

CLEANER, GREENER, SAFER POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 14TH DECEMBER, 2009

Present – Councillors Bashir-Ismail (Chairman), R Silvester (Vice-Chairman), Higson, Hollick, Morgan and J. Rothwell.

Also in attendance

Ms G. Hughes	- Head of Community Services
Ms. S. Sanders	- Head of Strategy and Commissioning – Drugs and Alcohol
PC. P. Spurgeon	- Greater Manchester Police
Inspector S. O'Neill	- Greater Manchester Police
Mr. D. Bagley	- Urban Outreach Worker
Ms. J. Thompson	- Assistant Director of Children's Services
Ms. K. Evans	- Drug Strategy Implementation Officer
Ms. L. Boardman	- Principal Project Officer
Mr. M. Russell	- Head of Service (Greenspace)
Mr. A. Bolan	- Environmental Education and Enforcement Manager
Mr. I. Hepplewhite	- Project Manager – Farnworth Inclusion Team
Mrs S. Bailey	- Principal Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Bashir-Ismail in the Chair

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Clare, Peel and Mrs Thomas.

21. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Group held on 2nd November, 2009 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

22. UPDATE ON KERB CRAWLING AND ON STREET PROSTITUTION STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Adult and Community Services was submitted which updated members on the progress made to date in delivering the Tackling Kerb Crawling and Prostitution Strategy.

The report reminded members of the background to the implementation of the updated strategy and new approach and reported on the success in its implementation and delivery to date.

PC Phil Spurgeon attended the meeting and gave a presentation to supplement the report which focused on enforcement operations and the need to identify funding to continue such actions.

Members noted that the economic down turn had meant that the commercial development around Merchant's Place had slowed down. It was essential for discussions to take place with the Council's Development and Regeneration partners to secure funding to enable the police operation to continue in that area.

Members also referred to the possible use of the Smart Car in the enforcement of kerb crawling.

It was agreed that:-

- (i) the report be noted and that PC Spurgeon be thanked for his informative presentation; and
- (ii) discussions take place with the Council's Development and Regeneration partners to identify potential funding to enable the police to continue with their enforcement operations in the Merchant's Quarter area.

23. WEEKENDERS PROGRAMME

Further to minute 17(i) of the meeting of this Group held on 2nd November, 2009, a report of the Director of Adult and Community Services was submitted which provided members with an overview of the Weekenders Project and its effectiveness in reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour.

The report advised that the Weekenders project was a 16 week intervention programme with targeted young people and was co-ordinated by the Council's Youth Inclusion Team and delivered by a wide range of partners.

The project aimed to address issues linked to alcohol misuse by young people, including health, anti-social behaviour, teenage pregnancy and social inclusion by raising awareness of the effects their drinking had on the young people themselves, the community and on services.

The project targeted at risk young people and all interventions were delivered on a Friday evening.

Over the sixteen weeks, the project involved a wide range of agencies such as:

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- Youth Inclusion Team;
- Greater Manchester Police;
- Royal Bolton Hospital;
- Bolton at Home;
- Neighbourhood Management;
- Teenage Pregnancy/Young People's Sexual Health Team
- Forrest Bank Prison;
- Youth Services; and
- relevant community groups.

Mr. I. Hepplewhite attended the meeting and gave a presentation to supplement the report. In addition, a DVD of some of the youngsters on the project was shown.

It was agreed that the report be noted and that Mr Hepplewhite be thanked for his informative presentation.

24. DRUG INTERVENTION PROGRAMME - UPDATE

The Director of Adult and Community Services submitted a report which provided an overview of the Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) together with its history, current performance and potential changes.

The report reminded members that the main aim of the Government's National Drug Strategy since 1998 had been to increase the number of problem drug users in effective treatment and reduce drug-related offending. One of the aims of the national drug strategies was to reach problematic drug users who were in contact with the Criminal Justice System and divert them into treatment.

