

CRIME & DISORDER OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Derek Sharp (Chairman), Hashim Bhatti, Hari Sharma (Vice-Chairman), John Story, Simon Werner, Eileen Quick, Parish Councillor Pat McDonald, Parish Councillor Spike Humphrey, Lenton and Marion Mills

Also in attendance: Councillor Da Costa, Parish Councillor Pat McDonald, Parish Councillor Spike Humphry, Parish Councillor Margaret Lenton and Superintendent Bhupinder Rai.

Officers: Mark Lampard, David Scott and David Cook.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Lead Member for Environmental Services.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on the 21 November 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

Cllr Werner mentioned that it was disappointing not to be discussing the Community Wardens paper at this meeting.

BUDGET REPORT 2018-2019

Mark Lampard, Finance Partner - Corporate Services & Operations gave the Panel a presentation on the 2018/19 Budget. The main points of the presentation were as follows:

Key messages:

- Lowest council tax outside of London
- Resident parking remain free in contrast to neighbouring authorities
- Keeping all 14 libraries open, some with increased opening hours
- 86% of schools in the Borough were good or outstanding
- Maintained £330k grant funding to community organisations and increased support for the Citizens Advice Bureau
- Inflation of RPI 3.9%
- Indicative fees and charges increased by up to 3.9% or more where justified market benchmarks were higher
- Increase in core council tax of 1.95%
- Adult social care precept of 3% applied for the final year
- Major Capital investment of £65m – due to the regeneration in Maidenhead
- Ongoing programme of £5.4m savings and additional income
- CCTV upgrade and expansion
- Car Parking charges benchmarked and increased below the benchmark figure. Advantage card holders will not pay any increase.

Annual Capital programme £7m net:

- Replacement parking card equipment £775k
- Commercial and operational estate repairs and maintenance £1.045m
- Replacement equipment at Windsor Leisure Centre £540k
- Dedworth Road £350k
- New London Road roundabout £250k
- Voluntary organisations grants maintained £200k

Capital investment net £65m net:

- Braywick Leisure Centre £15.8m
- Temporary parking facilities £10m
- Schools expansions £4.9m

Cllr Werner informed that he was glad to see CCTV improvements included following the views of this Panel, that projected borrowing levels should be shown leading up to 2025 and that he could not see investment into community wardens. Cllr Werner was disappointed that the warden report was not being considered at this meeting and recommended that a Task and Finish Group be established.

Parish Cllr MacDonald mentioned that it was said that advantage card holders would not be effected by the increased car parking charges yet there was no advantage card discount when parking in the Grove Road car park for over 4 hours. The Panel were informed that advantage card tariffs would be introduced where they were not currently available.

Resolved unanimously: that the Panel unanimously endorsed the recommendations.

STREET DWELLING & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY

David Scott, Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships introduced the Cabinet report regarding rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour strategy.

The Panel were informed that the report sought to establish a Rough Sleeping Support and Antisocial Behaviour Strategy; to both strengthen the current offer of support afforded to those rough sleeping, and at the same time ensuring there are consequences for those who behave antisocially and or fail to engage with the support offered.

The strategy proposed a multi-agency approach to increase the support available to include outreach workers, housing support officers and a team of enhanced community wardens and a Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM) Coordinator, in addition to external partners including Thames Valley Police (TVP). The strategy being developed so that the benefits for the vulnerable individuals can be realised as soon as possible.

The challenge was that there were a range of individuals with complex needs that needed support as well as an increase in anti-social behaviour. There were also individuals entering the borough to take advantage of footfall in the borough.

An enforcement approach including Community Protection Notices (CPN) and a revised Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) would also be considered to back up the support being provided. The role of community wardens would also be enhanced and the report recommended increasing fixed penalty notices to a maximum of £100.

The issues raised within the report had been discussed with other overview and scrutiny panels, in particular Corporate Services O&S Panel. Over the last five months a framework was put in place to help individuals with 1 to 1 support being provided.

In response to questions the Panel were informed that to introduce a new PSPO there would be a consultation period and that the proposed fixed penalty notices were not just for rough sleepers but for anti-social behaviour.

