

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 25 AUGUST, 2011 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Bernard, J. D. (Chairman)
Cartwright, Mrs. S. M. (Vice-Chairman)

Kraujalis, J. T. Sutton, Mrs. H. M.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. C. Brown, M. R. Green, J. Rowley, J. Toth and A. Williams

2. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No declarations were submitted

3. Minutes

RESOLVED:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Proposed Work Programme 2011-2012 Municipal Year

Consideration was given to the proposed Work Programme (Enclosure 4 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Head of Environmental Services informed the Committee that it was proposed that the next meeting would be held at the Ranger Centre at Hawks Green.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted.

5. Community Safety Landscape

The Committee received a presentation from Susannah Bentley, Research Officer from the Staffordshire Observatory, and Anthony Small, Consultation Manager, Staffordshire Police on the

Community Safety Landscape.

Ms. Bentley explained that the Staffordshire Observatory was a research unit located at the County Council that collected analytical data to share with the Police and its partners. The Committee was informed that the Staffordshire Observatory had now published the 2011 Strategic Assessment.

It was reported that in Staffordshire 6,508 crimes had been recorded in 2010/11 and that this was a 4% reduction on the previous year and was consistent with reductions in prior years. Crime with injury, alcohol related violence, burglary, robbery and Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) had all shown a reduction. However, there was a rise in crimes such as shop lifting, theft of motor vehicles and theft from them. The identification of young people in Cannock Chase who were at risk of offending was crucial in preventing them turning to more serious crime and becoming victims of crime themselves.

There had been a 14% increase in residents in Cannock Chase perceiving that ASB had increased which was higher than the Staffordshire average, although this meant there was still a high percentage that considered that it had not increased. The main reasons residents gave for why they considered that ASB was being committed was –

- Youths have nothing to do
- Kids have no respect
- More were drinking alcohol in groups
- Drug misuse

Town Centres were the main hot spot areas for ASB, drug misuse and teenagers hanging around and a range of agencies had been targeting those areas. There were, however, also hotspots within residential areas. It was considered that a robust evidence base was crucial when forming priorities and delivering services.

Mr. A. Small explained that the Police undertook a consultation and engagement strategy, focusing on the following key methods:-

- Feeling the difference
- Citizens Panels
- Citizens Focus Toolkit
- Monitoring Service Users Satisfaction Surveys

Feeling the Difference

Feeling the difference was a public opinion survey carried out in March and September each year and provided measures of what was being achieved in keeping communities safe and reassured. The survey included measures for policing and a range of other services, including wider criminal justice, Fire and Rescue Service and local councils. The results also informed the development and monitoring of the strategic priorities and objectives as set out in the Policing Staffordshire Strategy and Plan.

It was reported that

- 91% of residents in Cannock Chase felt strongly that they belonged to their immediate neighbourhood;
- 95% specified that it was a good area to live

96% agreed that people from different backgrounds got on well together
98% felt safe during the day
70% felt safe after dark
55% agreed parents should take individual responsibility for their children
41% agreed Police and the Council dealt with ASB.

The percentage of those rated as wealthy, comfortable, moderate/hard pressed for whom ASB was a problem were mostly similar.

Citizens' Panel

This was designed to place the citizen at the heart of decision making, consisting of a main Panel of over 3,000 members.

Citizens Focus Toolkit (CFT)

The CFT was a framework which helped identify local issues that were priorities for local communities and consisted of 5 key tests; what are your communities issues, how did you identify them, what are you doing about them, what does the public think; what have you learned.

Traditional methods, such as local meetings, police surgeries, community events, local police officers and PCSOs approaching residents were also used to seek their view on issues in their area. Local policing teams and their partners then sought to engage residents in helping to keep local areas safe and identifying solutions for problems.

User Satisfaction Surveys

Provided an insight into how services met the specific needs and expectations of victims of crime and ASB and victims and witnesses who attended court.