The report advised that DIP had been introduced in 2003, and involved interventions being put in place to be delivered through a multi-agency approach, linking drug treatment agencies with other criminal justice agencies such as the Probation Service, the Police, HM Prison Service, together with wraparound services such as education, training, employment and housing. These services and agencies worked together to provide a tailored package of care.

The Home Office funded the programme at £447 million for three years initially, however the initiative had been so successful that public funding had continued beyond the original period although at a reduced level, to ensure that the processes set up continue to engage these individuals into treatment and out of crime.

The report went on to outline the impact of DIP to date, particularly in relation to increased referrals for treatment, retention in treatment and the fall in acquisitive crime nationally.

The report then described how DIP was configured in Bolton and identified partners involved in the programme and how it was delivered.

With regard to the current funding arrangements, the report advised members that the allocation of funding was agreed in terms of the level of acquisitive crime within an area. However, the Home Office was currently conducting a review of DIP with a view to a new funding formula being introduced to eliminate inconsistencies concerning the cost of a DIP client in different parts of the country. Further details were expected from the Home Office in due course.

With regard to performance, the report advised that Bolton was performing well on KPI 1,3 and 4. Although the figures showing the number of clients being engaged into treatment through DIP, there was still some improvement needed.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

25. ALLOTMENTS REVIEW

Mr. M. Russell, Greenspace Manager, attended the meeting and gave a presentation on a proposed review of the Council's allotments.

Members of the Group had previously agreed in principle, to a review of the Council's allotments in order to:-

- increase capacity and reduce waiting limits;
- reduce number of new tenancies starting in the summer;
- reduce tenancy failure of new tenants and retention of older tenants; and
- reduce service subsidy

The Group had agreed that a number of proposals be consulted on with the Allotments JCC, as follows:-

- conversion of 25% to half plots when they became vacant;
- encourage development of non-allotment land for use by the community;

- move the tenancy renewal date from 1st April to 1st October; and
- no future issue of multiple tenancies.

Other proposals to reduce tenancy failures and reduce subsidies were also put forward by Mr Russell, and, in summary, were as follows:-

- training;
- “buddy up” with existing tenants;
- new tenants would get half plots for first year;
- cease the development of sites from revenue;
- reduce tenancy management;
- possible charges for direct services;
- increased charges or devolved responsibility to sites;
- make a charge for plots with water; and
- increase plot fees.

Members felt that the options should be discussed with the Allotments JCC. The JCC would then consult the allotment holders on their views with feedback reported to this Group.

It was agreed that the Allotments JCC be consulted on the option for reducing tenancy failures and reducing subsidy proposals, as now detailed, and that they consult their allotment holders with any views being reported back to a future meeting of this Group.

26. DOG FOULING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

A report of the Director of Environmental Services was submitted which outlined proposals for the use of the various options available to the Authority for the enforcement of dog fouling offences committed by owners of dogs.

The report reminded members of what constituted a dog fouling offence and the options open to an authority to prosecute offenders, namely the Fouling of Land by Dogs (Bolton) Order 2007.

Under provisions introduced within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, local authorities were presented with the ability to introduce five offences which may be prescribed in a dog control order. The Fouling of Land by Dogs (Bolton) Order 2007 was a dog control order which came into force on 1st May 2007 and had enabled Bolton Council to widen the designated area of land to cover all areas of public space which was open to the air and to which the public were entitled or permitted to have access (with or without payment). The penalty for committing an offence under the above order was a maximum fine of level 3 (currently £1,000). Alternatively, the opportunity to pay a fixed penalty may be offered in place of prosecution which

was currently set at £75.00. The report described the land that was subject to dog control orders.

The report also went on to describe the Enforcement process which involved:-

- (a) verbal advice – this option was available to Enforcement officers when carrying out enforcement/education, and had the option of issuing free dog bags;
- (b) Fixed penalty notices – this option was available to an authorised officer of primary or secondary authority who had reason to believe that a person had committed an offence under a dog control order by that Authority. The notice was currently set at £75.00 if paid within fourteen days (reduced to £50.00 if paid within ten days).

