



Overview & Scrutiny

No Direct Ward Relevance

Committee APPENDIX A

17th October 2007

PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORTS: QUESTIONS AND SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION FOR COUNCILLOR HARTNETT, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

The following questions were suggested by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Questions were posed to Councillor Hartnett, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Wednesday the 17th of October.

Roles and Responsibilities

I had tried to address some of these points in my address (written prior to receiving these questions).

1. What is your role as a Portfolio Holder?

My role as Portfolio Holder is many fold. As I see it the Portfolio requires me:

- to monitor performance of the various activities within the remit of my Portfolio;
- to act as a point of reference for Members and Officers on Community Safety matters;
- to act as a point of contact for our Communications Team, making comments on relevant subject matter as well as to act as a point of contact for the local, regional, national and international media;
- to respond to queries and questions and to offer views to Officers on Community Safety matters;

- to be kept informed by Officers of current activities and the performance of areas within the remit of my Portfolio; and
- to be made aware by Officers of emerging issues and best practice within the UK in relation to Community Safety activities.

2. How do you think the role of a Portfolio Holder at Redditch Borough Council (RBC) could be improved?

It depends what you mean by “role”:

- Is it the responsibility of a Portfolio Holder?
- Is it the scope of the Portfolio?
- Is it the amount of delegated powers given to a Portfolio Holder?
- Is it to give a budget to the Portfolio Holder to spend/allocate?

So this is a tricky question to answer. There is clearly a need to keep a balance between accountability and having an ability to react and respond to situations.

The Council, in its wisdom, has given greater powers over the years to Portfolio Holders. Ultimately, given its current political composition, this is a question for the Council to address.

On a basic level the “role” is to ensure we do what we should be doing and to do it to the best of our ability.

3. What additional help do you feel you need to do this?

What are you offering?

I currently have access to Officers and information on request and a lot of good will for which I am grateful. That help is essential and happily it is forthcoming.

4. What decision making powers would you like to be given as a Portfolio Holder (if any)?

We currently give very few powers to Portfolio Holders and there is a history and good reason for that. There is scope to give more powers if the Council can agree them. I believe it should be a gradual move towards some decision making powers. But again a balance needs to be struck. I currently only have power to offer opinions, comment and advice to Officers and I comment and take a lead at the Executive Committee and full Council on Community Safety matters. I also express RBC's views on Community Safety issues to outside agencies.

Key Issues of the Portfolio

5. What are the key issues facing your Portfolio?

- The greatest issue is the imminent change to the formula for the Local Area Agreement (LAA) grant funding. A decision is due soon and it could, in a worst case scenario, mean that we lose three members of staff from a section that is wholly funded by this budget. This clearly would be devastating.
- Ongoing issues with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in the Borough, and the case loads carried by the ASB Team. (This now covers all residents of the Borough).
- Crime figures and the CDRP's performance on this issue. In our league table CDRP has done very well. It was top or in the top three of all categories but one (which is wounding).
- To at least maintain the level of partnership working currently being undertaken.
- The new gambling and licensing act. This will require protocols to be written and agreed by RBC and the West Mercia Police (WMP).
- To advise members of the new legislation and responsibilities coming our way. (E.g. the Respect Agenda and the crime and disorder version of the community call for action).

- Following a decision made at full Council, possibly overseeing the introduction of Decriminalised Parking Attendants into the Borough. (That is if it comes within my remit as indicated by some Members at full Council). This remains to be confirmed.
- Maintaining public confidence, attempting to make people feel safe and getting the public to realise that Redditch is a safe place to live and work.
- Pursuing aspirations of making Redditch the safest town in the UK.

6. What solutions do you propose to respond to those issues?

- To pursue and see implemented the merger of the three North Worcestershire CDRP into one CDRP. Through this we should gain a critical mass, efficiencies and should get high calibre Officers to attend the boards. (Thus, making our assets work harder).
- To maintain a high profile for RBC in the field of Community Safety, with our Officers/Members taking a lead in the theme groups and initiatives. (E.g. employment of a Crime Analyst and further developments in the field of CCTV).
- To keep Members advised of our performance via the Executive Committee, full Council and other forums, which should help to raise issues of importance and relevance.
- To advise the Licensing Committee (and invite all members to learn about) best practice discovered on a recent field trip and how we can improve. (This work is under way now).
- To implement the Community Safety Communications Policy and to chase up other ideas agreed at Committees/the CDRP/Executive Panels/Executive Committee/full Council.
- To maintain a close working relationship with relevant Officers.

- To continue to comment and raise points at Council.
- To make contact with the local MP (the Home Secretary) with a view to seeking her views on her vision for Redditch in the area of community safety.

7. What level of research do you, as the Lead Member for your Portfolio area, undertake into the various issues within your remit?

- I meet and correspond regularly with the Lead Officer and have briefings on topics related to my area of responsibility.
- I also meet, as appropriate, with other front line Officers at RBC to understand greater the work they carry out and observe presentations from Officers on projects they have undertaken.
- Meet with the local Police at various levels.
- Attend and participate in the CDRP.
- Attend and participate in the County Safer Communities Board.
- Attend PACT.
- Read various magazines on Community Safety.
- Attend local, regional and national conferences and seminars on Community Safety and licensing.
- Use the web to gain information on relevant subject matters.
- Network with other Councillors around the UK over Community Safety issues.
- Refer to Beacon authorities and seek out best practice. (E.g. the Cardiff visit).

