

CLEANER, GREENER, SAFER POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 3RD NOVEMBER, 2010

Present – Councillors Bashir-Ismail (Chairman), Chadwick (Vice-Chairman), A. Connell (as deputy for Councillor Pickup), Critchley, Mrs Fairclough, Kay (as deputy for Councillor Peel), Morgan and J. Rothwell.

Also in Attendance

Mr. M. Cox	-	Director of Environmental Services
Ms.S. Schofield	-	Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services
Mr. M. Russell	-	Head of Greenspace
Ms. G. Hughes	-	Head of Community Safety Services
Ms. R.Owen	-	Safer Communities Officer – Central Bolton
Mrs. S. Bailey	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Bashir-Ismail in the Chair

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Peel and Pickup

25. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Group held on 8th September, 2010 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

26. PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PILOT WITHIN COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Director of Adult and Community Services submitted a report which:

- (a) provided members of the Group with an overview of the Be Safe's involvement in a pilot participatory budgeting event which took place in Rumworth during March, 2009; and
- (b) put forward recommendations to share the learning across the wider partnership and options to take participatory budgeting forward in other areas.

Members were reminded that in 2008, Bolton became a pioneer area for the Government's Neighbourhood Crime and Justice initiative which aimed to increase public participation and public empowerment around tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in local communities. To support this ongoing work, Bolton had been successful in securing £20,000 funding from the Home Office

to carry out a participatory budgeting pilot. The Be Safe Partnership had provided match funding which resulted in £40k total available funding.

The report went on to advise that Rumworth Ward had been chosen to host the pilot event as in January, 2009, the crime and anti-social behaviour levels were amongst the highest in the Borough and the public perceptions were some of the worst in Bolton. The aim of the pilot was to build on the previous four months of intensive engagement work and dedicated police operations in the Ward.

In this regard, the report advised members that 77 Rumworth residents had attended the participatory budgeting event and voted for various projects from a selection of community safety projects. Details of the projects chosen were provided in the report together with the associated costs. Due to savings being achieved during the delivery of the projects, a number of additional projects were delivered alongside those previously chosen.

The report went on to provide an evaluation of the success of the event in terms of advertising, awareness, involvement with the projects and perceptions. The Greater Manchester Police perception survey in Rumworth had shown that public perceptions had improved significantly since March, 2009 following the events.

Coupled with improvements in public perceptions, crime figures showed that all types of crime had reduced by 27% in Rumworth from October, 2008 to October, 2010. However, it was difficult to assess whether participatory budgeting alone had contributed to crime reductions and improvements to perceptions.

The report concluded that the Community Safety Services section had delivered a participatory budget pilot which, although was not a crime reduction technique, had delivered greater community engagement and enhanced involvement from local communities in the allocation of resources. The pilot had demonstrated that it had led to greater satisfaction and public confidence, which would therefore have a wider application than just within the field of community safety. Based on this, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. that a good practice guide be developed to enable other Council partners or public service partners to use this model;
2. that the existing Area Forums consider using participatory budgeting as a tool for allocating some part of their budgets; and
3. that the evaluation is shared with Bolton Community Voluntary Services and other voluntary sector bodies who may be able to access other funding.

It was agreed that the Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer be recommended to approve the recommendations contained in the report, as now submitted.

27. ALLOTMENTS SERVICE REVIEW – CONSIDERATION OF DEVOLVED MANAGEMENT

Further to Minute 24 of the meeting of this Group held on 8th September, 2010, Mr M. Russell, Head of Greenspace, gave a presentation to members on options for devolved management arrangements in respect of allotments.

Members were reminded that as part of the review of allotments, the views of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) had been sought. One of their recommendations had been that the Council should encourage sites to self manage. This would involve the Authority devolving a share of the responsibilities for issues of site management to an allotment society of committee.

In this regard, the presentation outlined various models which could be adopted by the Council for devolved management. These included:

- participation;
- delegation;
- semi-autonomy; and
- autonomy.

Currently, there were 37 allotment sites under the management of Environmental Services and 23 sites had some form of society/committee but they varied significantly in their level of activity. 9 site societies were members of the NSALG directly so would have guidance and support from the national body.

The presentation went on to outline the advantages of devolved management for the Authority and ploholders and requested members to agree to further investigate the options.

Following the presentation, members discussed the issues and made a number of observations:

- devolved management may assist in sustaining and improving sites;
- it was important for the Council to retain overview of the sites and offer a supportive role;
- the organisations concerned must have the ability to take responsibility of the sites;
- ensure Council practices and procedures were clearer and more efficient before any devolvement took place; and
- there must be transparency and fairness in allocation of plots.

It was agreed that officers be requested to further examine the options of devolved management and report back on their findings to a future meeting of this Group.

(The meeting started at 1.00pm and finished at 2.30pm)