

# **Community Safety, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Board**

**28 October and 9 December, 2015**

## **Summary of Matters Considered**

**Report of the Chair, Councillor L Horton**

The Scrutiny Board met on 28 October and 9 December, 2015 and the following items were considered. I have selected the main points of the discussion which I feel members of the Council will be particularly interested to know more about. For more detail, a copy of the minutes is available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) via the Council's website at <http://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cmis5/>

### **28 October, 2015**

#### **1. Discussion with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment**

The Cabinet Member attended the meeting to discuss her work programme.

She reported on the detail of the proposal to introduce parking charges at Sandwell Valley Country Park (Key Decision Ref. HE034). She informed the Board that a public consultation exercise was taking place. The Board is pleased to hear that income from the proposed charges will be ring-fenced for investment in the park but recommended that the charges remain static for a minimum of three years to provide stability for the public. The Cabinet Member reported that there are no plans to increase the charges at present; however she undertook to ensure that the Board's recommendation was considered as part of the public consultation.

The Board also discussed the proposal to enforce a 'Buses Only' street at New Street, West Bromwich (Key Decision Ref. HE030). The Director-Regeneration and Economy reported that there is already a Traffic Regulation Order in place at this location, however, further enforcement is required, as traffic monitoring exercises have shown as many as 80 cars driving down New Street in a 20 minute period. The Chair raised similar concerns about traffic on St Michael's Street, which is where the entrance to the bus station is located. The Director-Regeneration and Economy undertook to look into this with the Cabinet Member and carry out some monitoring if necessary.

## **2. Overview of Environmental Health and Trading Standards and the effectiveness and performance of those services**

The Board received a report and a detailed presentation on the work of the Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams, along with performance statistics on their services.

The Board heard that fly tipping represents a significant number of complaints made to the Council, however, prosecutions are difficult to secure due to lack of adequate evidence because, as a consequence of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, the authority is no longer able to carry out covert surveillance. The Board was advised that the Team is in the process of procuring one deployable CCTV kit for each of the six towns using grot spot funds and is hoping to secure capital funding to purchase an additional two kits. The Board recommended that the Director-Homes and Communities approve the use of capital funds for the purchase of two additional mobile deployable CCTV kits for the Environmental Health team, to support the team's work in tackling fly tipping around the borough.

The Board also discussed doorstep crime and the vulnerability of the elderly in particular. The Board noted that there is a link between a person experiencing doorstep crime and the subsequent deterioration in their health as post-traumatic stress contributes to a decline in personal care and their ability to carry out daily activities; depression; and the likelihood of going into a care home. The Team has developed an information booklet – entitled "Yee ha!" - to raise awareness of rogue traders and has distributed copies in known rogue trader zones in the borough and carried out visits. However, due to diminishing resources, the number of visits has had to reduce. The Board is concerned about this and feels that members have a responsibility to educate and protect their constituents and has therefore requested that copies of the booklet be provided to members to distribute in their wards. The Board has also recommended that a training seminar be arranged for all members on the

risks and consequences to the public from scams and how they can prevent their constituents becoming victims.

### **3. Managing Unauthorised Traveller Encampment – Joint Protocol with West Midlands Police**

The Board was informed that a review was being undertaken of the joint protocol with West Midlands Police on managing unauthorised traveller encampments. The Protocol was originally produced in 2013 to try and ensure a co-ordinated and appropriate response to unauthorised encampments between the Council and the Police, but following an increase in the number of unauthorised encampments in 2015, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Investment instigated a review. The aim of the review was to re-emphasise the need for a unified approach, outline the circumstances when an unauthorised encampment may be tolerated for a short period of time and to review the full range of powers available to the Council should eviction be required.

The revision of the Protocol also provided an opportunity to strengthen the relationships with Police Inspectors in the north and south of the borough and ensure a more unified approach going forwards.

### **9 December, 2015**

#### **1. Update on West Midlands Police “WMP2020” Change Programme**

The Board received a presentation and update report from the Chief Superintendent of West Midlands Police for Sandwell in relation to its 2020 Change Programme, known as WMP2020.

