

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 25 July 2012

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Les Marriott (Chair), Councillors Tony Ansell, Ifty Choudary (substituting for Councillor Beverley Mennell) Elizabeth Gowen, Jamie Lane, Phil Larratt, Lee Mason, Suresh Patel and David Palethorpe (substituting for Danielle Stone)

Witnesses Terry Pearson NCC Commissioning Manager -Item 5
Fiona Grant- NCC Item 5
Chief Inspector Faye Tennet Northants Police –Item 5 (b)
Debbie Ferguson- Community Safety Partnership Manager Item 6
Councillor Alan Bottwood- Cabinet Member for Finance- Item 7 (a)
Councillor Mary Markham- Cabinet Member for Housing -Item 8

Officers Renee Bullock HR and Organisational Development Manager
Fran Rodgers Head of Strategic Housing
Ashiedu Joel Engagement Team Leader
Tracy Tiff Scrutiny Officer
Joanne Birkin Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Brendan Glynane, Matt Lynch, Beverley Mennell,(Ifty Choudary substituting) Nilesh Parekh and Danielle Stone(David Palethorpe substituting).

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th May 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

Councillor Patel declared a personal interest in Item 5 a as a member of the County Council Shadow and Wellbeing Board and in Item 11 as a member of Northamptonshire County Council LGSS Member Panel.

Councillor Larratt declared a personal interest in item 11 as a member of Northamptonshire County Council LGSS Member Panel.

5. NORTHAMPTON ALCOHOL REDUCTION ACTION PLAN

The Committee received an update on the effectiveness of the actions in the Northampton Alcohol Reduction Plan from Fiona Grant and Terry Pearson, Commissioning Manager NCC .

The main points of the discussion were as follows:-

Key elements of the Alcohol Implementation Plan were as follows:-

- Re-alignment of alcohol treatment services. This to be based within each locality enabling services to be tailored to locality needs.
- Packages of care- looking at all areas of care and support required by a patient rather than a piecemeal approach.
- A&E Alcohol and Mental health workers available in A&E to identify patients with alcohol and mental health issues and deflect hospital admissions by referral to appropriate services.
- Access to shared electronic records.

The rate of alcohol related admissions in Northamptonshire was increasing at a faster rate than in England and the East Midland average. Between 2008/09 and 2009/10 rates for Northamptonshire increased by 17%. Whilst still showing an increase the change between 2009/10 and 2010/11 was only 4%. Provisional data for Q1- Q3 2011/12 shows a rise of 3%.

40% of those using the services were from Northampton.

The County Council will be holding a meeting for all stakeholders very shortly. The strategy is being updated and all stakeholders will be approached for views.

Any moves to improve the services offered to individuals were seen as positive.

There were still problems with regard to public perception and the culture of drinking. There were different aspects of behaviour being identified for example the rise of drinking at home. Strategies would need to be adapted to take these factors into account.

Problems associated with alcohol vary according to client groups. Older people seemed to be drinking more, which research has linked with increased dementia rates. Previous concerns such as the extension of licensing hours may have changed drinking patterns.

AGREED:- That the update on the progress of the Northampton Alcohol Reduction Action Plan be noted.

6. CHIEF INSPECTOR NORTHANTS POLICE

Chief Inspector Faye Tennet, gave a progress report on the Police's involvement in the Alcohol Reduction Action Plan.

The main points of discussion were as follows:-

In the last few weeks there has been a review of Operation Nightsafe. Special measures have been in place for the policing of special events such as the European football tournament, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and now the Olympics. Mobile police stations have also been deployed at key times.

Education on the effects of drinking has also been very important and there have been binge drinking and "one punch kills" campaigns. There has also been a campaign targeting teenagers and promoting family intervention on the problem of young people pre loading with alcohol before going out into town for an evening out.

Street Pastors have also played an important role, taking drugs and alcohol from people in the street and giving it to the Police.

There has been a significant test purchase operation being undertaken throughout the County, looking at underage drinking and sales. Overall this has been very positive. The licensed trade have been operating well.