Appendix A to the report contained a flow chart which summarised the processes;

- (c) Power to require name and address – If an authorised officer of a primary or secondary authority proposed to give a notice in relation to this offence, the officer may require the person to give them their name and address. A person would commit an offence if he failed to give him his name and address or gave a false or inaccurate name and address when required to do so.

Over the last three years, the Environment Education and Enforcement Unit had issued approximately 80 Fixed Penalty Notices for the offence of failing to remove dog faeces. Out of the 80 Fixed Penalty Notices issued, there had been 9 prosecutions for none payment.

The Council had recently launched a campaign funded by the Area Based Grant highlighting to residents the importance of keeping the streets of Bolton litter free. Future phases of the campaign over the next few months would be focusing on dog fouling.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

27. THE PROVISION OF CHRISTMAS TREES WITHIN THE BOROUGH OF BOLTON

The Director of Environmental Services submitted a report which reviewed the provision of Christmas trees across the Borough with a view to improving long term environmental and financial sustainability and rationalising provision for the future.

By way of background information, members were advised that there were currently 13 cut Christmas trees supplied throughout the Borough by Greenspace. Full details of locations and trees were provided in Appendix A to the report. This included two 45ft trees on the Town Hall Square and eleven 25ft trees in the surrounding thirteen districts.

The budget held by Greenspace covered the cost of supply, erection and removal of all the 13 Christmas trees and the provision of lighting on the eleven trees outside the Town Centre.

In 2008, the expenditure incurred on Christmas Trees by Greenspace was a total of £21,303.57, excluding staff time. A detailed breakdown was provided at Appendix B.

The report explained that a review of provision had been undertaken in terms of each site's history, positioning and provision of the trees, with a view to considering sustainability, rationalisation where appropriate and costs of supplying, erecting lighting and the taking down of the trees each Christmas.

The two trees on Victoria Square had not been considered as part of the review as there was no potential alternative form of provision.

In considering how to improve the sustainability of future Christmas tree provision and the establishment of a clear rational, there were a number of options, set out below, and each site has been considered against these options:-

- cease/reduce provision – trees within the same town/district, where historical one-off, area forum or business sponsored trees had become an ongoing annual process without rational. In some areas, two trees were located close to each other.
- cease provision and light surrounding trees – where there were existing trees within the proximity of the current electrical supplies – would provide festive lighting but not a traditional Christmas Tree.
- cease provision of a cut tree and replace with a permanent planted tree – removal of the tree pot and replacement with a permanent planted tree (approx 3-4 metres in height at time of planting).
- continue current arrangements – continue supplying under the current arrangements of disposable cut trees that would require yearly installation and processing and removal thereafter.

Following evaluation of each of the locations across the Borough against these options, the detailed recommendations for each site were set out in Appendix C attached. A potential timetable for implementation of the recommendations was set out at Appendix D.

It was also proposed that once the ongoing locations for future Christmas Tree provision were confirmed, a future report would be submitted reviewing the future lighting options for those trees.

It was proposed that any savings arising from ceasing provision be used to fund permanent plantings and that the subsequent savings in not providing cut trees be used to rollout further permanent plantings in subsequent years. It was anticipated that the full roll out would take 3 to 4 years, commencing with the first plantings in early 2010.

There was the potential for some financial saving from 2013 but the extent of that saving could only be firmly established in conjunction with a review of the lighting provision once future tree locations were confirmed.

It was agreed that the Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer recommended to:-

- (i) support the review of the provision of Christmas trees across the Borough on the basis of environmental and financial sustainability; and
- (ii) support the individual recommendations for each location as set out in the Appendix to the report.

(The meeting started at 1.00 p.m. and finished at 2.50 p.m.)