

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee**
held on Thursday, 3rd June, 2010 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)
Councillor W Livesley (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors M Davies, P Edwards, D Flude, D Hough, J Wray, L Gilbert and
P Whiteley

Substitutes

Councillors L Gilbert and P Whiteley

Officers

T Kingston – Senior Community Warden
T Potts - Community Safety Manager
Z Neeld – Strategic Partnerships Manager

In Attendance:

Councillor R Bailey

Apologies

Councillors E Alcock, S Furlong, M Hardy, J Jones and S Wilkinson

15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2010 be approved as a correct
record and signed by the Chairman

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

None

17 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present wishing to speak

18 COMMUNITY WARDEN SERVICE

T Potts the Community Safety Manager was called to the table and informed the
Committee that the Community Warden Service was established to address

public concerns in relation to Crime and Disorder, and tackle issues in relation to anti social behaviour. This was achieved by working in partnership with the local community and its partners, to provide a safer environment in which to live work and visit.

With regard to the review of the service, it was highlighted that from 1 April 2009, Cheshire East Council had inherited 2 existing warden services from Congleton and Crewe. Macclesfield had Environmental Enforcement Officers, whose main focus was based around the Clean Safer Neighbourhood agenda and mainly dealt with fly tipping offences. A review was therefore undertaken to harmonise and integrate the existing services into one service that would be in a better position to deliver the new authorities objectives, in a more focused and cost effective manner.

The review had resulted in 10 Community Wardens and 2 team leaders at a cost of £426,000. However there were still 3 Community Warden positions to be filled.

The main priorities for the service were to:

- Provide a highly visible uniformed presence to reduce the fear of crime and promote public reassurance.
- Address issues relating to anti social behaviour through proactive and reactive enforcement and education.
- Encourage and enforce the safe and proper use of outdoor recreational areas and public open space.
- Adopt a proactive role in encouraging all sections of the community to use public open spaces for supporting activities and environmental appreciation.
- Enforcement of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire license conditions.
- Environmental Enforcement including, removal of abandoned vehicles, vehicles for sale on the highway, collection and detention of stray dogs, issue of fixed penalty notices and fly tipping.

With regard to abandoned vehicles, Members commented that the procedure for abandoned vehicles was not on the web site and that this should be rectified as soon as possible.

Members questioned the Community Warden Deployment and it was highlighted that in the last 6 months, the service had issued 51 litter and dog notices, dealt with 153 abandoned vehicles reported 54 untaxed vehicles, picked up 195 stray dogs, issued 4 vehicle for sale warnings, participated in 6 police operations, provided security at election count centres and delivered 'lets bike' safety campaign in 5 local schools. The Committee felt that good news stories should be publicised in the press.

Members then went onto question what areas of work the Community Warden Service delivered that could not be covered by the Police Community Support Officers. T Potts highlighted this work focused around vehicles on the highway, abandoned vehicles, stray dogs and fly tipping investigation and prosecution.

It was highlighted that that the Fire Service had also started to concentrate on Community Safety and the Police Authority also dealt with some of the same

issues as the Community Safety Wardens. Members expressed concern regarding the overlap of work between Cheshire East Council, the Police and Fire Service.

T Kingston – Senior Community Warden was then called to the table to answer any questions. He highlighted that the Wardens, 4 in the day and 2 in the evening worked shift patterns from 8.00am to 10.00pm, 6 days a week and their work was demand led. It was agreed that further details relating to the working patterns of the Wardens would be circulated to the Committee.

Members questioned the remit of the Fire Authority and T Kingston highlighted that although it could not currently enforce, this was currently being investigated and that the aim was to create a one stop shop for all agencies and services.

The barriers to creating a one stop shop were also questioned and it was highlighted that the barriers were currently operation issues, however this was being addressed and all agencies were realising the benefits of joined up working.

Members then went onto question prosecutions and felt that all those refusing to pay the fines issued should be prosecuted in order to send a zero tolerance message out to the public. T Kingston reported that this was a legal issue that would need to be taken up with the Borough Solicitor.

It was noted that as a result of the review the Warden Service had reduced from 30 to 12. T Kingston informed the Committee that the service had not suffered as a result of the reduction; however it would struggle to operate effectively if the service was to be reduced any further. He also felt that the advantages of the Community Wardens were centered around life skills, their background and understanding the communities needs.

The Committee felt that without accurate benchmarking it was difficult to assess how the service was performing and that Cheshire East needed to compare with other authorities and share ways of working. T Kingston informed the Committee that they looked at best practice, approached outside agencies, based work around the community and tried to look outside the box.

Following detailed consideration of the evidence received the Committee agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise this service further and interview external agencies.

RESOLVED

That a Task and Finish Group comprising of Councillors Livesley, Hough and Edwards be established to fully scrutinise the Community Warden Service.

19 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Consideration was given to an update on the developments of the Sustainable Community Strategy, to which Members made the following comments:

- That the document was aspirational rather than based on reality and that there were gaps in some areas that needed to be addressed
- With regard to 'unlocking the potential of our towns' Members expressed concern that Congleton had be omitted from the strategy and that the report should refer to service areas rather than market towns.
- With regard to 'our vision for Cheshire East' it was felt that this was an overview of what the Borough had already achieved rather than a vision for the future. Therefore this should be rewritten to include priorities for the future.

It was agreed that, following the consultation process, the Committee would receive a further update, prior to the strategy being submitted to Council for approval.

RESOLVED

That the above comments be taken into consideration and the final Strategy be brought back to the Committee prior to its submission to Council on 22 July 2010

20 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee consideration to the process to approve the work programme for 2010/2011.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 19 April 2010 had approved a paper entitled 'Strengthening the Scrutiny Function' which proposed a more formal approach to the work programme setting process in 2010 to enable the views of Cabinet to be fed into the process. This approach was also considered and endorsed by the Scrutiny Chairs Group. The main aim of the new approach was to share work programmes with colleagues in Cabinet and Corporate Management Team (CMT) at the outset, so that Overview and Scrutiny became an integral part of the Corporate business planning process of the Council. Work programme items would subsequently be linked to relevant Corporate plan targets, and where appropriate, Performance Indicators and LAA targets.

It was intended that emerging work programmes of all five Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be presented to Cabinet informally in June, and then each Committee would formally endorse its work programme before the summer recess.

RESOLVED

That the report be approved

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.30 pm

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)