

CRIME & DISORDER OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Derek Sharp (Chairman), John Bowden (Vice-Chairman), Hari Sharma, Julian Sharpe (sub for Jesse Grey), John Story and Simon Werner

Also in attendance: Parish Councillor Margaret Lenton (Wraysbury Parish Council) and Parish Councillor Pat McDonald (White Waltham Parish Council).

Officers: Tanya Leftwich and Simon Fletcher

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jesse Grey (Councillor Julian Sharpe was sub) and Hashim Bhatti.

Apologies for absence were also received from Superintendent Rai (Thames Valley Police).

The Chairman informed everyone present that the meeting was being recorded and that the audio would be available on the RBWM website shortly.

The Chairman also informed everyone present of the fire evacuation procedures.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on the 14 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY IN OPERATIONS & CUSTOMER SERVICES - CIVIL ENFORCEMENT OFFICER & COMMUNITY WARDEN SERVICES

The Chairman informed everyone present that the extra meeting had been arranged due to the Delivering Differently in Operations and Customer Services – Civil Enforcement Officer and Community Warden Services that would be going before Cabinet tomorrow evening.

The Strategic Director of Operations, Simon Fletcher, explained that on the 30 June 2016, Cabinet had approved in principle a proposal to consider the use of a private sector provider for the delivery of Civil Enforcement and Community Warden Services on behalf of the Council. Members were informed that this paper was requesting authority to amend the original approach given by Cabinet in June 2016 to now look at potential alternative service delivery options for just Civil Enforcement Services.

Members were informed that the paper also requested delegated authority to conclude a competitive procurement process for this service in order to test the private sector market.

The Strategic Director of Operations assured Members that no final decisions had been made or approved and that the report requested a further report be presented to Cabinet in April which would set out the results of the procurement process and the other options available to

the council for this service. Comments from this Panel were requested on the procurement process.

Members noted that third party services were being considered as they had the potential to better cover and address parking enforcement needs across the Borough (e.g. greater flexibility and resilience associated with major events and better coverage and patrols of residential and more rural locations), they had the potential of increased enforcement need if parking issues were being better covered, had the ability to access private sector expertise on dynamic resource development utilising technology and quick response arrangements. Also that third party services had the potential for costs associated with future investments and development in technology to be borne by the third party provider (e.g. new hand held units, virtual permit technology, etc).

The Strategic Director of Operations informed Members that the Council was looking at Westminster City Council as they currently used third party providers. It was noted that the Council had also commenced a pilot utilising third party resource to deliver Civil Enforcement services within a defined area of the Borough.

The Chairman informed Members that he had been assured by officers that a paper would come back before this Panel before it went to Cabinet in April 2017. It was noted that the Chairman's concerns regarding the Night-time Economy being destroyed if civil enforcement workers stopped people from parking when collecting takeaways had been alleviated. Members were informed by the Chairman that he had been assured that the appeals process would be retained as a council function. The Chairman had also been assured that all RBWM civil enforcement officers would be offered jobs by the third party provider if that was the route Cabinet decided to go down.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:

- Councillor Sharma suggested that the pilot utilising third party resource to deliver Civil Enforcement services should be done throughout the whole of the Borough.
- Councillor Story expressed his support for the paper and stated that he was pleased to see that the Council was retaining its Community Wardens.
- The Strategic Director of Operations informed Members that the Council had spoken to both Wokingham Council and Bracknell Council with regard to joint procurement options and that if the timing was right for all three partners then it could potentially benefit all involved.
- The Strategic Director of Operations confirmed that the RBWM Civil Enforcement Officers were all aware of what was being proposed.
- Councillor Werner questioned why improvements to the service could not be made in-house rather than by using a third party provider. Councillor Werner stated that he felt Council employees served the public / residents in the first instance whilst the private sector did not necessarily do the same. The Strategic Director of Operations assured Councillor Werner and the Panel as a whole that the paper did not pre-judge and that an in-house service would also be considered.
- Parish Councillor Margaret Lenton stated that she believed enhanced enforcement across the Borough would be very popular and questioned how flexible it would be. The Chairman explained that he had been assured that the flexibility scope would be written into the contract.
- Councillor Bowden informed the Panel that a decluttering system had been put in place in Windsor which had resulted in no / incorrect signage to state whether you could or not park in areas and incorrect road markings on kerbs. Councillor Bowden suggested that the Council spent some money getting the signage and road markings corrected.
- Councillor Bowden went on to inform the Panel that he believed there to be an informal process in place which meant that certain streets in Windsor did not get enforced with regard to parking. It was suggested that an informal arrangement would not be possible with a private company and he therefore envisaged problems. The Strategic Director of Operations explained that informal arrangements with specific

shops, businesses, etc were being agreed which was not helpful to residents as they were unaware of the arrangements being put in place and that businesses needed to be clear on restrictions. It was noted that where informal arrangements were felt to be beneficial / appropriate they should be formalised, publicised and enforced so everyone was clear about where they could and could not park.

- That the cost of the pilot was net neutral.
- That the Council was not meeting its manifesto commitment with to increase the number of Community Wardens from 18 to 36 as it currently had 18 Civil Enforcement officers, 4 Parking Supervisors and 1 Machine Maintenance officer.

Councillor Werner, supported by the rest of the Panel, commented that with regard to recommendation (ii) that no assumption should be made that the Council would be 'going private'. It was requested that in order to put residents first all avenues should be fully investigated before a decision was made which included contacting other Local Authorities / public sector providers and private sector providers. Parish Councillor Pat McDonald added that it would useful to know 'best practice' so comparisons outside of the Council could be made.

The Crime & Disorder Overview & Scrutiny Panel unanimously agreed to recommend to Cabinet that they:

- Agreed the amendment of the 'in principle' approval given by Cabinet on June 30, 2016, removing Community Warden services from the scope of the proposal and that third party service providers now be considered for Civil Enforcement services only.**
- Delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Operations & Customer Services in conjunction with the Lead Member for Environmental Services to conclude a competitive procurement process for the provision of Civil Enforcement services within the Royal Borough.**
- Requested a further report be submitted to Cabinet in April 2017 detailing the outcome of the competitive procurement process and if appropriate seeking authority to award a contract to the preferred bidder.**

DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman informed Members that the dates of the next meetings were as follows:

- Tuesday 24 January 2017.
- Thursday 20 April 2017.

It was noted that the meeting on Monday 30 January 2017 would likely be cancelled as the Budget and Council Tax report going to Cabinet in early February would now be available in time for the meeting scheduled to take place on the 24 January 2017. The Clerk would confirm the cancellation shortly.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 7.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....