

## **Minutes of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board**

**10<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 at 5.30 pm**  
**at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Khatun (Chair);  
Councillor Preece (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors Downing, Eaves and Tranter.

**In Attendance:** Adrian Scarrott (Director - Neighbourhoods)  
Gary Bowman (Chief Executive – Service  
Manager Area Working)

**Apologies:** Councillor Tipper.

25/14 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup>  
November, 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

26/14 **Anti-social Behaviour Policy, Hotspots and New Tools and Powers to Address**

The Board received a report on the Council's anti-social behaviour (ASB) policy with particular regard to its function as a social landlord in identifying and tackling ASB hotspots. The report also provided an overview of the changes introduced by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Following a restructure in June 2014, a new comprehensive Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Service had been created. The Service had broad functions including early intervention work to prevent anti-social behaviour; power to take enforcement action on persistent anti-social behaviour; supporting the Safer Sandwell Partnership (The Police and Crime Board) with the practical work to reduce crime, identifying vulnerable people and repeat callers living in priority areas, and problem solving through town tasking and community operating groups (COGs). In each aspect of work the team had a particular focus on meeting the

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needs of victims. Each of the new Sandwell Local centres had Neighbourhood ASB officers working as part of an integrated team with ward based Neighbourhood Officers, enabling the sharing of information, with the ability to respond to urgent priorities, ensuring a consistent approach across the six towns.

The Service also worked in partnership with the Police to identify ASB 'repeat locations' or 'hot-spots', as these areas tended to be those areas most accessible to the public, for example town centres, car parks, open spaces and children's play areas park. They often involved multiple offenders and more than one complainant, resulting in a wider impact on the community. It was noted that the greatest numbers of reported incidents arose in Soho Victoria, West Bromwich Central and Princess End. Adjacent wards in Smethwick, Tipton and West Bromwich also had a higher number of incidents reported. These areas corresponded with existing Policing Priority Areas (PPAs) in Princess End and Soho Victoria.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 gave the Police and the Council new powers and streamlined existing powers to enable a faster and more effective response to anti-social behaviour. The Act had been introduced incrementally during October 2014 and was designed to give victims a greater say in the way their reports of ASB were dealt with. The Board was briefed on each of the new powers, which had been reduced from 19 to 6.

Partners and council officers were working together on an implementation plan in respect of the Act through a task and finish group reporting to the Safer Sandwell Partnership. The Council's scheme of delegation would be amended accordingly in order that the relevant officers from the various council departments were authorised to use the new powers. A series of briefings had taken place for members on the Act to discuss how it could work in practice. Further briefings and training events were planned for 2015.

27/14

**Discussion with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Town and Neighbourhood Services**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Town and Neighbourhood Services had been invited to attend the Board to

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discuss his portfolio of responsibility and forward plan and give the Board opportunity to fulfil its role as critical friend.

The Director – Neighbourhoods was also present.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member highlighted in particular the current review of neighbourhood working that was taking place (see Minute No. 20/14 of 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2014). He discussed in detail his vision for the delivery of services at a local level through the development of a more generic workforce that would be able to respond faster and more efficiently to residents.

This new model of working would save money through the elimination of duplication and waste, enabling more focus on larger issues. A particular example discussed was missed appointments, which caused not only inconvenience but also wasted costs to both the Council and the client so a review of the appointments system would be undertaken to seek to address this. This work would take place alongside the Facing the Future Programme (see Minute No. 24/14 of 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2014), which was looking at smarter and more affordable service delivery across the whole of the Council in the face of continued budget reductions. The Board welcomed the opportunity to have an input into this piece of work at an appropriate time.

The Director - Neighbourhoods reported that a review was due to be undertaken to look at the structure of the Welfare Rights Service and its role in terms of locality working. The Board welcomed the opportunity to have an input into this piece of work at an appropriate time.

28/14

**Update on Recommendations from Scrutiny Review of Domestic Homicide Reviews and Scrutiny Review of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) Delivery Plan Analysis and Best Practice**

The Board received an update on the recommendations contained within its review of Domestic Homicide Reviews and Scrutiny Review of the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) Delivery Plan Analysis and Best Practice.

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It was noted that some of the recommendations had not been implemented fully because there had not been any new domestic homicide cases to test the new procedures against. The Board therefore requested a further report at such time that all new procedures had been fully tested.

With regards to the recommendation for the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board to review the guidance contained within Independent Management Reviews, the Board felt that it was now more appropriate for this piece of work to be undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) or an appropriate sub-group.

The Board enquired about the vacant position of Chair of the Safer Sandwell Partnership (SSP), following the departure of the previous Chair. It was reported that the Vice-Chair would take on the role in the interim period before a new appointment was made. The Board requested that the role be filled by another Sandwell chief officer, subject to any restrictions in the SSP constitution. .

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that a further report be submitted when the new procedures have been tested fully;
- (2) that, with regards to the recommendation for the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board to review the guidance contained within Independent Management Reviews, the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) or an appropriate sub-group be asked to complete this piece of work;
- (3) that, subject to the requirements set out in its constitution, the Safer Sandwell Partnership be requested to consider a Sandwell chief officer to fill the vacant position of Chair.

29/14

**Work Programme**

The Board reviewed its work programme for 2014/2015.

Following West Midlands Police's recent announcement that it would be closing all police station front desks in Sandwell; with the

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exception of West Bromwich Police Station, which would be reduced from, 24hr opening to 8am to 10pm; the Board requested that an appropriate officer from West Midlands Police be asked to attend its next meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the consultation that was undertaken on the closure of front offices and its results.

The Board also requested that the Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to its next meeting to discuss his vision and priorities for Sandwell.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) that representative from West Midlands Police be asked to attend the meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2015 to discuss the consultation that was undertaken on the closure of police station front offices and its results;
- (2) that the Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to the meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2015 to discuss his vision and priorities for Sandwell.

(The meeting ended at 6.04 pm)

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