

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Thursday, 20th January, 2011 at 6.00 p.m.
in Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor C. Wilson (Chairman)
Councillor Cotterill (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Attwood, Burston, J R Davies, Foster, Mrs D Harley, Lowe,
Mrs Martin, Mrs Westwood and Ryder.

OFFICERS

Assistant Director of Finance (Customer Services) (Directorate of Corporate Resources), (Lead Officer to the Committee), Assistant Director Policy, Performance and Resources, (Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services), Treasurer, Assistant Director Human Resources and Organisational Development and Head of Accountancy (Directorate of Corporate Resources), Assistant Director of Policy and Improvement, Head of Community Safety, Anti Social Behaviour Unit Operations Manager, Marketing and Communications Officer (Chief Executive's Directorate), Principal Solicitor and Miss K Fellows, (both Directorate of Corporate Resources).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Superintendent Stuart Johnson – Dudley Local Policing Unit – West Midlands Police

33. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Caunt and Ms Wood.

34. **SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillors Mrs Westwood and Lowe had been appointed as substitute members for Councillors Caunt and Ms Wood respectively for this meeting of the committee only.

35. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor J R Davies made a personal declaration in relation to Agenda Item No. 7 – Revenue Budget Strategy 2011/12 in so far as it related to

Dudley Citizens Advice Bureau as he worked for Sandwell Citizens Advice Bureau and had a colleague who worked for Dudley Citizens Advice Bureau.

36. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 4th November, 2010, be approved as a correct record and signed.

37. PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this Agenda item.

38. CONSIDERATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY) REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE PETITIONS OFFICER.

No Petitions had been referred to the Committee.

39. REVENUE BUDGET 2011/12

A joint report of the Chief Executive and the Treasurer was submitted on the proposed Revenue Budget Strategy for 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 – 2013/14.

Following the presentation of the content of the report, and its appendices the Assistant Director of Policy and Improvement responded to a question from a Member and advised that the Community Safety budget reflected the core elements of community partnerships and although at present there was no overview of the implications of changes, scrutiny of the proposals in relation to the budget would take place during the next few weeks and thereafter further detailed information should become available.

In responding to a question in relation to the efficiency cuts in the Children's Services budget the Treasurer indicated that there was a need for a further review of expenditure in the above and other Directorates and an equivalent figure to that referred to in paragraph thirty of the report submitted, had been set aside in the general fund as a contingency whilst the process was underway.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet's Revenue Budget Strategy proposals for 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2011/12 – 2013/14, as set out in the report, and Appendices to the report,

submitted be noted and that the Cabinet be informed that there were no observations that this Select Committee wished to make on the proposals.

40. WEST MIDLANDS POLICE PROGRAMME PARAGON UPDATE.

A report of Superintendent Stuart Johnson, Dudley Local Policing Unit was submitted on the developments within the West Midlands Police brought about through Programme Paragon.

In presenting the report Superintendent Johnson referred to the fact that crime rates continued to fall.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted Members asked questions and made comments relating in particular to:-

The rising number of arrests for drug related offences;

The level of authority Police Community Support Officers had;

That Members had been advised that crime rates had reduced due to adverse weather conditions;

Concerns in relation to the Police issuing press releases that crime had reduced due to adverse weather conditions, as those conditions had resulted in critical problems both financially and physically for other members of the public and a request that more sensitivity be exercised when issuing press releases in the future;

Praise given for the efforts of the Police in relation to progress made with Programme Paragon given financial restraints upon the Authority in view of the current economic climate.

In responding to questions raised and comments made Superintendent Johnson accepted that there were problems with shift patterns of the Neighbourhood Police teams, however it was hoped that problems may be resolved as shift patterns were changing within the next three months.

He also referred to Operation Advent that had taken place in December, 2010 and focused upon drug related crimes and the success of the operation resulting in significant arrests.

In relation to the role of Police Community Support Officers he stated that they formed an integral front line of policing operations and recognised that they were the ears and eyes of the Police. He stated that he was unsure that they would be as effective in community engagement should they be granted powers of arrest and in any event an increase in their powers would be a national issue to be determined by the Home Office.

