

COUNCIL MEETING – 22 JULY 2014

REPORT OF THE PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

8 July 2014

Present: Councillor Allebone (Chairman), Councillors Gough (Vice Chairman), Elliott, Emerson, G Lawman, Maguire, B Patel, M Patel, Simmons and Watts.

Also present: Mrs B Lawrence (Head of Resources), Mrs L Elliott (Head of Finance), Mr J Casserly (Managing Director, Wellingborough Norse), Mrs G Chapman (Principal Community Support Manager) and Mrs P Whitworth (Democratic Services Officer).

(Councillor Timms did not attend the meeting.)

(Councillor Bell attended the meeting as an observer.)

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new Partnerships and Performance Committee.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beirne, Hawkes and Warwick. Councillor Warwick was unwell in hospital and the chairman wished him well on behalf of the committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that there were no declarations of interest.

3. ANNUAL REVIEW: WELLINGBOROUGH NORSE LTD

The annexed circulated report of the Managing Director, Wellingborough Norse, was received to present members with the company's annual performance review for the year 2013-14.

The report included information relative to overall performance against objectives, financial performance, and other relevant areas of accomplishment or where improvement or adjustment may be required.

Introducing the report, the Managing Director, Mr Casserly, explained that the past year had been a successful one. He said the relationship between the borough council and Wellingborough Norse was continuing to develop and that a three-year review of the partnership was imminent.

Members discussed the garden waste collections, and in particular how the eight-month collection season affected the performance target of percentage of waste collected annually. Mr Casserly explained that the performance indicator had been established when collections took place all year round, and had not been updated when collections were reduced to only eight months of the year. He said that the performance target would be looked at in the future.

Members then discussed the possibility of extending the collection season. Mr Casserly confirmed that costings had already been looked at, and the company would work with decisions made by the council.

Members asked for more detail about the company's business growth and work it undertook in addition to that on behalf of the borough council. Mr Casserly agreed to send out a briefing note after the meeting to give members the information requested.

Members made specific enquiries about grass cutting, overhanging shrubs, weeds, and the outdoor areas at Redwell Leisure Centre and Mr Casserly agreed to distribute more information in response to the enquiries after the meeting.

A discussion took place around the need for clear service standard expectations, in particular in the parishes, and it was agreed that once standards had been communicated to members, there was the potential for a quarterly customer satisfaction survey to be sent to ward councillors.

The committee thanked Mr Casserly and the staff of Wellingborough Norse for their good work and helpfulness.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

4. WELLINGBOROUGH COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REVIEW 2013-14

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to inform members of the progress of the Wellingborough Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for the year from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. The report discussed progress made by the CSP during the year and looked at some of the initiatives and projects that had taken place, as well as future plans.

The Principal Community Support Manager, Mrs Chapman, gave the apologies of Inspector Pauline Sturman from Northamptonshire Police, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Members raised concerns about the visibility of PCSOs, particularly in the villages. Mrs Chapman explained that when PCSOs were introduced they were more resource intensive and ringfenced for each area, which was no longer the case. She confirmed that the borough council, as it contributes towards the cost of PCSOs, was pushing for a clear service standard.

Members also raised concerns about the borough and parishes being asked to fill gaps in service that affected resident safety. Particular mention was made of the reduction in cutting trees around road signs, the stopping of school crossing patrols, and the turning off of street lights and speed cameras.

Mrs Chapman replied that, as a partner in the CSP, the borough council was able to challenge other agencies to make sure they were fulfilling their duties, and partnership decisions could then be made if there was a need for an enhanced service level locally.

Members welcomed the CSP emphasis on domestic violence but asked for reassurance that the crisis regarding refuges was being addressed. Mrs Chapman explained that contracts and procedures were being put in place and that the borough council's revenue and benefits service was working with the borough's refuge to mitigate the effects of changes to funding streams.

A request was also made for statistics on hate crime and Mrs Chapman said that monthly figures were available and she would request that they were sent directly to members from the police.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(Councillor M Patel left the meeting at 8.45pm and did not return.)

5. PERFORMANCE – PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to inform the committee of the council's progress against performance targets from 1 July 2013 to 31 March 2014.

The report explained that the council's performance indicators (PIs) were monitored by a red, amber, green (RAG) traffic light system, and that a direction of travel was also provided to give a comparison against the performance for the previous year. The report showed that there had been a significant improvement in performance since the previous year.

Members discussed the performance indicator relating to the number of planning applications taken to appeal. Concern was expressed about the suitability of the target as it was a matter over which the council had no control. Members also asked whether that now the council had achieved the ability to demonstrate a five-year supply of developable housing land, the number of applications taken to appeal would change.

The Head of Resources, Mrs Lawrence, explained that the Head of Planning and Local Development would respond to the five-year supply question after the meeting. She also said that the suitability of the performance target had been acknowledged and that senior management reviewed performance indicators each year. She confirmed that the indicator would be looked at during the next review.

Members mentioned that, if the indicator was removed, it would be useful to continue to receive information relating to the number of planning applications being taken to appeal.

Members raised concern over the two performance indicators relating to the percentage of recyclable materials and garden waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting, both of which were showing as red and below target.

Councillor Elliott proposed an amendment to the proposed action in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Maguire, requesting that the Resources Committee be asked to consider the extension of the brown bin collection by one month, bringing the collection season to nine months, in order to meet consumer demand and environmental developments, and to consider any alternative ways to increase recycling.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried with five votes in favour, one vote against, and three abstentions. This became the substantive motion and, on being put to the vote, was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the Resources Committee be asked to consider the extension of the brown bin collection by one month, bringing the collection season to nine months, in order to meet consumer demand and environmental developments, and to consider any alternative ways to increase recycling.

6. COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PERFORMANCE – 1 OCTOBER 2013 TO 31 MARCH 2014

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to inform the committee of the council's performance, including Wellingborough Norse, in handling customer feedback during the second half of the year. The report also included detail on requests for information considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004, as well as including detail on complaints that had been referred to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Members asked about the complaint relating to the conduct of bailiffs when visiting a customer's property regarding unpaid council tax. They asked it be noted that bailiffs were the council's contractors and the council should also take responsibility for resolving the issue alongside the company that organised the bailiff.

A question was also asked about a complaint relating to Wellingborough Norse vehicles damaging grass verges. The Managing Director of Wellingborough Norse, Mr Casserly, explained that vehicles would only park on verges for traffic safety reasons but agreed that he would look at the issue to see how drivers could be more careful.

In relation to a complaint about the issuing of fixed penalty notices, members asked for information about changes to the Wellingborough Norse employee structure, and in particular what was happening with enforcement and education activity now that the number of environmental wardens had been reduced from two to one.

Mr Casserly explained that although there was only one environmental warden, the number of employees with the ability to issue fixed penalty notices had not decreased and the enforcement activity had not been diluted in any way.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.