

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

MONDAY, 9 JULY 2018

- PRESENT: Councillor A Banks (Chair)
- Councillors B A Hughes, M A Lovatt, L A Malyon, T McNicol,
C Pearce, T Riley and P Wood
- ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Johnson
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Bowen - Portfolio Holder for Communities, Leisure,
Sport, Parks, Countryside & Housing
Councillor Ogden - Cabinet Support Member
- APOLOGIES: Councillors E Fallows, D Grocott, K J Jackson, L D Lea and
M M Lovatt

96 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS.**

DECIDED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Panel held on the 19th March
and 2018 and 5th June 2018 be approved as a correct record and
signed by the Chair.

97 **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE
STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL.**

DECIDED: That the Minutes of the Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel Meeting
held on 23 April 2018 be noted.

98 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS.**

There were none.

99 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.**

No declarations of interests were made.

100 **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS.**

There were no questions to the Portfolio Holders.

101 **UPDATE ON GRAFFITI - CHIEF INSPECTOR MARK THORLEY.**

Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel - 9 July 2018

At the request of a member, Chief Inspector Mark Thorley updated the Panel on the current situation with graffiti in the area. For the instance at the Bus Station in Leek, the perpetrators had been identified and dealt with accordingly. Since then, some instances of graffiti had re-occurred in the town centre which had led to a number of juveniles accepting responsibility and referred to the Youth Offending Team.

Some graffiti had also been carried out on the railway carriages at the Churnet Valley Railway which was being dealt with by the West Midlands Police Force.

The local policing team had visited local schools and talked to children about graffiti, the dangers of swimming in the outdoors, fires and raised awareness of the SPACE scheme. This piece of work appeared to be successful as a reduction in the number of instances of graffiti had been seen.

Members asked questions relating to claiming costs and the removal of graffiti. It was confirmed that costs would need to be claimed through a civil court and the removal of graffiti was the responsibility of the owner of a property, which the Council could assist with at a cost. If the graffiti was in a public place this would be cleaned by the Council.

Discussion also took place around the recent moorlands fires in the area, the impact these had on the various authorities, an alleged spate of assaults and possible grooming. The Panel was advised to contact the Police should they have any concerns and the Council's Licencing Team.

The poor condition of the bus station in Leek was highlighted and a request was made for this to be looked into. Councillor Bowen would discuss this with Cabinet.

The Chair thanked the officer for attending the meeting.

DECIDED: That the update be noted.

102 **SCHOOL FUNDING LETTER UPDATE - ANDREW SHAW, EXECUTIVE HEAD OF THE LEEK FEDERATION.**

Further to a letter being sent to the Secretary of State for Education in relation to funding for schools, Andrew Shaw, Executive Head of the Leek Federation was in attendance at the meeting. He thanked the Panel for sending the letter; the Leek Education Partnership had noted and recognised the Panel's support on this matter.

The Executive Head explained that funding was going to be an ongoing issue, there was a difference in the calculations for funding of 2 and 3 tier school systems and representations had been made. Despite the letter stating that funding had increased for schools, in real terms schools had received a spending cut. The school continued to save where possible, for example working in collaboration with other schools, goodwill of staff and governors.

Councillor Bowen had recently attended a Local Government Association conference at which all Councils were in agreement that the increases in funding received were no where near enough.

Discussion also took place around redundancy, recruitment difficulties, and numbers of students attending Cambridge or Oxford from the north of the country and support for children with special needs.

Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel - 9 July 2018

The Panel thanked Andrew for attending the meeting.

DECIDED: That the update be noted.

103 **YOUR HOUSING GROUP (YHG) 6 MONTHLY UPDATE - SHARON WHEELER, PROPERTY MANAGER SOUTH & PAUL STANNERS, SERVICE MANAGER.**

The Panel considered a legacy agreement update report introduced by Sharon Wheeler - Property Manager South and Paul Stanners – Service Manager.

In February 2018, Eaton House closed and the Moorlands housing team moved to agile working. This involved using an office in Moorlands House and offering a drop-in service in Moorlands House reception one day a week. Face to face meetings with the YHG housing team were available to customers throughout the week. A dedicated free phonenumber which connected to Your Response (customer call centre, was available on reception at all times.

A central lettings team had also been set up which provided a more efficient service to the customers as the majority of 'sign ups' could now be done digitally.

Members were concerned that they had not received the points of view of the tenant representatives or any customer satisfaction data. Sharon Wheeler advised that the tenant representatives attended the meeting in November but since then they had stepped down and YHG were in the process of recruiting further members. It was mentioned that all housing associations experienced difficulties with customer involvement which the Panel sympathised with. Members suggested that an advertisement was placed in the local press and on the radio.

A member of the Panel requested clarification of 'agile working' and it was explained that agile working enabled staff to spend more time out on their patches to carry out area walk-about and meet with customers. Some members felt that this led to a reduced level of customer service, particularly for people living in rural areas and vulnerable customers. It was explained that less customers were going into the offices, events held within the community were poorly attended and home visits were available to tenants.

Discussion also took place around the current team structure, staffing numbers and work bases.

The Chair passed on his thanks to the officers for attending the meeting.

DECIDED:

- 1) That the update report be noted;
- 2) The importance of the tenant representatives being appointed for the next meeting be noted;
- 3) That the next update report include customer satisfaction data, feedback on agile working, an update on new builds and financial information for the repairs budget and untenable properties;

Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel - 9 July 2018

4) For a YHG Board Member to be in attendance at the next meeting.

104 **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT - DAVID SMITH, PRINCIPAL OFFICER - COMMUNITIES & PARTNERSHIPS .**

The Panel received a report which included an amended policy to reflect legislative and other changes since the Council last made revisions in 2016. The report also provided an update to Councillors on the Council's actions to meet its safeguarding duties.

The Council was committed to ensuring the safety and protection of people using its services. In response, the Council has developed policies and procedures to ensure that children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect were safeguarded when using services provided by or on behalf of the Council in accordance with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

The Council had established an officer group, chaired by the Executive Director (People) to co-ordinate the Council's response to safeguarding.

Recent actions included: updating the Council's safeguarding policy, providing safeguarding training for staff members; updating recruitment and training procedures, and reviewing staff safety arrangements. The Council had also supported the work of the Safer and Stronger Communities Strategy Group to safeguard the local community.

The Panel discussed the mechanisms for dealing with grooming and the importance of reporting any concerns members may have. It was also mentioned that disturbances in pubs had increased during the World Cup but a celebration parade had also taken place without any issues.

DECIDED: That the Panel notes the actions taken by the Council in response to its safeguarding duties and the amended Safeguarding Policy.

105 **WORK PROGRAMME**

DECIDED: The Panel considered its Work Programme and agreed the items listed, subject to, the Police Crime Commissioner being invited in relation to the new joint governance arrangements with the Fire Service.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm

_____ Chairman _____ Date