

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee**
held on Thursday, 21st June, 2012 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)
Councillor M Grant (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors A Barratt, L Brown, P Hayes, J Jackson, W Livesley, M Parsons,
J Wray, Lam and R Fletcher
Emily Lam – Police Authority

Apologies

Councillors D Hough and B Silvester

OTHERS PRESENT

Councillor Rachel Bailey – Portfolio Holder for Communities and Registration
Services

OFFICERS PRESENT

Zandra Neeld – Performance Manager
Amanda Rudham – Human Resources Policy Manager
Jan Griffiths – Community Safety Operations Manager
Judith Gibson – Domestic Abuse Manager
Kate Rose – Principal Children's Safeguarding Manager
James Morley – Scrutiny Officer
Katie Smith – Scrutiny Officer

11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting on 10 May 2012 be approved as a
correct record

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Members of the Committee present who wished to declare any
interests.

13 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no Members of the Committee present who wished to declare any
party whip.

14 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN

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

15 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Committee considered a report on the consultation on the equality objectives that had been discussed at the Committee's meeting on 1 March 2012. The report also contained examples of equality issues regarding employment procedures which the Committee requested on the 1 March 2012.

The Performance Manager and the Senior Personnel Officer attended the meeting to present the report. The officers gave an outline of the report. Members asked questions and the following point arose:

- An Equality Impact Assessment had to be carried out with every business plan to consider how decisions made to change a service affect equality.
- Members believed the equality of Councillors and Service Users should be as important as the equality of staff and should be reflected as such in the equality objectives of the Council.
- Bullying and Harassment were difficult to define. Personal perception played an important role in whether an individual was being bullied or harassed. There were management structures in place to deal with disputes. Managers would be responsible for making a judgement in each case and the Human Resources service was there to offer advice.
- Members believed that Social and Economic status should not be included in the list of protected characteristics as social and economic status was considered to be irrelevant when managing and hiring employees.
- There was an objective to "develop a culture where staff understand their role in relation to equalities and behaviour in a way that illustrates this understanding". Members wanted to know how this culture change would be carried out.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received.
- (b) That the Performance Manager and HR Manager be requested to amend the equality objectives to include Councillors and Service Users as well as Officers so that Councillors and service users are equally protected.
- (c) That the Performance Manager and Senior Personnel Officer be requested to report back to the Committee to explain how Councillors and

Service Users will be supported in future as well as Officers.

- (d) That “social or economic status” should be removed from the list of protected groups in the Council’s policy on equality for staff however that “social or economic status” should be a protected group for Service Users.
- (e) That the Performance Manager and Senior Personnel Officer be requested to show the practical steps that will be used to “develop a culture where staff understand their role in relation to equalities and behaviour in a way that illustrates this understanding” and the method that will be used to measure achievement of the culture development.

16 CCTV UPDATE

The Community Safety Operations Manager attended the meeting to present an update to the Committee on the current status of work to remove trees obscuring the sightlines of a number of CCTV Cameras. At previous meetings Members had expressed concern that the safety of communities was being put at risk by the effect trees were having on the coverage of CCTV cameras.

The Community Safety Operations Manager outlined the process which had to be carried out to trim or remove trees so that they no longer obscured the view of CCTV cameras. If a tree was subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), planning consent would need to be obtained from the relevant planning committee prior to any alterations being made to the tree. Trees without TPOs could be trimmed or removed without the need for planning permission which made the process of dealing with obscuration much quicker.

There were currently a significant number of trees obscuring various cameras throughout the Borough which would take time to deal with. Once the current issues with tree obscuration had been dealt with a plan would need to be put in place whereby CCTV staff were able to anticipate future obstruction by growing tree so that action could be taken before issues arose.

The Committee was keen to ensure that community safety was maintained at all times, by making sure that no CCTV cameras were obscured. The Committee also recognised that it was important acknowledge the adverse effects of poor lighting in an area covered by CCTV cameras. The Committee wanted to ensure that these issues were also dealt with by Officers.

There was no specific budget for the work that needed to be carried out and the cost of the work was being borne by Highways and Streetscape as they were responsible for the trimming of trees under their jurisdiction. The Committee was keen to see a specific budget for the work associated with maintaining the effectiveness of CCTV cameras so that the budgets and duties of Highways and Streetscape were not adversely affected by the extra work.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Regulatory Services was in attendance and addressed the Committee by thanking them for their work and that she would

do what see could to help improve the situation regarding obscuration of CCTV cameras.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received.
- (b) That the Community Safety Operations Manager be requested to formally document the process by which the removal of tree obscuration is carried out and present it to the Committee at a future meeting.
- (c) That it be recommended to Cabinet that a budget for tackling tree obscuration should be included in the next annual budget for the Safer Communities department.
- (d) That the Committee write formally to the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Regulatory Services to express their belief that the process to ensure that CCTV cameras are not obscured should be reviewed to improve the process in order to protect community safety.

17 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Committee considered a report on Domestic Abuse in Cheshire East from the Domestic Abuse Manager for the Cheshire East Integrated Safeguarding Unit and Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Partnership. The Principal Children's Safeguarding Manager was also present.

The Officer presented an overview of the report. Members asked questions and the following points arose:

- Funding for the Domestic Abuse Partnership was only provided for one year each year and the future of funding was unstable. This made it difficult to plan for and develop future service provision for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- The Domestic Abuse Partnership wanted to provide more support for perpetrators of domestic abuse however were unable to due to lack of funding. The Domestic Abuse Manager suggested that by working with perpetrators they would be able to reduce the number of repeat offenders and help to protect victims of domestic abuse.
- There were 5000 domestic incidents reported to the Police in Cheshire East, 35% of which were alcohol related. Mental health issues was also a factor in many cases. The highest number of high risk cases totalling 158 (2per 1000 population) which was shown in the table at 4.1, occurred in Crewe
- 2% of victims of domestic abuse use refuges for accommodation away from perpetrators. There was a refuge in Crewe for Cheshire East

residents and residents from outside the Borough. Some victims required refuge further away from perpetrators for safety reasons which meant Local Authorities had to support each other by providing refuge for victims from outside their Borough.

- Out of Hours services could provide emergency support in finding overnight accommodation for victims if necessary. Most of the services provided to victims who come forward for support were best provided to them during office hours.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received.
- (b) That the Committee recommend to Council that funding for the provision of support to perpetrators of domestic violence to provided.
- (c) The Committee the Domestic Abuse Manager be requested to return to a future meeting of the Committee with proposals for funding to deal with perpetrator behaviour.
- (d) That the Committee recommend to Council and its partners that the funding of the Domestic Abuse Partnership be budgeted for three years in the next budget to provide stability and increase confidence in the continuity of the work carried by the Partnership.

18 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee gave consideration to the Work Programme and the business of future meetings. Members of the Committee were asked if they would represent the Committee as a non-voting member of the Budget Task Group.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Work Programme be noted.
- (b) That Councillor Peter Hayes be the Committee's representative as a non-voting member of the Budget Task Group.

19 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee gave consideration to the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED - That the Forward Plan be noted

Before concluding the meeting the Chairman thanked the outgoing Scrutiny Officer James Morley for his work with the Committee over the past 11 months and welcomed back Katie Smith who was due to take over as Scrutiny Officer for the Committee.

The meeting commenced at 10.35 am and concluded at 1.05 pm

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)