The Chairman informed that he had met with the chief constable and that he had been informed that aggressive begging would be dealt with.

Cllr Werner raised concern that the report had been circulated late, that there was insufficient evidence and that it lacked detail. There was no evidence of aggressive begging and was a concentration on homelessness. These people often had complex issues so he was pleased to see mental health was being looked at, however it was a concern that they could also be fined.

Cllr Quick mentioned that there had been concern raised about aggressive begging and questioned how we would be defining this and how it would be judged. A lot of residents had contacted her with regards to the issues raised as well as concerns regarding security with bags being left on streets.

Thames Valley Police informed that the Police had no powers to remove belongings left on the street. Items could be removed from train stations as they were on private property. Counter terrorism does deem property left by the homeless to be a security risk. With regards to aggressive begging evidence was required for convictions; we need to show that their actions were active and not just begging.

Cllr Shelim mentioned that the report was a good first step in creating a strategy and provided reassurance to our residents that action was being taken.

Cllr Da Costa said that this was too much an important issue not to get right and it required a more in-depth report. He questioned if 56 days was sufficient to solve complex mental health issues. More detail was required regarding costs and other services being offered. The flexible housing support grant was not mentioned. There also needed to be wider consultation with our stakeholders such as the CCG and mental health teams.

Cllr Story asked Thames Valley Police if there were any lessons that could be learnt from other areas. The Panel were informed that other boroughs had been proactive in the use of PSPOs and had also introduced specific areas to help give to the homeless without giving money. MEAM had been successfully used in West Berkshire.

Cllr Story asked the same question to the Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships and was informed that officers had looked at 26 towns that were using MEAM and were looking to introduce one for the borough. Officers were looking at best practice and how we could use our estate to provide support. We were talking to third sector providers about how we could make an impact. There was a lot to be done and thus important to get a strategic framework in place.

Parish Councillor Cllr McDonald mentioned that as a Maidenhead resident and visitor to Windsor he had never come across aggressive begging and asked if there was any evidence. The Panel were informed that there had been an increase in reported incidents as well as an increase in anti-social behaviour, especially over the last 6 months.

Parish Councillor Cllr M Lenton reported that she was delighted to see that it was acknowledged what a complex issue this was but felt that begging could be dealt separately, she mentioned how she had witnessed two women fitting outside shops in Windsor. She recommended that shops and bus companies be consulted.

Parish Councillor Cllr Humphrey mentioned that rough sleeping support and anti-social behaviour were two separate issues and this report was trying to deal with both together.

Current news articles and statements had brought the borough into disrepute. He recommended that there be a rough sleeper strategy and separate anti-social behaviour strategy. He did not agree with fining rough sleepers if they did not engage.

Cllr Bhatti said he welcomed the report and felt it would be good for the borough, he asked what interim measure were in place at present. The Panel were informed that work was already being undertaken to help the homeless and that a revised role for wardens was being considered. Partner agencies currently worked together on the issues raised.

Cllr Werner recommended that enforcement for the homeless was not the way forward, that the issue of anti-social behaviour and homelessness should be separated and that the report should have an evidence base when considered.

Cllr Sharma mentioned that the issue of street dwelling and antisocial behaviour was taken very seriously by the administration and he welcomed the report that was proposing the development of a strategic framework for these complex and sensitive issues. The Council was helping those vulnerable members of our society and this was the start of a long journey. He recommended that officers be given time to explore best practise as part of their work and was concerned that there was opposition trying to make headlines out of sensitive issues. Cllr Sharma supported the report and said a further update should come back to the Panel.

Cllr Mills mentioned that there was no quick fix and that it was important to get our intentions communicated clearly.

Resolved that: the Crime and Disorder O&S Panel considered the Cabinet report in considerable detail and approved the recommendations (Cllr Werner did not support the recommendations and proposed that the Panel should have suggested that enforcement against homelessness should not be recommended, that there should be a distinction between anti-social behaviour and homelessness and that more evidence within the report was required). A number of areas of detail were considered by the Panel.

COMMUNITY WARDENS ROLE AND OPTIONS

Item withdrawn.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Panel was 16th April 2018.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.30 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....