

Minutes



Meeting CORPORATE STRATEGY AND CO-ORDINATION SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 22nd November 2004 (commencing at 10.30 am)

membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

D E Pulk (Chair)

Tom Pettengell (Vice-Chair)

	Colin Bromfield		K L O'Toole
	G Gilfoyle		Mrs Sheila Place
	Richard Jackson	A	Ray Poynter
A	B Laughton		Maureen Tewson
	Ellie Lodziak	A	Y Woodhead
	J T A Napier		

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor M Brandon-Bravo

“ Mrs K L Cutts

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 11th October 2004, having been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

TAKE YOUR COUNCILLOR TO SCHOOL: ORAL FEEDBACK

Members reported on their activities during Local Democracy Week. Councillor Pettengell had met the Youth Council at Chilwell Comprehensive School, Councillor Pulk 6th formers at The Wheldon Sports College and Councillor Gilfoyle the first meeting of a primary school council. Councillor Napier wondered whether the Council might be more organised in its approach to developing youngsters' interest in local democracy. Councillor Pulk felt that although there was a national initiative, there was a role for the Council too, and he stressed the importance of the Headteacher being interested. Councillor Tewson indicated that when she had been Chair of the County Council, she had

invited most of the primary schools in Beeston to visit County Hall. Councillor Pulk suggested a small group (comprising of himself, Councillor Pettengell, a Liberal Democrat Member and any other interested Member) to look at current practice and suggest improvements. Councillor Lodziak had visited Eastwood Comprehensive School to speak to 6th formers with their local MP. Councillor Bromfield referred to work by the Youth Service to establish youth forums and youth councils around the council.

It was agreed to establish a study group along the lines suggested by the Chair, to scrutinise current efforts to develop young people's interest in local democracy, and to suggest improvements.

CRIME AND BURGLARY RATE REDUCTION – UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

Steve Green, Chief Constable, gave a presentation on the Force's work to reduce crime and burglary rates. He had identified from the minutes Members' concerns about resources being moved out of the county and into the city. He explained how resources were allocated to Divisions by a funding formula. However a serious crime incident, for example, would require officers to move to where they were most needed. This would be for a fixed period.

He displayed information relating to crime levels, which showed significant but varying reductions in all areas. However violent crime, while showing a decline overall, had increased in some areas. The Force was answering 90% of 999 calls within 10 seconds, and had also improved the response to non-999 calls. He referred to the huge increase in the number of such targets.

He explained that when he had last addressed the Committee in March 2004, the Public Service Agreement target had been more of an aspiration than achievable. However latest figures were promising, with it looking possible to achieve the target of a 30% reduction in burglaries by March 2006. This was being achieved through strong performance management, improved systems, the National Intelligence Model, strengthening crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) and the relentless pursuit of the drugs agenda. He indicated that targets on how to respond to burglaries were now being exceeded, and the number of identified criminals awaiting arrest was reducing.

In relation to drug offences, Mr Green indicated that there was a long term commitment, and initiatives constantly needed renewal. He observed that the Force was exceeding targets for drug related arrests, and the Sherwood Project for intensive supervision for prolific drug related offenders was proving successful. He commented that meeting the Public Service Agreement target required action by Police and its partners, and wondered whether the Committee was scrutinising their contribution.

In reply to this last point, Councillor Pulk referred to the meeting held at the Galleries of Justice, where CDRP representatives had been invited. Mr Green referred to a need for consistency in CDRP responses both to individual victims and to crime patterns. He also spoke briefly about serious crime in

Nottinghamshire. Councillor Pulk thanked the Chief Constable for his presentation, and his officers for the work they were doing. He was pleased to see the progress being made to achieve the crime and burglary reduction targets.

Councillor Bromfield wondered whether the figures highlighted hot spots within Divisions. Mr Green replied that Divisional Commanders had information on the local picture. He stated that crime was concentrated on a small number of areas, with a consequent need to focus on them. Councillor Jackson referred to a need for a dramatic improvement in the burglary clear-up rate. Mr Green replied that detection and violent crime were his priority. He expected detection rates to rise above 20% this year, and above 30% in the long term. In reply to questions from Councillor Napier, the Chief Constable observed that an arrest resulted in a charge in about 70% of cases, and that where officers were moved around the county, this was done after an assessment of risks.

Councillor Pulk asked whether Community Support Officers had a role in filling gaps. Mr Green indicated that moving officers happened less frequently, since the creation of a City Division with 800 officers. However there would be difficult decisions to make. He stated that there was no direct link between the number of calls and the number of convictions, with many of the extra calls being about anti-social behaviour. Councillor Pulk referred to Dr Sutton's work on crime reduction, and felt it might be useful for the Committee to speak to a judge or magistrate. Councillor Mrs Cutts commented that the people she represented did not feel that their needs were being met. Mr Green replied that the number of officers in South Nottinghamshire was not reducing, but there were difficulties with operating shifts and vacancies for beat managers. The county now had 70 Community Support Officers. He expected the number to increase and for them to be given the full range of powers in the next 18 months.

It was agreed to note the information from the Chief Constable, and to investigate the possibility of the Committee getting the perspective of a judge or magistrate.

SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AUDIT

Jack Markiewicz gave a brief introduction to the PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) audit of sickness absence performance management in 3 departments, and updated the Committee on current activity. The Corporate Performance Board was working towards further benchmarking, tightening trigger levels, more regular reports from the Employee Service Centre, the establishment of absence management officer posts in departments, involving trade unions, and a clear-out of long term sickness absence cases.

Councillor Pettengell asked whether all departments were taking the same approach. Mr Markiewicz stated there was a need for more co-ordination. However, departments were dealing with sickness effectively. He stated that there would be liaison between absence management officers, who would be able to share good practice. Councillor Pulk observed that the Audit Commission had observed sickness absence as an issue during its recent visit.

He queried PWC's comments about the Occupational Health Unit. Mr Markiewicz referred to efforts to fill the two Occupational Health Nurse vacancies, including one with a mental health specialism, using agency nurses in the meantime, and referring employees to nurses rather than the Occupational Health doctors.

EQUALITY AGENDA FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT – EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Maggie Else, Corporate Equality Officer introduced the report and explained the progress being made by the County Council in equality and diversity in service delivery and employment. She stated that the Audit Commission Team visiting recently had been positive about the County Council's equality work. She indicated that the Authority was close to reaching level 3 of the Local Government Agency Equality Standards. A pressure testing review would take place shortly, with the possibility of a mock inspection in January followed by the full inspection by the Audit Commission. She pointed out that no such county had yet achieved Audit Commission assessment at level 3. She outlined new legislation affecting anti-discrimination in employment.

Ms Else also drew attention to equality impact assessments, which would be included in all Cabinet and Committee reports from April 2005.

WORK PROGRAMME

Alistair McGrady, Scrutiny Officer, reported that items for the 20 December meeting would include the outcome of the comprehensive performance assessment and the Gershon Report.

The meeting closed at 1.00 pm

CHAIR

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