Dynamic Emergency Care Centre (known as DECC) continues to run in partnership with East Mids Ambulance Service and the police. This has set up a kind of triage system which has assisted in taking minor injuries out of accident and emergency. This also allows the Police to achieve early intervention in cases that are presented there.

There has been a countywide review of Pub watch; Northampton Pub watch has gained recognition for its scheme.

The Chief Inspector confirmed that the Police did receive a lot of support from the Council's Licensing Committee and they were involved in joint enforcement operations with Licensing officers and other agencies.

The Committee expressed concern that there was still a perception that there was a problem with street drinkers. Chief Inspector Tennet commented that there had been a significant problem 18 months /2 years ago but that there had been a multi-agency approach to tackling this. The approach had been to target certain repeat offenders and through several different interventions had moved the offenders from the town centre. There has recently been a case which had been prosecuted but the outcome had been a fine, which was not very helpful.

Chief Inspector Tennet emphasised that whilst there are powers to remove alcohol from drinkers and move them on this does not help to rectify the situation in the long term. Both the Police and Council wardens have been involved in trying to improve the situation.

AGREED:- That the update From Chief Inspector Tennet on the progress of the Northampton Alcohol Reduction Action Plan be noted.

7. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) PERFORMANCE

Debbie Ferguson, Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Manager presented a progress report on the levels of CSP performance.

The main points of discussion were as follows:-

In early 2011 it was agreed that as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee role, that in meeting their responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009, a bi annual report from the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) would be provided.

The Partnership met some, but not all of the 2011/12 targets. The Partnership achieved substantial reductions in domestic burglary, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour and drug offences. Serious acquisitive crime, vehicle crime in particular has seen an increase and there had been no reduction in violent offences. Consultation undertaken with communities and the annual Strategic Assessment has helped in shaping the priorities for the coming year. A and E Data Sharing is now well established and the statistical data is informing areas of work such as the police Nightsafe operation and problem licensed premises.

The first quarter of 2012/13 has seen continuing reductions in anti-social behaviour, violent crime, burglary and robbery. Vehicle crime continues an upward trend, started in 2011, but vehicle crime levels are still significantly lower than 2009/10. Priority location work in relation to serious acquisitive crime continues and the main area of focus is the Spencer ward.

Members of the Committee expressed concern over attacks on taxi drivers and asked whether CCTV could not be used in tracking offenders. It was pointed out that in order to be able to respond effectively there needed to be an instant report of an incident. Both the Police and the Community Safety Partnership have undertaken some work with the taxi drivers, producing stickers which state that no money is left in the cab, providing crime prevention advice and looking at ways that some protection might be offered to the drivers.

There was a discussion concerning the use of the 101 Police reporting number, with members expressing concern that it had been taking a long time for calls to be answered. Chief Inspector Tennet acknowledged that there had been problems but there had been a change in shift patterns and staff numbers and it was hoped that these problems would ease. She emphasised that the emergency calls are still receiving priority. All crimes in progress should be reported on the 999 number and that emergency call centre handlers would be able to prioritise calls. Debbie Ferguson agreed to follow up on the nature of the measures that are being put in place by the police and report them back to the Committee members.

Members were pleased to see an increase in the number of domestic abuse prosecutions, but asked what percentage of cases went through to prosecution. It was acknowledged

that there had been issues in getting people to report incidents but a lot of work had been done to make the reporting process easier and to assist people in any prosecution follow up. Court sessions specifically dedicated to Domestic Abuse are now being held.

AGREED:- That a further update report be received in six months time.

8. MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE FOLLOWING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT.

(A) ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

Councillor Bottwood, Cabinet Member for Finance and Renee Bullock HR and Organisational Development Manager gave the Committee an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Absence Management Review as agreed by Cabinet in January 2011.

There were four accepted main recommendations:-

Include the Health and Well-being policies into the Annual equality report-this was to ensure consistency of Equality Impact Assessments. This has now been introduced.

Provide appropriate training and support for all managers and team leaders on absence management-There are now a range of E learning modules available to managers related to absence management, this is to ensure that they are able to undertake the learning sessions when convenient and that they can be tailored to individual needs.