A key strand of the work is to refocus neighbourhood policing to work closely with communities to build capacity at a local level through problem solving to reduce demand on the force. This will be complemented by helping communities to form organisations such as Neighbourhood Watch schemes. This will require upskilling of neighbourhood police officers and police community support officers. The Force was already piloting this approach in the Princes End and Soho and Victoria wards.

The Board asked for a further update on WMP2020 at a future meeting.

## **2. Feedback on Use of the Community Trigger Under the Anti-Social behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014**

The Board received a report on the Community Trigger, which is a process that gives victims and communities the right to demand action on problems with anti-social behaviour that they have reported in the past, but feel that no action has been taken.

Since going live in October 2014 there have been eight requests for a Community Trigger to be activated. Each case has been investigated and only one has met the threshold. The threshold for the trigger has been modelled after that used in Manchester, which is considered to be national best practice.

As a result of investigating requests that did not meet the threshold, it has been identified that closer working relationships with some registered social landlords in the borough is needed. This is being addressed.

## **3. Feedback on Achievements of the Safer 6 Campaign 2015**

A local Watch Commander from West Midlands Fire Service attended the meeting to provide the Board with feedback on the recent autumn Safer 6 campaign, which had been held to coincide with a number of festivals such as Halloween, Diwali and Bonfire Night. A winter campaign is being planned for early 2016 focusing on road safety.

The Board was supplied with a breakdown for each town visited by the campaign. It was noted that the campaign also supports a number of local ward pledges as many of them relate to topics such as anti-social behaviour, speeding and littering.

It is important to share the successes of the Safer 6 campaigns as widely as possible. The campaigns have a proven record of positive outcomes and it is felt that such an approach could be used successfully in other areas.

The Combined Authority presents an opportunity to work with partners regionally to encourage programmes similar to Safer 6 elsewhere in West Midlands.

The Board recommended to the Cabinet:-

- to work collaboratively with partner agencies to promote the work and ongoing successes of the Safer 6 programmes both within the borough, regionally and nationally;
- to consider establishing an apprenticeship post to strengthen the communications work associated with the Safer 6 programmes both during the campaigns and at other times of year;
- to investigate ways in which the voluntary and community sector in Sandwell can be better engaged with Safer 6 programmes;
- to consider ways in which fly-tipping problems can be addressed including site monitoring, the use of Community Payback and working with neighbouring authorities where appropriate;
- to champion a Safer 6 style approach within the Combined Authority to encourage the take-up of similar programmes elsewhere following the continued and evidenced successes of such programmes in Sandwell to try to address cross-border issues.

#### **4. Highways Investment Plan:**

##### **(a) Investment in Carriageway Maintenance**

The Board received a report on the strategic approach to investment in carriageway maintenance. This is designed to be a preventative approach, whereby cost-effective treatments are used to reduce the need for more expensive works later on.

It was reported that Sandwell has been successful in receiving £7.3million grant funding from the Department to support a total investment of £16.2million to repair all sections of the classified road network in the borough that have been assessed as close to, or in, urgent need of repair over six years to 2020/21. This amounts to 23% of Sandwell's classified roads.

##### **(b) Highway Investment Plans for Public Transport**

This briefing advised the Board of highway investment plans for the smooth running of public transport in Sandwell and what Sandwell needs to do to ensure that there is joined up working with neighbouring West Midlands authorities.

For West Midlands, public transport encompasses a variety of forms including bus, tram, train and light rail. However public transport must also be considered alongside the needs of other modes of transport such as the car, business/freight transport, walking, cycling etc.

Members also noted several initiatives that are currently being developed including the SPRINT rapid transport bus system proposed for the Hagley Road.

## **5. Consultation on Local Strategy for Flood Risk Management**

The Group Manager Highway Services advised the Board of the current consultation on a Local Strategy for Flood Risk Management in the Black Country. This is a requirement of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Members noted that the Council is a Lead Local Flood Authority and has powers and statutory duties to manage and co-ordinate local flood risk management activities. Local flood risk means flooding from surface water, groundwater and smaller watercourses. To achieve this, the Council works closely with a number of partners including the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water and Highways England.

It was reported that the Council has been successful in bidding for funding from the Government relating to flood risk management including capacity building funding and funding for a significant project at Thimblemill Brook.

**Councillor L Horton**  
**Chair of the Community Safety, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Board**