

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

Thursday 13th March 2008 at 6.00 pm
in Committee Room 3, Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor A. Turner (Chairman)
Councillor Cotterill (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Burston, A. Finch, Ms Foster, Harley, Jones and Nottingham.

OFFICERS

Director of Law and Property (as acting Lead Officer to the Committee), Head of Policy (Chief Executive's Directorate), Head of Traffic and Engineering, Group Engineer (Development), Project Engineer (Traffic and Transportation) (all Directorate of the Urban Environment), Mr J Jablonski and Mr P Furidze (Directorate of Law and Property).

Also in Attendance

Assistant Director of Finance (Revenues, Benefits and Management Support), Principal Solicitor (Directorate of Law and Property) and Mr P Harris (Community Partnerships Officer – West Midlands Police).

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APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ahmed, Mrs Collins and Ryder and the Head of Community Safety (Chief Executive's Directorate).

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor A Turner declared a Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, in agenda item number 6 (Driver Watch) in view of his being a Founder Member of Driver Watch.

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MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th January 2008, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this agenda item.

DRIVER WATCH

A verbal report was given by Phil Harris, a West Midlands Police Community Partnerships Officer, on the Driver Watch Scheme.

It was reported that the Driver Watch Scheme was a crime prevention initiative set up by West Midlands Police at Halesowen. Drivers enrolled as members of the scheme worked together with the Police to help stop crime and make neighbourhoods feel safer by acting as eyes and ears in communities that they drive about in doing their work. The information was subsequently passed onto to the Police to evaluate and take necessary action. It was reported that the scheme was a passive approach in increasing public vigilance. Participants were only meant to report and not tackle crime and potential crimes.

The meeting was also informed that about 102 taxi drivers, milkmen and driving instructors were members and that efforts were underway to restart and expand the scheme. With this in mind, it was suggested that consideration be given to drivers of Council vehicles being included in the scheme as this would be a major boost to the scheme's effectiveness and encourage local business with fleets to join up.

Arising from the verbal report given, Members asked questions and received answers on the operation of the scheme and its success rate. It was reported that Driver Watch members were identified by Driver Watch stickers on their vehicles, carried logs and note pads to record their observations for later transmission to the Police via a dedicated telephone line to a named officer at Halesowen Police Station. It was reported that, depending on the severity of the incident observed, drivers could ring the emergency 999 number or 0845 113 5000 for other incidents. The meeting was also informed that Driver Watch members received advice and training in how and what to observe.

Although it was not possible to provide definitive data on whether the scheme had a high or low success rate, information such as incidents figures/logs was available together with results arising from these. However, it was also commented that there were benefits, such as public reassurance and increased vigilance, in those areas where Driver Watch was in operation. The scheme had few cost implications since the information took a few minutes to note and pass on to the police for action later.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information as now reported on the Driver Watch Scheme together with the comments and responses given at the meeting, be noted.
- (2) That Directors of Council Directorate be requested to consider the introduction of a pilot Driver Watch Scheme involving drivers of Council vehicles in their Directorates.

- (3) That Mr Harris be requested to supply Democratic Services with the information requested for distribution to Members of the Committee.
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59 CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13(c), it was

RESOLVED

That agenda item 9, Legislation Relating to Crime and Anti-social Behaviour on Public Highways, be considered as the next item of business.

60 LEGISLATION RELATING TO CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ON PUBLIC HIGHWAYS

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted, reviewing the actions open to the Council in the light of legislation on closure of highways on the grounds of crime on anti-social behaviour.

As part of the presentation of the report the present situation, as outlined in paragraphs 17 to 20 of the report, in relation to present and proposed gating orders and a special extinguishment order, was commented upon.

Arising from the presentation given, Members commented in particular on the actual or proposed orders referred to and also cited a number of problem sites in their wards. The view was also expressed that there were a number of pathways that could be closed since they were a cost to the local authority by being overgrown, encouraging nuisance and attracting fly tippers.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report submitted, on a review of the actions open to the Council in the light of legislation on closure of highways on the grounds of crime and anti-social behaviour, be noted.

61 OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2008/09

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on proposals for the Outline Work Programme for the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

Arising from consideration given to the report, a concern was raised as to whether or not Directorate Reporting under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998, was included in the Council's Risk Register. This matter could be checked and Members notified.

The possible engagement of young people in the work of the Select Committee was also raised.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the content of the Committee's Outline Work Programme for 2008/09, be approved.
- (2) That the Head of Policy (Chief Executive's Directorate) be requested to arrange a meeting between the Chairman of this Committee and representatives on the Youth Parliament so as to explore how best to capture young people's views and ideas regarding community safety and community services with a view to their inclusion at a future or future meetings of the Committee.

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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN – DIRECTORATE OF LAW AND PROPERTY

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on the annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2008/09 for the Directorate of Law and Property. A copy of the Plan was attached as an Appendix to the report submitted.

Arising from consideration of the report, Members commented whether it would be possible to include non-BME women taxi/private hire drivers in the proposed focus group referred to in the report.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendices submitted, on the annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan for 2008/09 for the Directorate of Law and Property, be noted.
- (2) That consideration be given to widening the female ethnic minority taxi/private hire drivers focus group.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.

CHAIRMAN