

Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee

23 JUNE 2015

PRESENT: Councillor M Winn (Chairman); Councillors M Bateman, A Bond, S Chapple, S Cole, B Everitt, A Hetherington and T Hunter-Watts

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors J Brandis, S Renshell and Sir Beville Stanier Bt

APOLOGIES: Councillors S Jenkins, P Agoro and A Cole

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 11 February and 27 May 2015 be approved as a correct record.

2. "LEGAL HIGHS"

The Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee received a briefing on psychoactive substances or "Legal Highs" from the Buckinghamshire Drug and Alcohol Team (DAT). It was noted that the term "Legal Highs" referred to a category of extremely dangerous recreational drugs which were becoming widely used. Members were advised that some drug users had switched from illegal drugs to "Legal Highs". This was because the legal highs were cheaper, in some cases more potent and would not be picked up on IOM or safeguarding tests.

Members questioned whether awareness training was available for schools. No specific training had been introduced as a result of the report. It was noted, however, that Addaction ran a training programme for schools. Users of legal highs were from all backgrounds and were of all ages. An engagement café had been open on Saturday and Monday afternoons and attracted approximately 60 users each week. The café was run very effectively, and it was noted that there was a noticeable change in crime patterns during its hours of operation.

The Government had indicated that legal highs would be illegalised in a Psychoactive Substances Bill. Mephedrone was classified as a class B drug, or class A if prepared for injection, in 2010. The illegalisation of the drug had little impact on its use, as it had become a popular drug prior to the illegalisation. Approximately 20% of legal highs had some mephedrone in them. Members noted that legal high and mephedrone use was particularly high in Aylesbury and Buckingham. The DAT asked Members to feedback any known problems in their communities to Kay Aitken and to the Drug and Alcohol Team.

3. CCTV PANEL

Members of the Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee had a role in helping to monitor the CCTV Control Room, in line with Aylesbury Vale District Council's Code of Practice. The Committee were asked to appoint at least three Members to the CCTV Panel to undertake individual monitoring visits to the Control Room during 2015-16.

RESOLVED:

That Councillors Bateman, S Cole, Hetherington and Winn be appointed to the CCTV Panel.

4. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16 AND ONWARDS

The Committee was advised that establishing the work programme was an important stage in the scrutiny process. The work programme would identify the key topics that Scrutiny Committees would consider during the year ahead. Members received a report setting out some of the key principles to take into account when setting the work programme. The Committee report contained some examples of work previously undertaken by this Committee, and a copy of the current work programme was considered.

During an interactive session, 27 issues were identified, 10 of which were highlighted for inclusion onto the future work programme. Issues were suggested under the following themes, which were drawn from the Committee's terms of reference:-

- Crime and disorder/community safety
- Leisure – arts, sports and recreational activities
- Housing
- Planning and design services
- Environment (sustainability)
- Parks and open spaces
- Licensing
- Environmental health
- Flood risk and associated plans

The Committee report also included the selection criteria and a prioritisation guide to help identify whether an issues might be of high/medium/low priority for inclusion on the work programme. The issues identified by the Committee for inclusion in the work programme were:-

- Report on flooding on the Willows development
- Encouraging use of parks and open spaces
- Creating new habitats for wildlife
- Increase in issues associated with mental health
- Maintaining the character of Aylesbury Vale's villages, whilst balancing the need for housing growth
- Right to Buy policy in the Vale
- Homelessness and the support for Aylesbury Homeless Action Group
- Anti-social behaviour
- Domestic abuse services

RESOLVED:

That the issues identified by the Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee be included in the work programme for future meetings.