

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 11 September 2019

Time: 7.00 - 8.17 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors M C Appleyard, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, A D Collingwood, A E Hill, M Hussain JP, H L McCarthy, Ms C J Oliver, S K Raja, R Raja, J A Savage and R Wilson,

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Ahmed, M E Knight, Mrs W J Mallen and N B Marshall

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Improvement and Review Commission held on 12 June 2019 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

13. WYCOMBE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2019-2020

The Chairman welcomed Sarah McBrearty (Community Safety Manager – Wycombe District Council), who provided an update on the Wycombe Community Safety Partnership priorities and actions for 2019/20.

The Partnership Plan had been re-written and prioritised in 2017 and was to run through to 2020, each year however these priorities and actions were revised and reviewed as appropriate, by means of the Annual Strategic Assessment.

Focussing on each of the priorities of:

- Tackling anti-social behaviour and crime;
- Safeguarding adults;
- Safeguarding children; and
- Building community resilience

the actions taken and planned in respect of each of these were outlined.

In respect of **Tackling Anti-social Behaviour and Crime** Members could well have seen the three recently employed full time Street Wardens in High Wycombe, in operation Monday to Saturday 8am to 7pm, with the ability to be extended to later hours or Sundays if Police operations etc. required such.

The High Wycombe Town Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) whereby street drinkers could be asked to hand over their drink and if not complying were subject to a fine, was working well. A reluctance to hand over drink meant this Order was having an impact. It had not completely removed the problem, but the problem was decreasing. This PSPO expired next February but officers were looking to renew / revise it to continue.

The British Retail Consortium estimated that at least a third of shop-lifting crimes were related to organised crime. Wycombe Community Safety Partnership was working to tackle shoplifting offences, with a focus on safeguarding young people who were being victimised into carrying out these offences.

In respect of the **Safeguarding Adults** strand, the considerable support available via the Partnership for victims of domestic violence, along with friends and family, was outlined.

The Desborough Road Outreach Project (DROP) was explained; a multi-agency approach to engage with sex-workers, often very vulnerable young women, and help them with health and safeguarding issues and assist them to combat drug and drink dependency which was often the key reason for their involvement.

Similar multi-agency work (importantly Registered Social Landlords being amongst these agencies) in respect of victims of 'cuckooing' where professional criminals were targeting vulnerable people to use their homes as bases for drug dealing or other criminal activities, was explained.

The key priority of **Safeguarding Children** was outlined with reference to the £800K granted to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner in November last year (2018) which had been utilised in the Early Intervention Youth Fund to prevent involvement with gangs and knife crime. A school drama scheme on such topics and a 'Reach Every Generation' specialist mentoring service had been initiated and expanded.

Test purchasing operations regards under age alcohol sales and hotel room booking by apparent adult and young persons had resulted in re-education / training for local businesses, re-alerting them to these key issues.

The award of £90K from central Government to spend by March 2020 in respect of knife crime was welcomed, but a concerted long term approach to tackle the issue was required.

The activities and plans in respect of the final **Building Community Resilience** priority were explained. The strength of Neighbourhood Watch schemes locally was commended and the work with Buckinghamshire County Council Trading Standards

in respect of exploitation and scams with these watches was referenced. 'Street Association' schemes and their successes were outlined and the need to roll these out further where possible, was acknowledged.

The future of the Partnership in the landscape of the new Buckinghamshire Unitary Council was referenced. At present Wycombe and Aylesbury each had their own Community Safety Partnership; Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils had one Partnership for both districts, and each of these, along with other statutory partner agencies, met regularly as the 'Safer and Stronger Coordinating Group'. As part of the unitary work a workshop was being arranged which would look at best practice and discuss the options for a potential new structure of Community Safety Partnership governance. This would be the forum via which a new County-Wide Plan would emerge, the need to then sub-divide, focussing on specific geographic areas and issues had already been acknowledged.

