

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

Thursday, 4th November, 2010 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, Caunt, Mrs D Harley, Ms Wood and Woodall.

OFFICERS

Assistant Director of Finance (Revenues, Benefits and Management Support) (Lead Officer to the Committee), (Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement), Assistant Director of Policy and Improvement, Head of Contingency and Disaster Management, Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager and Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator (All Chief Executives Directorate), Divisional Manager of Children's Specialist Services, Safeguarding and Review Unit (Directorate of Children's Services), Senior Solicitor and Miss K Fellows (both Directorate of Law, Property and Human Resources).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Ms J Winpenny, West Midlands Fire Service.

26. **MS DAWN HEWITT – HEAD OF COMMUNITY SAFETY**

The Chairman reported on the recent illness of Dawn Hewitt.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, be requested to write to Dawn Hewitt wishing her a speedy recovery and best wishes.

27. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J R Davies, Foster, Mrs P Martin and Ryder.

28. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Woodall declared a personal interest in Agenda Item number 8 – The Reluctance of Victims of Domestic Abuse to pursue the matter through the Courts - in so far as the report referred (a) to the justice system and he was a supplemental Justice of the Peace and (b) to

Children in the care of the Local Authority and his daughter was a designated Child Protection Officer with the Primary Care Trust.

29. MINUTES

A member raised concerns that the information requested in resolution (1) (a) to (c) had not been received following the last meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2nd September, 2010, be approved as a correct record and signed.
 - (2) That the Chairman in conjunction with the Lead Officer to the Committee pursue the provision of the information referred to in resolution 1 (a) to (c) of Minute 21.
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30. PUBLIC FORUM

No matters were raised under this Agenda item.

31. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CONTINGENCY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT 2009/10

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the state of preparedness within the Council to respond to those incidents both minor and major which could befall the community of Dudley either from natural or man-made disasters within the Borough. Documents and plans held by Contingency and Disaster Management, Council training sessions and exercises for 2009/10 and a list of incidents for the year were appended to the Report submitted.

Arising from the presentation of the report, and appendices to the report submitted, members made suggestions, raised concerns and questions. In responding The Head of Contingency and Disaster Management indicated as follows:-

- That there was a protocol for dealing with the disasters referred to within the report submitted which had been circulated to Elected Members and was also available on the Council's intranet.
- In relation to the English Defence League Demonstration on 3rd April, 2010, West Midlands Police utilised the Himley Hall facility as a control centre for the operation and were not charged for the facility, as they were a partner organisation. The centre was utilised as a Multi Agency Control Centre and no individual agency were

Charged as the Centre was also the Council's operations centre for the duration.

Members then commented as follows:-

The Chairman indicated that West Midlands Police should be informed that they may be charged for utilising the facility at Himley Hall in the future.

A member raised concerns that West Midlands Police had removed a CCTV Camera from the Gornal area in order that it could be utilised for the above demonstration and upon its return it was no longer working. There was general agreement that the Police should be responsible for its repair or replacement.

- It was reported that an incident would be categorised as a disaster if it required one or more of the responding bodies, a serious use of resources, a large number of facilities or the infrastructure was in jeopardy
- In relation to uninterrupted power supplies, it was stated that there was a generator at Himley Hall that offered a back up power supply and that the Council had back up telephone lines and mobile phones.

The Chairman commended the work of the Contingency and Disaster Management team.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on The Annual Report of the Head of Contingency and Disaster Management 2009/10, be noted.

32. THE RELUCTANCE OF VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE TO PURSUE THE MATTER THROUGH THE COURTS

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the reasons why victims of domestic abuse were reluctant to pursue the matter through the courts which in turn impacted on sanction detection rates. Sanction detections were defined as offences for which someone was charged, summonsed, received a caution or other formal sanction.

In presenting the report the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator made particular reference to the Council's campaigns with hard to reach groups such as those in respect of sexual orientation and disabilities.

In presenting the part of the report relating to Child Protection, the Divisional Manager for the Safeguarding and Review Unit made reference to the Domestic Abuse Response Team dealing with an average of four hundred referrals each month, with three hundred and twenty involving a child in the household, with the majority of referrals being low level risk and

only a small number proceeding to an initial assessment by children's social care or a Section 47 child protection investigation and subsequent child protection plan.

In responding to a question from the Vice Chairman on behalf of Councillor Foster in relation to the Visual Evidence for Victims Scheme, it was stated that this had produced one prosecution, and the service was at risk due to the possibility that funding would be unavailable in Dudley and other Local Authorities who also contributed to the project's funding.

In relation to the measurement of targets, it was reported that baseline figures could be difficult to set and sanction detection targets were unrealistic, with other authorities remarking upon how difficult it was to achieve their own sanction detection targets.

In relation to best practice the Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager reported that a domestic abuse improvement review was being undertaken with a master class taking place on 26th November, 2010 when best practices would be looked at.

The life long psychological damage that was caused by domestic abuse was discussed.

It was reported that a domestic abuse support worker was based at Russells Hall Hospital in order to deal with referrals from members of hospital staff and provide help and guidance to victims of domestic abuse.

It was also reported that there was a strong programme of training available to those who may come into contact with those vulnerable to domestic abuse.

The Divisional Manager of the Safeguarding and Review Unit reported that referrals to the Domestic Abuse Response Team were made solely by the Police and was conscious that arrangements with other key partner agencies were required in order to better co-ordinate responses at this early stage.

It was reported that the Home Office statistics stated that during their lifetimes one in six victims of domestic abuse were males.

The Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator indicated that domestic abuse in males was difficult to detect in view of their reluctance to report such incidents.

She also reported that the independent Domestic Violence advisers had been approached as part of the Domestic Abuse Service review in order to collate information from those males who had suffered domestic abuse, however they had indicated that there were no male victims who were willing to talk about their experiences at present.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the information contained in the report submitted, on the reasons why victims of domestic abuse were reluctant

to pursue the matter through the courts which in turn impacted on sanction detection rates, be noted.

- (b) That the Domestic Violence Co-ordinator be requested to email to Councillor Foster the response to questions raised on her behalf at the meeting outlined above.

33. 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 the activities relating to the terms of reference of this Committee for the first quarter of 2010/11.

In responding to a question raised by the Vice Chairman on behalf of Councillor Foster in relation to the Joint Activities Group, the Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager advised that the Group had not met for three months in view of organisational issues, however anti social behaviour activities were now being undertaken with a number of partners. However there had been a meeting of the Joint Activities Group three weeks ago and information received indicated that anti social behaviour was reducing resulting in performance improvements.

Arising from a further question it was reported that hate crime work was developing, which would result in a broad strategy and would also cover those with learning disabilities.

In responding to a question raised by the Vice Chairman on behalf of Councillor Foster the Assistant Director of Policy and Performance indicated that in relation to the Tell Us Survey there had been no detailed guidance or rationale for the survey and it was one of a number of indicators that were being stopped by the Government.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the information contained in the report, and Appendix to the Report, submitted on the Council's quarterly performance of the first quarter of 2010/11, on the activities relating to the Terms of Reference of this Committee, be noted.
- (b) That the Drugs and Alcohol Team Manager and the Assistant Director of Policy and Performance be requested to email the responses to questions raised on her behalf at the meeting outlined above to Councillor Foster.

32. 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

Should the matter be unresolved prior to the next Meeting of the Committee, that a representative from West Midlands Police be requested to attend a future meeting of the Committee to address the position of the CCTV Camera that had been removed from the Gornal area and utilised by them for the English Defence League Demonstration.

The meeting ended at 7 p.m.

CHAIRMAN