Refresher training be available to managers and team leaders on a bi annual basis- this has been covered by the introduction of the new E learning material.

Include Absence Management Information in the Induction programme for new managers-this has also been completed.

There was concern that these measures are in place, but the performance indicators show that there is still an increase in absence management figures. It was agreed that targets have not been met and it was pointed out that the original data may not have been accurate which could have led to the setting of inappropriate targets.

The Committee was informed that these concerns had also been picked up by Audit Committee when they had examined the Performance Indicators and they had requested a report back. This report could also be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was also questioned whether the removal of Enterprise workforce from the figures had made any appreciable difference as that was one area that had always had a high level of absenteeism. The figures for Enterprise and the Leisure Trust were still on the rolling programme but would shortly be coming off and that may show a difference.

Concern was also expressed that the increasing levels of sickness could reflect the amount of pressure that staff were under, with constant service reviews and reductions in staffing numbers.

AGREED

1. That the report regarding performance indicators for absence management requested by Audit Committee be brought to this Committee.
2. That the Committee receives details of the absence management statistics in six months' time.
3. That no further monitoring of the accepted recommendations contained within this Overview and Scrutiny report are required.

(B) NEIGHBOURHOOD MODEL

Councillor Eldred, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Engagement was unable to attend the meeting. Members were concerned that the neighbourhood coordinators were key to delivering the updated Neighbourhood Model and suggested that it would be useful to receive a presentation from the Cabinet Member on the proposed changes to the Neighbourhood Model and whether Overview and Scrutiny could provide input into the process.

AGREED:- Councillor Eldred be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to discuss the Neighbourhood Model.

9. PRE DECISION SCRUTINY: TENANT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY, HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME, TENANCY STRATEGY 2012-13.

Councillor Mary Markham, Cabinet Member for Housing, and Fran Rodgers, Head of Strategic Housing, submitted a summary on three consultations that were currently on going in respect of the Tenant Involvement Strategy, Housing Allocations scheme and the Tenancy strategy 2012-13.

All of the consultations that were taking place were aiming to reach as many people as possible. There were a series of consultation events planned for members of the public, aimed at existing tenants, people on waiting lists, members of the public and encouraging members to get involved.

Tenant Involvement Strategy

The main points of the discussion were as follows:-

The Tenant Involvement Strategy was built on tenants' panels, mystery shopping, estate walkabouts, work done on voids etc.

The Tenant Involvement Strategy will be going to Cabinet in September.

Members who had been to area meetings and heard an explanation of the strategies etc. felt that they had been very informative. Immediate feedback had been very positive.

Currently there were no detailed implementation plans as these would feed out of the Cabinet report in September.

There were some concerns over consistency of housing officers when on estate walkabouts and it was acknowledged that there had been staffing problems but these were

being resolved. Work was in place to allocate an action plan for each area and new people have been recruited to implement that.

Housing Allocations Scheme.

This Council, alongside all others will have to change its scheme in light of the Localism Act. Existing tenancies will not be affected. Benefit changes will affect those people claiming housing benefit, who are of working age and who are currently occupying a property that is larger than their needs.

Currently there are 9,200 people on the Northampton waiting list. . Approximately 500 a month are added to the register and there is an average of 1,000 properties relet over the period of a year. That number of available properties is reducing, Action needs to be taken to try and manage the register and assist people in a realistic manner.

The main proposed changes were: -

- Reduction of bands from 5 to 3
- Additional priority for working households
- Additional priority for voluntary work
- Government has determined that there should be a priority for those leaving the armed forces and their families.
- Local Connections

People will not be accepted for inclusion on the housing register unless basic checks as to their eligibility have been made. The basis for the changes is the need to be transparent. There will be people who will be disappointed; but it is important that they are aware of the realities of the situation and that they are helped to find other solutions.

There will be a 16 week consultation at the end of which time a report will be made to Cabinet.

Committee asked that they be given an opportunity to see a summary of responses.

