

COUNCIL MEETING – 11 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT OF THE PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

26 September 2016

Present: Councillors L Lawman (Chairman), Gough (Vice-Chairman), Abram, Aslam, Graves, and Simmons.

Also present: Miss J Thomas, Head of Planning and Local Development, Mr M O'Donnell, Health Protection Team Leader, Ms A Roy, Chief Executive at Northamptonshire Rights and Equalities Council, Ms M Crofts, Director at Northamptonshire Rights and Equalities Council.

(Councillors Griffiths and G Lawman attended as observers.)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Cllr Allebone.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that there were no declarations of interest.

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The chairman proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016 be confirmed and signed, subject to the addition of the following words: "The chairman noted that a presentation was received from Clyde Leslie, representing the Wellingborough African Caribbean Association (WACA) immediately prior to the meeting. This presentation informed the committee of WACA's work and vision, and was followed by questions from members". This was seconded by the vice-chairman.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016, as amended, be confirmed and signed.

4. PRESENTATION FROM NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RIGHTS AND EQUALITIES COUNCIL

The annexed circulated report of Head of Resources was received to provide members with an introduction to the presentation by Northamptonshire Rights & Equality Council (NREC). The chairman welcomed Ms A Roy and Ms M Crofts to the meeting and invited them to begin their presentation.

Ms Crofts outlined the history of the organisation, and explained the work undertaken by NREC throughout the county and specifically in Wellingborough, including support for victims of discrimination and working with the police around hate crime. Ms A Roy explained some of the more specific cases handled by NREC and how they are resolved by working with employers, victims of discrimination and hate crime, and other organisations

such as the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and Northamptonshire Police.

Ms Roy went on to explain that whilst they had been offering advice on low-level immigration queries until 2013/14, NREC had been forced to focus their efforts purely on discrimination due to funding challenges. Ms Roy also outlined the extra fundraising undertaken by NREC which had enabled them to recruit two new staff members to roles specifically working in Wellingborough.

Members asked about the impact of recent events on the instances and reporting of hate crime. Ms Roy explained that whilst Northamptonshire Police had issued a press release stating there had been no increase, it was possible that the lack of an increase could have been due to non-reporting of incidents.

Ms Roy stated that training may benefit Police officers on the ground in dealing with hate crimes, as particularly with incidents on social media, victims were anecdotally being seen to have to put in the leg work. She also clarified that the statistics provided covered a full year, and that although the cases specific to Wellingborough may have seemed proportionally low, an individual case could account for hundreds of hours of officer time.

The chairman thanked Ms Roy and Ms Crofts for attending.

RESOLVED that the presentation from Northamptonshire Rights and Equality Council be noted.

5. PERFORMANCE – PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Resources was received to provide members with a report on the council's progress against performance targets from 1 January 2016 to 31 July 2016.

Members discussed the relevance of performance indicators that the council had no control over, including missed bin collections and planning appeals. Members recognised that all explanations against any downward trends were well explained and accounted for and commended the high rate of collected council tax.

Members requested that the figures for collected business rates be distributed.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the report on Performance – Progress Against Targets be noted
- (ii) the figures for business rate collection be circulated amongst the members

6. PRESENTATION FROM WELLINGBOROUGH TAXI ASSOCIATION

The annexed circulated report of the Head of Planning and Local Development was received to introduce the points for discussion by the Hackney Carriage Association and the Licensing Section of the council.

The Chairman expressed disappointment that a representative from the Wellingborough Taxi Association had not attended the meeting to answer member's questions. Mr O'Donnell, the Health Protection Team Leader, was subsequently invited to present the report.

Mr O'Donnell outlined the information in the report, explaining the procedure and timescales for licensing drivers, vehicles and organisations for both hackney carriages and private hire taxis. He also told members about a recent exercise undertaken between the council, Northamptonshire Police and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) in the borough, whereby twenty one vehicles were spot checked for relevant licensing compliance. The results of this operation had been previously circulated in MBN2016/2017-16.

Members agreed that this operation was a success and where possible operations should be continued, as it provided a valuable opportunity to build relationships between private hire and hackney carriage drivers and operators, the Police, the DVSA and the licensing team.

Members also discussed the potential impact of "Uber" or similar app-based private hire companies could have on the taxi trade in the borough, and the processes for reporting issues, including poor driving standards and challenges faced by drivers in particular areas of the borough.

Mr O'Donnell explained that there had been no application from Uber or similar at this time, but that legal advice would be sought on how such an organisation would be licenced. He went on to explain that some issues were reported to licencing by customers and in the event of repeated complaints, the drivers could be called to the Licensing Sub-Committee. He also confirmed that there was close working with Northamptonshire Police and the British Transport Police around potential issues surrounding permits issued to drivers in certain private areas of the borough.

RESOLVED that the presentation the council's Licensing Section be noted.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 8:30pm.