

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee**
held on Thursday, 6th January, 2011 at The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1DX

PRESENT

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

Councillors A Barratt, J Crockatt, M Davies, D Flude, D Hough and
S Wilkinson

Apologies

Councillors E Alcock and J Wray

61 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2010 be approved as a correct record.

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

None noted

63 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN

There were no members of the public present who wished to address the Committee.

64 PCSO SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Tony Potts, Community Safety Manager, attended to provide an update on the current situation in relation to the proposed service level agreement (SLA), between the Safer Cheshire East Partnership and Cheshire Constabulary, in relation to the funding of Police Community Support Officers (henceforth PCSO).

It was explained that the financial issues around the funding of the SLA were still being discussed when the report was submitted to the Committee. As the meeting was postponed from 2 December 2010 to the 6 January 2011, it was reported that more detail had become available since that point. With this in mind, it was noted that an agreement had been reached that the Safer Cheshire East Partnership would match any central government funding package for PCSOs. Having said this, due to the comprehensive spending review, a number of uncertainties had been created around future funding, with the finite details still unknown. One of the most important elements of this was that the funding for PCSOs was no longer ring-fenced and in its place a general 'neighbourhood

police' fund had been allocated to local authorities who had been granted full autonomy over direction of spend.

It was reported, that whilst it was expected that a large proportion of this fund would be allocated to funding PCSOs, this would not be confirmed until the budget had been decided. As a result, the total amount of PCSOs in Cheshire East would be unknown until the final budget had been settled.

Tony Potts continued to explain due to this uncertainty, both parties – the Safer Cheshire East Partnership and Cheshire Constabulary, had agreed not to progress the SLA until the final details were known. It was reported, that the SLA would likely be reviewed as part of this process.

Following detailed consideration of the report and its subsequent explanation, a number of queries and comments were made. Firstly, the point was made that when the budget had been finalised and a decision over resource allocation imminent, the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee should be consulted in order to provide input to the budget 'balancing act'.

The aforementioned review of the SLA was also queried. Bearing in mind that the Committee had already offered its input into the SLA in a meeting on 5 August 2010, there was concern over how much this would change in any review and whether this would cause any delays. It was confirmed that the current SLA was robust and any changes would likely be minimal with Cheshire Constabulary simply ratifying a few slight modifications.

Continuing with the SLA, it was questioned who would be responsible for monitoring the delivery of its terms. The Committee were reassured built into the SLA was the requirement for progress reports to be brought back to Members on a regular basis and following these, it would be in the Committee's prerogative to flag any issues for concern.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That the Committee be consulted in the decision over the budget allocation of the 'Neighbourhood Police' fund.

65 REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SAFETY WARDENS

The Committee considered the final report of the Task and Finish Group who conducted a Scrutiny Review on Community Wardens.

Members of the Task and Finish Group were invited to introduce the report and to draw attention to the issues that were highlighted. It was explained that the Group had taken an evidence based approach to the review and had heard accounts from all relevant stakeholders. The review had highlighted that whilst the Community Wardens did a lot of good work which was value for money, there was concern with the number of overlaps with other services.

With this in mind, the report had recommended that Cheshire East look to slim down the duties of the Community Wardens in order to reduce duplication and save money.

The Committee thanked the Group for their report and for their hard work in producing it. In opening the debate, Councillor Murray queried whether the difficult economic situation that Cheshire East, along with all local authorities faced had changed the emphasis of the report somewhat. In expanding on this, Councillor Murray continued to assert that whilst it was accepted that the Community Wardens did an undoubtedly good job, it was queried whether the considerable funding that they received from Cheshire East would be better spent on other services in a reduced funding environment. Indeed, a number of links were made to the earlier item regarding PCSO funding.

Furthermore, a number of concerns were expressed over how Community Wardens were being held accountable to their allocated areas if they were sometimes being deployed in adjacent areas. The Committee felt that more clarity was required over this issue.

In sum, considering that the economic landscape had changed considerably since the report had been carried out, it was decided that it would be most germane if an auxiliary report was produced by the relevant officer (Tony Potts) to satisfy the questions that had been raised. It was suggested therefore, that Tony Potts produce this report, including the following elements:

- A revised job specification – after speaking to Street Scene, Enforcement Officers etc to highlight any gaps in need.
- A deployment proposal outlining how many Community Wardens would be required and where they would be placed/used.
- How performance would be measured.
- How Community Wardens would be managed.

It was suggested that the Task and Finish Group recommendations would be reconsidered at a subsequent meeting in light of the findings from the auxiliary report.

RESOLVED

- a) That the report be received
- b) That an auxiliary report be produced which outlines:
 - A revised job specification – after speaking to Street Scene, Enforcement Officers etc to highlight any gaps in need.
 - A deployment proposal outlining how many Community Wardens would be required and where they would be placed/used.
 - How performance would be measured.
 - How Community Wardens would be managed.

- c) That the recommendations of the Task and Finish group are reconsidered in light of the auxiliary report.

66 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the work programme. It was agreed that an update outlining the status of Community Payback in Cheshire East be added to the work programme for consideration at a future meeting.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved subject to the amendment highlighted above.

The meeting commenced at 2.30 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)