Members raised a number of issues and queries and received clarification as follows:

- It was confirmed that a Community Safety Accreditation scheme was being looked at to offer to the Street Wardens, which if successfully obtained, would enhance their powers to work alongside Police further;
- Members expressed their worries that the PSPO had taken a considerable time to establish initially with various legal and administrative hoops to jump through, would this endanger the quick 'renewal' of the Order next February? In respect of this officers were confident that timescales could be met, a renewal was simpler than instigation of an Order;
- Ms McBrearty agreed to obtain a response from the Council's Human Resources department in respect of the need for DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks for elected members;
- The recent presence of children in High Wycombe High Street at midnight was referenced, the use of the Buckinghamshire County Council Safeguarding emergency duty team 'out of hours' phone number (0800 999 7677) in such cases, was suggested;
- The fact that knife crime figures were not of the epidemic proportions evident in London was noted, but it still of concern locally;
- It was confirmed that the Desborough Road area was included in the Street Wardens patrol plan, though of course the initial focus of the Wardens had been the town centre begging issue; and
- Some 226 recording incidents of the Wardens moving on / dealing with begging and 116 referrals of information re issues to the Police, for the period 1 July 2019 to 10 September 2019 (2 ½ months) was commended.

The Chairman on behalf of the Commission as a whole, asked that it be minuted that for such a small team the Community Safety unit at WDC did a brilliant job.

This excellent work done would hopefully transfer over to the new Partnership in the Unitary Council.

The Chairman also indicated that the Commission would be grateful if the Strategic Chair of the Partnership (Superintendent Kevin Brown) and the Operational Chair (Chief Inspector Graham Hadley) along with the Cabinet Member responsible here at WDC; Community Portfolio holder Councillor Graham Peart BEM be invited to the next meeting of the Commission (Wednesday 6 November 2019).

RESOLVED: That the Commission note and support the updated Wycombe Community Safety Partnership priorities and actions for 2019/20.

14. REPORT OF THE PARKING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor Mrs L Clarke OBE Chairman of the Parking Task and Finish Group introduced the report of the Group. Noting that the meetings had not had the best attendance, some worthwhile and valid recommendations had emerged as featured in the Report.

Mrs Clarke wished to put on record the great work of Democratic Services officers Jemma Durkan and Liz Hornby in administrating the Group and thanked the relevant Environment Portfolio-holder Councillor Mrs Adey for her attendance.

Members discussed the recommendations featured and suggested mention of their keenness to see more enforcement to control parking on pavements and grass verges. This was to be inserted under recommendation 11.

Reference to the local plan's approval of stacked car parking at the Park and Ride site was to feature in recommendation 13.

Whilst parking provision for residential development as well as at supermarkets was to be referenced in the final recommendation.

These above three amendments are featured in **bold** in the recommendations as finally agreed below and to be referred to the Cabinet Meeting of the following Monday 16 September 2019.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations of the Parking Task and Finish Group as featured below (as amended in **bold** by the Commission) be referred to Cabinet for consideration and response.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That there be an agreed parking strategy.

Reason: To ensure that all car parks have the same sized car parking space, opening times, levels of cleanliness, provision of disabled and mother and child spaces. To improve the number of short stay spaces and consider the possibility of free parking for the first 30 minutes of any stay over all car parks

Recommendation 2

That funding be provided for consultancy work to survey the usage of the Park and Ride.

Reason - Data was required to find out who was using the Park and Ride car park. Currently any member of the public could use the car park and it was suspected that a majority of users were not using the park and ride bus service.

Recommendation 3

That four buses be provided for the Park and Ride rather than three as suggested by Buckinghamshire County Council, to run in conjunction with the trains to and from Birmingham/London.

Reason - BCC were currently reviewing options for the bus service to and from the Park and Ride. This was to reduce operational costs when Section 106 funding that had helped subsidise the current route comes to an end. Four buses would provide a better service and help maintain the best route to and from High Wycombe town centre. This would also ensure the bus provision for the Park and Ride would run in conjunction with trains to and from Birmingham/London. Although the times have been amended they were still out of sync with the trains and had no cognisance of the walking times to and from the platforms.

Recommendation 4

To ensure that the Park and Ride remained free for people parking and then using the bus service to and from the town centre in High Wycombe.

Reason - To encourage people to use the Park and Ride service.

Recommendation 5

That the new barriers and payment system for the car park at the Park and Ride site be put in place as soon as possible.

Reason - So that charging for car park users who were not using the Parking and Ride service could be implemented.

Recommendation 6

Provide improved signage and information at the Park and Ride site regarding payment and tickets for the users of the bus service.

Reason - To provide users with the correct information and to ensure that they receive a ticket to enable free return travel.

Recommendation 7

That funding be providing for a report to be commissioned to provide information and data on the anticipated parking demand expected across the District in the future.

Reason - Due to housing requirements outlined in the Wycombe Local Plan and changing Government policy up-to-date data was required regarding future parking requirement in the District.

Recommendation 8

To investigate the use of new technologies to help assess the usage of car parks.

