

Adults and Community Scrutiny Panel Meeting

Minutes – 11 March 2014

Attendance

Members of the Panel

Cllr Ian Angus
Cllr Ian Claymore
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Chris Haynes
Cllr Matthew Holdcroft
Cllr Linda Leach
Cllr Rita Potter

Other Councillors

Cllr John Reynolds

Staff

Earl Piggott-Smith
Kathy Roper
Nikki Hills

Scrutiny Officer- Item 8
Joint Commissioning Team Manager - Item 6
Senior Landscape Architect- Item 7

Other Officers

Apologies

No apologies were received

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Action</i>
MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS		
1.	Declarations of interest There were no declarations of interest received.	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting (28 December 2014) Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting be amended to record Cllr Payal Bedi as attending.	Earl Piggott-Smith
3.	Matters arising Wolverhampton Adult Safeguarding Peer Review Outcome and Action Plan – The panel were advised that detailed proposals for reviewing the performance of the Adult Safeguarding Board and the implementation of the Peer Review Action Plan would be presented to a future meeting of the panel.	Earl Piggott-Smith

DECISION ITEMS

- Improving biodiversity on highway land**

Cllr John Reynolds introduced the report. Cllr Reynolds explained that the overall aim of the strategy was to make highway land in Wolverhampton more attractive spaces and environmentally friendly spaces. The aim of the strategy was also to encourage the natural wildlife to develop by making small changes to the maintenance of grassland and woodlands.

Nikki Hills detailed the legal duties of the Council and the work being done to meet its responsibilities following the granting of Nature Improvement Area status. Nikki gave details of the new approach to the maintenance of highways which was designed to create shade and shelter for small animals.

Nikki explained that fallen logs in woods would be allowed to decompose on the floor and create more natural habitats for insects. An important part of the work involved new approach to maintaining hedges and cutting a small strip of grass along the verge to keep the area tidy but allowing grass to grow taller to increase plant species diversity and creating wildflower corridors.

Nikki explained that the new approach will be applied in selective areas and the results monitored. Nikki explained that feedback from the public about the changes to the highways would also be monitored any complaints investigated. If there are complaints about the appearance then changes can be made to return to space back.

The panel welcomed the report and the plans for improving the appearance of highways and creating more environmentally spaces that support a range of animals and plants. The panel were very supportive of the plan.

The Panel were concerned about the potential for the long grass to become 'litter traps' and that it was important that changes in pattern and frequency of grass cutting was explained to the public as not being a cost cutting measure, but part of plan to increase biodiversity and improve the appearance of highway verges.

Nikki explained that the new policy will be only be used in selected areas before being rolled in other areas. Nikki accepted that litter was going to be an issue but confirmed that litter picking would continue and the situation monitored. The feedback from the public has been positive so far.

The Panel queried whether the budget was realistic to undertake the necessary maintenance once the trial ended. Nikki confirmed that the new maintenance regimes were to be cost neutral.

The Panel commented on the need to explain the new policy to the public and that work is done to avoid any negative publicity. The Panel commented on the importance of keep the appearance of highway verges as neat as possible.

Nikki explained that the posters would be used to tell the public about the changes.

The Panel suggested that it might be useful to discuss the publicity work done by Telford who have previous experience of using wildflowers to improve the appearance of grass verges.

Cllr Reynolds commented that £12,000 of funding from Nature Improvement Area would be used to restore the appearance of the hedges in Bantock Park. Cllr Reynolds explained that there are restrictions about how the money can be used and it was unlikely that money could be used for PR work to explain the changes.

The Panel suggested that it would be a good idea to try and involve local schools in the trial areas.

Resolved:

- The Panel supported the work being done to improve the appearance of selected highway areas.
- The Panel agreed to receive a progress report in 12 months' time.
- The Panel suggested that Facebook Today could be used to publicise the scheme and raise awareness about it.

Nikki Hills

5. **All Age Disability Strategy**

Kathy Roper outlined the key parts of the strategy and the consultation work done during its development. Kathy explained the aims of the strategy and how it provides a framework linking a number of national policies intended to support disabled people and their families in a more holistic way.

Kathy explained the consultation process undertaken with different stakeholder groups.

The Panel queried the support available to help disabled people who assessed as being not eligible to claim disability benefit or where benefit sanctions have been applied. Kathy confirmed that appropriate support would be provided to people affected and also that there were local organisations that would help people to appeal against decisions and represent them also.

The Panel commented on the issue of public transport and how well it meets the needs of disabled people. Kathy agreed that more work was needed to be done to improve transport.

The Panel discussed including employment and transport as a future scrutiny topic. The issue of changes to adult education was also suggested as a topic.

Resolved:

- The panel agreed to receive a progress report on the All Age Disability strategy in November 2014.

Kathy Roper

6. **Transforming Care: A national response to Winterbourne View Hospital - Wolverhampton response**

Kathy Roper briefed the Panel on work done to implement recommendations following the report on Winterbourne View Hospital that was presented in December 2013.

Kathy explained the work done to monitor care standards for people placed outside Wolverhampton. Kathy explained that people are placed in establishments across the West Midlands so that their care can be monitored. Kathy explained the main issue arising from Winterbourne View was that as all services were being provided by one organisation there was not the same opportunity to review the quality of care.

The Panel queried the process for recruiting staff. Kathy explained that there is a robust recruitment process. In addition, Kathy explained that before people are placed the Council will look at how people with disabilities are used to assess the standard of care provided. Kathy commented on the value of peer advocacy programmes in getting a better idea of what it feels like to be a resident.

The Panel commented on the findings of Francis Inquiry and the need to have proper recruitment practices to protect vulnerable people. Kathy commented on the work done with New Cross Hospital to develop services.

Resolved:

- The Panel welcomed the report and progress made to date.

8. **Adults and Community Scrutiny Panel – Draft Work Programme 2013/14**

Earl Piggott-Smith presented to a report detailing the agenda for future meetings of the panel. The panel agreed to include a report on the Care Bill to work programme.

Earl Piggott-Smith