

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 22 MARCH 2016 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.30 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Norman Jorgensen (Chairman), Michael Firmager (Vice-Chairman), Chris Bowring, Ken Miall, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight and Bill Soane

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Mark Ashwell, Superintendent Rob France and Bob Pitts

Officers Present

Matt Davey, Head of Highways and Transport
Brian Grady, Head of Strategic Commissioning
Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services Officer
Davina Williams, Policy and Strategy Manager (Community Safety Partnership, Engagement and Commissioning)

Others Present

Superintendent Rob France, Thames Valley Police
Jean Lee, Careers Teacher, Addington School

26. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

27. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

30. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

**31. UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE COMMUNITY CAFÉ AT SHUTERS,
WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Jean Lee, Careers Teacher at Addington School, introduced an update on the Community Café project which involved students with learning difficulties. The project had been running for about 18 months and assisted students in obtaining City and Guilds qualifications. It involved cooking food offsite and selling it at the Council Offices every Thursday during school terms. Six students participated in the first year. This year, three had stayed on to mentor three new students.

It involved hard work for the students but gave them great experience of customer service and working in a team. Teachers and parents had noted how the students have grown in confidence.

Abi Hart and Ayse Akyildiz, two students participating in the project, gave a presentation involving photographs of key events such as the opening of the café and the first anniversary. They explained what the project had done for them. Asked by Members what they enjoyed most about it, they said that they enjoyed serving customers and it also got them out of the school environment every week.

Karen Seymour, Instructor for Hospitality at the school, said that they encouraged students to have a voice. The work experience helped students to deal with everyday situations that they might find difficult, such as customers changing their minds.

Davina Williams, Policy and Strategy Manager (Community Safety Partnership, Engagement and Commissioning), thanked the school for their participation and for making great use of the café space for the Council.

Asked by the Chairman how they saw the project going into the future, Jean Lee stated that they are currently identifying students for future years.

RESOLVED: That the update report be noted and that the staff and students of Addington School be congratulated for its success to date.

32. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Davina Williams, Policy and Strategy Manager (Community Safety Partnership, Engagement and Commissioning), introduced the report. She explained that the partnership involved the police, health services, judges, the probation service, Members of the Council and key agencies. The report focused on the four priority areas one year into the two year plan.

The first priority related to domestic abuse. The Partnership tried to ensure that there was appropriate support for victims and perpetrators. This was often a hidden crime. Much of their work involved raising awareness and providing training, for example on safeguarding.

Superintendent Rob France, Thames Valley Police, stated that he believed that instances of domestic abuse are underreported. For example, it can easily pass unnoticed by neighbours where there are large detached houses.

Asked to explain changes in the definitions of domestic abuse which can make it difficult to compare statistics over time, Superintendent France stated that this was done by the Home Office and was out of their control but included, for example, changes in the lower age limit for some definitions.

Members asked about reasons for underreporting such as men being too embarrassed to report abuse or spouses not wanting to risk breaking up a marriage. Superintendent France responded that it was not really possible to estimate underreporting. He emphasised that if a crime was reported to police then they would move to prosecute. However, there were other organisations that people could go to, for example Women's Aid. Brian Grady, Head of Strategic Commissioning, mentioned in this context that there was a triage group dealing with reports involving children.

Asked if he believed that the incidence of domestic abuse is falling or increasing, Superintendent France stated that he believed that it was falling overall but that the rate of reporting was increasing.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey said that women tended to be more aware of the extent of abuse because they all knew women who were being abused. She believed that in many cases women did not report abuse unless it affected their children.

Brian Grady stated that there was a need for a national conversation on domestic abuse. Rob France added that awareness raising needed to start in schools.

Davina Williams summarised the report on Priority 2 relating to repeat offenders. She stated that there was a support programme for a small cohort of individuals. The Partnership would try to help get them into employment. There were often multiple barriers that had to be overcome, for example dyslexia or the person may be a drug user or ex-drug user. Compared to the other Berkshire authorities, Wokingham had fewer repeat offenders.

Asked how funding works under this priority, Davina Williams and Superintendent France responded that there are a number of sources including the Police, housing services and anti-drugs services.

Davina Williams reported that the Council had changed providers of the substance misuse recovery service to an organisation called SMART.

Asked if driving under the influence of drugs is on the increase, Superintendent France stated that new testing kits would be available soon to help Police identify offenders.