Tenancy Strategy 2012-13

Currently tenants are offered an introductory tenancy of a year, then provided there are no problems they will be offered a lifelong tenancy. Consultation is currently underway on proposals to limit the length of tenancies. After an initial period a set period tenancy would be offered, probably of five years. A review would then take place and if circumstances had not changed for the tenant then they would likely be offered a renewal.

There would not be any change for existing tenants and elderly and disabled tenants would still be offered lifetime tenancies.

There could also be variations in the amount of rent paid by different types of tenant.

Members felt that it was very important that all members were aware of the potential changes. There had been a Councillor Development evening on the topic but there had been poor attendance.

AGREED:-that a summary of responses to the consultation on the housing allocations policy be brought to this Committee at its meeting in September.

10. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the 2011-2012 Outturn Report

The main points of concern were:-

- Absence Levels
- Number of households living in temporary accommodation
- Total Number of people living rough on the streets

The Committee felt that there was too much emphasis on those areas which were showing red flags, irrespective of the size of changes. It was felt that it might be more helpful to be able to examine performance trends. It was agreed that it would be useful to arrange an information session on the performance management data.

The Committee was reminded that there had been a Task and Finish Group that had examined the problem of rough sleepers. It was felt that there should be a review of how the recommendations had been implemented and the impact that they were having.

Members also commented that the fly tipping statistics only related to the land that Enterprise were responsible for. It was therefore felt that there should be some figures made available for land that is still the responsibility of the Council.

AGREED: -

- 1 A Councillor Development session on the performance management trends be arranged.
2. The impact of the recommendations of the scrutiny review on rough sleepers be examined at the next meeting on 17 September 2012.
3. Information on the fly tipping clear up rates for areas under the Council's responsibility be made available to the Committee.

11. SCRUTINY PANELS

(A) SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - SERIOUS ACQUISITIVE CRIME AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Committee noted the report on the progress of the Serious Acquisitive Crime and Community Safety Review.

(B) SCRUTINY PANEL 2- RETAIL EXPERIENCE.

The Committee noted the report on the progress of the Retail Experience Review.

(C) SCRUTINY PANEL 3- INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS AND SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

Councillor Larratt, Chair of Scrutiny Panel 3 – Infrastructure Requirements and Section 106 Agreements presented the draft scope for the Review for approval.

AGREED:- The scope for the Review be approved.

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHARED SERVICES (LGSS) SCRUTINY INQUIRY

The Committee was informed that Councillor Larratt had withdrawn from the membership of this Inquiry as he had an interest as a member of Northamptonshire County Council LGSS Member Panel. Councillor Malpas had been put forward to take Councillor Larratt's place.

AGREED:- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee approves the change to the membership of the Inquiry .

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTING AND MONITORING WORKING GROUP

The Committee was asked to confirm the membership of the Reporting and Monitoring Working Group for 2012/2013 as follows:-

Councillor Les Marriott (Chair)
Councillor Brendan Glynane
Councillor Beverley Mennell
Councillor Nilesh Parekh
Councillor Danielle Stone

AGREED:- the membership of the Reporting and Monitoring Working Group for 2012/2013 be approved.

14. REPORT BACK FROM NBC'S REPRESENTATIVE TO NCC'S HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Lee Mason attended the meeting of the Northamptonshire County Health and Social Care Committee on behalf of Councillor Danielle Stone, Northampton Borough Council's representative.

The main points of the meeting were:-

Measures taken to address the pressures on the Northampton General A&E department- There has been a minor injuries unit set up next to the Accident and Emergency which has made it easier to direct those cases away from Accident and Emergency. There are still issues of education with people presenting with problems that would be more suitable being dealt with by a GP.

The Committee will shortly be splitting into 2 separate bodies in order to manage its workload. It is an important scrutiny body and Members felt that there it was important that a representative attend on their behalf.

AGREED :- (1) That in the absence of Councillor Danielle Stone, Councillor Lee Mason be the substitute representative on the Committee.
(2) That the update be noted.

15. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee did not identify any items for pre decision scrutiny.

16. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 8:35 pm