He also commented that there was little evidence to support a correlation between crime and the adverse weather conditions. It was accepted that the weather suppressed street crime.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on the developments within the West Midlands Police brought about through Programme Paragon, be noted.

41. DUDLEY BOROUGH HATE CRIME ROLE UPDATE

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on Dudley MBC's and Safe and Sound's approach to hate crime and outlining some achievements to date.

Prior to presenting the report the Head of Community Safety thanked the Committee for their best wishes and support during her recent illness.

In presenting the report the Head of Community Safety reported that there had been one meeting of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum with a further meeting planned in February, 2011.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted Members asked a number of questions, made comments and raised concerns.

In responding to a question from a Member Superintendent Johnson reported that within the previous six months there had been one hundred and fourteen hate crimes recorded which was considered to be a small figure. He indicated that hate crime had increased during the previous two years and that nine out of ten reported incidents involved general verbal abuse with physical abuse being in the minority of cases.

He also stated that fifty per cent of the recorded incidents had been as a result of the English Defence League protest, which had increased recorded incidents.

He indicated that hate crime incidents towards those who were disabled were relatively low.

It was reported that West Midlands Police were in the process of changing ownership of incidents of hate crime to the Criminal Investigations Department.

The Head of Community Safety advised that work was being undertaken whereby activities and profiles of offenders was examined, in order to ascertain the motivation of hate crime and the evidence collated by the Partnership Analyst, who would assimilate that with the data held by the Police.

It was reported that the hate crime data contained in paragraph sixteen of the report submitted would be collated at partnership level on a monthly basis and subsequently reported to the Safe and Sound Board on a quarterly basis.

The Head of Community Safety confirmed that she would put forward the request to the Community Safety Partnership Analyst that the data collated include the proportion of incidents which related to religion as opposed to other areas of hate crime for monitoring purposes.

In relation to reporting incidents of hate crime, the Head of Community Safety stated that when developing the Local Area Action Plan consideration would be given to the provision of a separate telephone number being provided for such incident reporting.

Superintendent Johnson indicated that there had been instances when incidents of hate crime within the work place had been reported to the Police.

Superintendent Johnson reported that West Midlands Police had no current intention to set up a separate reporting mechanism for incidents of hate crime and that victims of hate crime could report those to the Police Community Support Officers and via internet social networks. There were also systems for capturing data in relation to such reports made over social networks.

The Head of Community Safety advised that incidents of hate crime could also be reported to the Crime Reduction Officer with Portfolio for Hate Crime or their Housing Manager and that the Crime Reduction Officer would work with the Police in order to encourage the victim to report the incident.

She also indicated that the Crime Reduction Officer could investigate how any possible changes to council policy in relation to rent arrears affecting re-locating those council tenants who were victims of hate crime.

There followed a debate in relation to the definition of hate crime as contained in the MacPherson report, which had been commissioned as a result of the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, and consideration given to a possible motion in respect of that definition.

Superintendent Johnson advised that data in relation to the percentage of perpetrators of hate crime that had showed remorse following the crime had not been obtained.

In relation to the regional comparative data the Head of Community Safety provided data of the percentage rates of the number of reported incidents that proceeded to Court in comparison to the number of incidents that were reported.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in report, submitted on Dudley MBC's and Safe and Sound's approach to hate crime, outlining some of achievements to date, be noted.
- (2) That a further report be submitted on the MacPherson definition of Hate Crime to the next meeting of the Committee.

42. QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT.

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on the performance of the Council in relation to activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee for the second quarter of 2010/11, July to September, 2010 inviting members to review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in respect of the matters under the responsibility of this Select Committee.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the Report, submitted on the Council's quarterly performance for the second quarter of 2010/11, on the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee, be noted.

43. TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO REQUEST THE ATTENDANCE OF ANY SAFE AND SOUND BOARD MEMBER OR THE PROVISION OF ANY INFORMATION AT A FUTURE MEETING IN RELATION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES WORK PROGRAMME.

Following discussion on this issue it was:

RESOLVED

That the attendance of any Safe and Sound Board Member or the provision of any information at the next meeting would not be required.

The meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.

CHAIRMAN