Davina Williams summarised Priority 3 which included various types of hidden crime such as incidents related to race or religion, homophobic or transphobic crimes, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. She reported that increased awareness of racial crime had led to increased reporting.

Superintendent France stated that much depends on the links that the authorities have with different groups. For example, they had good links with the Mosque in Earley but fewer connections with disabled people.

Ken Miall asked if the Council had policies to deal with transsexual issues in schools. Davina Williams responded that this has been raised with educational psychology services who are working with schools. Brian Grady proposed to bring a short report on the matter to the next meeting.

Priority 4 was summarised as dealing with issues affecting residents of all ages and included burglary, theft of vehicles, anti-social behaviour, concerns of safety and fear of crime. Superintendent France reported that there had been an increase in violent offences and sexual offences whereas burglaries were down.

Davina Williams referred to a survey of young people which showed that their top concerns were related to careless driving and speeding. The Council's budget for the partnership programmes this year was £118,000 and that will be reduced by 1 per cent next year.

Asked if Prevent - the programme to counter radicalisation - will be made a new priority, Superintendent France stated that this wasn't a particularly big problem in the Borough and that it might be more useful to look in general at people who are vulnerable to exploitation whether it be in relation to drugs or terrorists.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the update report be noted; and
- 2) a report dealing with transgender issues in schools be discussed at the next meeting.

33. ROAD REPAIRS - WARD MEMBER ROAD REPAIR NOTIFICATIONS

Members received and considered a report on road repairs and Ward Member road repair notifications.

Members asked about the designation of the A329(M) and if it was appropriate to consider it a 'local' road when summarising expenditure. Matt Davey, Head of Highways and Transport, stated that he considered it to be a local road. He agreed that it was unusual to have responsibility for a Motorway class road. However, whether it was designated as Motorway class or not, the Council would still have to maintain it to the same standard appropriate for the level and speed of traffic.

The Chairman asked about the timescale for the introduction of a web-based service for customer queries. Matt Davey said that the model was already there for waste services and he hoped that the roads service could be available in three to six months.

Responding to queries about the forward programme of projects, Matt Davey stated that the programme for the next year would be available in a couple of weeks and they will then extend the programme over 2 or 3 years ahead.

Members welcomed the facility for them to report issues to a designated email address and reported that it was working well for those who use it.

RESOLVED: That the report on road repairs and Ward Member notification be noted.

34. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Mark Ashwell, Deputy Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities, stated that the Borough is fortunate to have one thousand community organisations which receive about £13 million in funding from the Council. No other Local Authority had protected this funding as well as Wokingham. He was compiling a single register of organisations to help with a more coordinated approach. Organisations had been assured of a pause in budget reductions and that they would receive substantial notice of any future changes which would give time to find alternative funding.

In response to Member queries about funding Outside Bodies, Brian Grady, Head of Strategic Commissioning, stated that some Outside Bodies were not charities but where Bodies received large funding from the Council, there should be a Council representative with voting rights.

Asked about the effects of cuts in funding, Brian Grady responded that the impact would be up to the trustees of the organisations to assess. The Chairman asked that the value that organisations deliver be taken into account.

Brian Grady also reported that the review of adult social care was almost complete. Mark Ashwell said he would bring draft recommendations to this Committee before final decisions were made.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the update report be noted; and
- 2) the Executive Member for Regeneration and Communities bring recommendations to the September or November meeting.

35. REVIEW OF OUTSIDE BODIES APPOINTMENTS

Members received and considered a report on appointments to Outside Bodies. Further information on the funding of such Bodies was circulated at the meeting.

Members asked about specific Bodies that they thought received funding but were not identified as such in the list. Colm Ó Caomhánaigh, Democratic Services Officer, asked members to direct any queries about the information to him and he would check again. Similarly if Members were aware of Bodies on which the Council had a representative that were not on the list, they should notify the Democratic Services section.

Members asked about funding from Town and Parish Councils. Officers responded that they would look into that and it would be interesting to see which Town and Parish Councils were investing funds.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report on appointments to outside bodies be noted; and
- 2) the information be circulated to all Members of the Council once it has been checked for completeness.

36. WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Work Programme that was circulated with the Agenda. The Chairman noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee would have new items for this Committee in the new municipal year.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Work Programme be noted; and
- 2) the programme be amended with the relevant resolutions from this meeting.