Reason - New technologies would help to identify the amount and locality of users of car parks in the District. This would enable capacity requirements for car parking to be accurately measured.

Recommendation 9

That Dynamic Parking Management apps be utilised to help identify users such as local residents or blue badge holders to enable charging to be applied accordingly.

Reason - This would enable users such as blue badge holders to access car parks with barriers easily and so that payment options would be easier to manage.

Recommendation 10

That the electronic signs in High Wycombe providing information on parking availability be updated to include all major car parks and real-time information.

Reason - Not all of the major car parks in High Wycombe were included on the current parking information signs and the information regarding number of parking spaces available was not accurate.

Recommendation 11

Issuing of on street parking permits should be limited for new build residential properties **along with the instigation of greater control of pavement and grass verge parking.**

(Suggested reason - new build properties in the town centre did not provide adequate parking capacity and were therefore causing issues with on street parking. Parking as a planning condition/policy would be difficult to enforce so limiting on street parking permits would be the best option to alleviate this problem).

Recommendation 12

That all surface car parks be stacked to provide additional parking capacity.

Reason - To increase car parking capacity.

Recommendation 13

That funding be provided as soon as practicable possible to stack the Park and Ride car park to provide long term airport parking **as per the recently approved local plan.**

Reason - Due to plans to provide a bus provision to Heathrow Airport from the Park and Ride, funding was sought with a view to bring this into place as soon as possible and as a future income stream.

Recommendation 14

That town centre car parks are refurbished.

Reason - The WDC owned town centre car parks are past their original replacement date and need to be brought up to a better standard for users.

Recommendation 15

That a co-ordinated parking strategy be created to work with partners such as Chiltern Railways, Eden and supermarkets within Wycombe.

Reason – To ensure that all partners within the town were in agreement and worked to a co-ordinated parking strategy.

Recommendation 16

To look at provision of parking at supermarkets **and residential development** within the town centre. To look at what control WDC had and how much WDC could influence supply.

Reason: Some supermarkets have increased their free parking time to 3 hours. There would be reference back to their Planning Permission to ascertain whether this was in line with their original Permission.

15. JOINT WASTE CONTRACT TASK & FINISH GROUP - COMMISSION CHAIRMAN'S VERBAL UPDATE

The Chairman of the Commission updated the Meeting on the rather truncated work of the Joint Waste Contract Task & Finish Group; in that the Group had only met once, and then for a short time, in order to be made aware of the process of tendering that had occurred in respect of the Contract. As a result there was no need or opportunity to currently scrutinise.

It was noted that if required in due course, the Group could be re-convened in order to assist the Executive with its help and support.

16. RIVER WYE TASK & FINISH GROUP - COMMISSION CHAIRMAN'S VERBAL UPDATE

The Chairman again verbally updated the Meeting on the status of the River Wye Task & Finish Group. Here the Chairman's intention to call a special meeting of the Commission to consider the Group's work had been superseded by events; in that

such major schemes were not now to be put forward to the Shadow Executive for consideration for adoption individually, but as part of a package of schemes from each of the former five authorities forming the new Buckinghamshire Council as at 1 April 2020.

Cabinet here at Wycombe District Council has assured the Commission Chairman of the inclusion of the River Wye scheme in the package being assembled currently for future presentation to the Shadow Executive.

Members wished it to be put on record that they highly commended Councillor H McCarthy on his input and perseverance in respect of this proposed River Wye project and the work overall of the Task and Finish Group.

17. COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Meeting noted that effectively there were no current Task and Finish Groups.

Members agreed that the two items featured on the Cabinet Forward Plan appended to the agenda: **Regeneration Strategy** and **Eastern Quarter** were both items appropriate for scrutiny by the Commission and therefore asked that these be scheduled on the next Meeting of the Commission (Wednesday 6 November 2019) for a report to be submitted for inclusion on the agenda for consideration by the Commission.

Also in respect of the Work Programme, as featured under the minute for the **Community Safety Partnership** item, this subject matter was also to be included on the 6 November 2019 agenda, in that the Strategic Chair of the Partnership and the Operational Chair along with the Cabinet Member responsible here at WDC; Community Portfolio holder Councillor Graham Peart BEM, were to be invited to **further update** the Commission on the Partnership's work.

18. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

There were no Councillor Calls for Action.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Peter Druce	- Democratic Services
Ian Hunt	- Democratic Services Manager
Sarah McBrearty	- Community Services Team Leader