It was explained that the Police were undertaking a wide reaching range of initiatives to help address problems.

Members asked whether the information could be broken down to street or Ward level. The Head of Policy explained that a Research Officer had recently been appointed who would be adding local data to the district wide information. However it may be some months before it was available.

6. Anti Social Behaviour Experience and Victim Support – Case Study

The Chairman of the Committee agreed that the order of the agenda be amended and this item was brought forward.

The victim gave an account of the experience when subjected to anti social behaviour. The resident explained that the fear of reprisals and intimidation had been extremely difficult to cope with. When the resident had contacted Victim Support this had helped to alleviate stress and rebuild confidence. The Victim and Witness Champion (VWC) had contacted the resident on a weekly basis, often making home visits, even sending text messages and this had helped to boost the resident's morale and assistance had been given with personal safety issues. The resident reported that it was easy to understand why people were reluctant to come forward with respect to ASB as fear was a big pressure to deal with. The resident did not consider that the Victim Support programme was publicised enough. It was explained that at the back of the Police Witness Statement it asked if Victim Support was wanted.

The VWC explained that the majority of referrals came from the Council, particularly Housing Teams, rather than the Police, and by word of mouth. The Committee was informed that there was only sufficient funding received for a 20 hour a week post based within the Community Safety Partnership to deliver services across Cannock Chase. Victim Support was identified as an independent organisation that could manage this post as a 'critical friend' and draw on its existing experience in supporting ASB victims and witnesses. The post had commenced in May 2010 and referrals had been accepted from 1 June, 2010. The VWC reported that over a 12 month period, 110 cases had been referred. Unfortunately due to the part time nature of the post, the workload had to be curtailed and carefully managed.

The VWC had raised awareness amongst partnership agencies of the importance of recognising the needs of their clients and the importance of delivering quality services, including the need for emotional support. Relationships had been developed with agencies to ensure a quick response and smooth delivery to the victim. The VWC has raised key areas of community and individual concern to the Joint Operations Group (JOGs) and ASB Case Conference.

Testimonials from victims had been received with respect to the support given to them by the VWC, and in respect of closed cases 100% of victims had expressed being completely satisfied with the service provided.

The victim was thanked for attending the Committee to enable Members to be more informed of what was taking place.

7. Community Safety Report and Potential Review

Consideration was given to the Briefing Note of the Head of Policy (Enclosure 6.1 - 6.6 of the Official Minutes of the Council).

The Local Strategic Partnership Manager gave an overview of the current community safety priorities in the district and initiatives being undertaken to address concerns raised by the community.

It was explained that all of the major crime types were showing a reduction from figures reported in 2010. Despite this, a recent consultation process undertaken had continued to highlight that residents' perceptions of anti social behaviour and the Partnership's response to this issue was a concern.

The Committee was informed that overall crime and ASB had declined considerably in Cannock Chase over the last 3 years. However the people's perception that it was actually increasing was an important issue and ways to address this were being explored. The year to date figures for ASB showed that 1,103 incidents had been reported compared to 1,544 during the same period in the previous year. However, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of residents who agreed that the Police and Council were dealing with ASB locally.

Chase partners had adopted the nationally recognised problem solving approach to community safety involving the following three keys aspects in responding to and preventing crime:

- Offender
- Victim
- Location

It was noted that there were a 6 key localities across Cannock Chase which reported higher than average perceptions that community safety concerns were an issue. It was considered that interventions to improve quality of life should be targeted on those areas. The Committee undertook to engage with residents in the hot spot wards to seek further information about their concerns and agreed to liaise with the Head of Policy and the Local Strategic Partnership Manager with regard to this.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That the key priorities for Partners in relation to crime and anti social behaviour in Cannock Chase be noted.
- (B) That Members liaise with Officers with respect to them engaging with residents in localities which had reported higher than average perceptions of community safety issues. to endeavour to address community concerns and work with vulnerable people and victims in the district.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 6.00 p.m.