesses. Specific projects that had been delivered included delivering tamper proof screws to address the stealing of number plates and gating projects in various areas across Slough. Engagement with schools remained a priority and ASB awareness sessions had been held at Wexham School with additional crime prevention talks being delivered at East Berkshire College. Additional youth work included four youth bus events attended by 30 young people on each occasion.

The Police representative, then provided a short discussion about how the Police were addressing the issue of prostitution. It was confirmed that it remained a concern for Slough. The nature of the issue meant that addressing it was far more problematic. A number of recent initiatives had had a short-term impact – but whether this will be sustained over the longer term was questionable. The introduction of the traffic calming measures in Chalvey also had an inadvertent impact as the introduction of one-way measures had pushed the problem elsewhere.

A number of Member questions followed. This included the criteria used to determine whether the policy of gating will be applied to a particular area, the publicity that had accompanied the recent initiative to distribute tamper proof screws, how mediation was followed and work that had been conducted with schools. The officer confirmed that there were guidelines in place which determined when gating would be applied. At the heart of this was the importance of gathering evidence to determine need. It was agreed that that the guidelines would be forwarded. The publicity surrounding the distribution of tamper proof screws had been mainly carried in the Citizen. The Officer confirmed that these were still available and could be obtained by phoning the ASB team. The issue of mediation was more difficult as it had to be entered into voluntarily and could not be imposed on a party. However if a party declined to partake, the housing team could become further involved and if it was a family issue – the FIP would also express an interest. Work with schools had primarily been pursued through an external partner – ‘Learning through Action’ who delivered training to schools.

The discussion was then focused on the issue of prostitution. Questions were invited from the public in attendance. There was widespread disappointment that the paper submitted had not had sufficient detail around how the issue of prostitution was being addressed. A number of questions were raised including what learning the council and police were applying from other areas and the effectiveness of the Sex Worker Action Group. The Officers confirmed that research had gone into what other areas were doing including Bristol, Oxford and Ipswich. However it was important to note that the issue in Slough was different from these areas. The introduction of SWAG, itself a model based on one used in Oxford, was a recent initiative and as yet it was difficult to assess its long term impact.

Members confirmed that given the issues raised at the meeting it was important that a follow up paper which was solely focused on the issue of prostitution be brought to the meeting in October. Given the wider issues

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expressed concerning ASB – the Chair advised that she wanted the topic cascaded up to main Overview and Scrutiny and further consideration given to it at that committee.

Resolved:-

- (a) That a paper focused on prostitution be brought to the next Neighbourhoods and Community Services Panel in October.
- (b) That the Scrutiny Officer cascades the topic of ASB up to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider.

5. Neighbourhood Working

Kam Bhatti, Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Co-ordinator gave an update on what work the council, working in conjunction with its partner, was doing around neighbourhood working. The Officer detailed the work that had been undertaken in three pilots in Slough, Chalvey, manor Park and Colnbrook, the broad intentions behind this and the key successes to date.

Key intentions behind the project included improving understanding of local need, improving opportunities for local involvement and ensuring that scarce resources are channelled in the most effective way. Key successes to date included delivering new recreational facilities in Colnbrook, community events and CCTV installations in Manor Park and work to improve the YMCA hangout in Chalvey.

Notable benefits delivered through the work included better quality of life for local residents and greater degree of involvement of local people and better coordination of effort between partners.

Members praised the work of the Officers and a number of questions followed. These included a question on how the work had been publicised, how the areas were selected, what additional funding could be used to sustain the projects and whether this would be rolled out to other areas of the borough. The officer confirmed that the work had been primarily publicised via the council newspaper – the Citizen although additional articles had been placed in local newspapers. The choice of the three areas had been determined by need. Funding was an issue. The council could not apply for grants – but it was working closely with local communities to access the grants that were available. Finally the officer confirmed that no final decision had been made on whether this would be rolled out.

Members expressed an interest in gaining more information. The Officer confirmed that a workshop could be held and that further work on making this happen would be pursued.

Resolved:-

- (a) That the Neighbourhood Crime and Justice Coordinator would work with Member services in scheduling a Member workshop on Neighbourhood working.

6. Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

James Priestman, Head of Community Safety presented a paper on the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill. Officers confirmed that this was a briefing supplied by Thames Valley Police HQ and as such, and given the fact that the Bill was still subject to change, officers present would not be able to answer any specific questions.

A number of general questions were raised including the likelihood that the elected commissioner would not have any substantive knowledge of Slough. Officers confirmed that due to changes to the Police Authorities and the way policing is arranged in the Thames Valley context – there was a very real possibility that the elected commissioner may not have substantive knowledge of Slough.

Members noted the contents of the report and thanked the officers for the short presentation.

7. Consideration of reports marked to be noted/for information

A report was received on the Libraries Update. A number of questions were raised including the rationale behind key financial data and whether the policy of neighbourhood libraries will be rolled out.

Resolved:

- (a) That questions raised by directed back to the Assistant Director for Culture and Skills and replies provided outside of the meeting.

8. Forward Work Programme

Members asked for a detailed paper on prostitution to be included at the October meeting.

It was also agreed that the Panel would seek to cascade the paper on Anti-Social Behaviour up to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration.

9. Date of Next Meeting:

Monday 24th October 2011.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.30 pm)