8. What are the three most important pieces of information that you receive in a month and what actions have you initiated from this information?

It dependent on what month it is. It could be:

- the minutes / agenda of the CDRP;
- the minutes/ agenda of the County Safer Communities Board;
- the minutes / agenda of tasking for community safety related improvements;
- information gained from Officers following a briefing session; and
- performance data, including Key Performance Indicator data given to me by officers.

Action initiated:

- progressed and gained agreement for the installation of interactive CCTV and agreed joint funding arrangements for this equipment with the CDRP;
- progressed and gained an agreement, in principal, for redeployable CCTV, which was partly as a result of a motion to Council;
- regained £9,000 of funding that had been cut by Worcestershire County Council Officers for new street lighting;
- extended the ASB caseload from Council tenants to all residents;
- carried out a youth mapping exercise with the help of all Members;
- visited Cardiff to observe best practice in action on licensing of licensed premises;

- introduced the “good deed” cards currently used by our Enforcement Team;
- introduced the “Graffiti Man” service;
- initiated major improvements to the quality of life for residents at Evesham Mews in consultation with the tenants and Tenant Participation Officers (as a result a new residents’ group was formed and improvements have been made to the fabric and appearance of the mews);
- introduced new high security doors with cameras and key fobs at the Woodrow district centre residential flats, (and ensured that local Members were informed each step of the way); and
- introduced the safer, cleaner, greener initiative in the Borough which became The Estate Enhancements Scheme.

Budget and Resource Allocation

9. What role do you have in the budget setting process within your portfolio area?

- As a Portfolio Holder I have no role in the budget setting process within my area.
- At full Council I contribute in the same way as other Members by making a single vote during the budget setting time.
- On the CDRP I have no budget setting powers. The budget is allocated and I, like other Members, can make bids and suggestions about how that is allocated.
- A similar situation applies at the County Safer Communities Board where Members can make bids and suggestions to affect the allocation of the budget.

10. How do you input into the resource identification and allocation process?

- I input into the process in the same manner as all the other Members at RBC. I express a view, move motions (be it at the Executive Committee or full Council) and discuss matters within my political group.
- I also contribute by expressing views to Officers when asked for an opinion and by asking questions about how and why they are allocating that particular resource.
- A similar situation applies when I am acting as a Member of the CDRP and County Safer Communities Board. (Expressing views and questioning Officers or partners).
- I base my comments and questions on the information I have received from various sources including the press, official reports, the street, phone calls made to me by members of the public, the post and from my political group.
- I also base my contribution on where RBC is and how the Council is performing,

11. How do you monitor decisions about expenditure in your service area?

At RBC:

- through regular briefings with Officers, who provide both written and verbal reports on activities, including performance based assessments; and
- through presentations or by telephone conversations with Officers who have or are currently carrying out projects like the Evesham Mews initiative.

At the CDRP:

- we receive reports from the Crime Analyst relating to our activities and performance which is measured against the performance of our family group (we have been in the top

three of this group for a number of years in all categories except wounding); and

- similar arrangements apply at the County Safer Communities Board.

12. Do you think that Redditch receives its 'fair share' of resources for community safety?

- At RBC: The Council allocates the budget for this activity so it must be fair!
- At the CDRP: Resources are currently formula funded, per head of population. This arrangement could be regarded as unfair. However, problems have been recognised and the funding criteria is about to be changed (I understand funding will be based on "need") so watch this space.
- The County Safer Communities Board: Similar arrangements apply. LAA resources are allocated or not as the funding is no longer guaranteed.

13. What else could we do to ensure that we receive our 'fair share' of resources?

This question presupposes that current funding arrangements are not fair. However:

- at RBC the decisions relating to resource allocation are in the hands of the Members and community safety competes with other services for scarce resources;
- the allocation of other sources of funding is out of Member hands but we can do our self a favour by maintaining a high profile and by continuing to take a lead on issues (E.g. bidding for "pathfinder" status or winning "reward" funding); and
- we can influence the decision so we should emphasise our positive record in terms of performance and I believe we are

very lucky with the officers staffing this section as they have a “can do” culture. (That success should be rewarded).

Crime Disorder and Reduction Partnership (CDRP)

14. How do you feel the Crime Disorder and Reduction Partnership (CDRP) is working?

- I believe, and the statistics will confirm, that we are doing very well. This has not always been the case. In the past some partners did not attend meetings and little debate took place. In the past two years that has all changed.
- Our current performance, and recent past performance when measured against similar CDRPs from around the UK, has been in / around the top three positions for almost two years in our “family” group.
- This CDRP has led with initiatives such as “tasking”, an Officer working group, which I have attended once by invitation and as the name suggests is task orientated. This form of working has been nationally recognised and duplicated in the County and around the UK. Senior Officers from RBC delivered a speech and managed a work shop at a national conference on the matter.
- There are many other Officer working groups at present including; the RAHP, Prevent and Deter, Catch and Convict, the Town Centre Group, the Licensing Group and the Night Time Economy Group.

15. How do you monitor the CDRP?

Monitoring takes place in a variety of forms:

- by attending and questioning officers at meetings;
- by reading and calling for reports;
- the CDRP initiated the post of Crime (data) Analyst to help develop understanding of what the CDRP is doing and to

facilitate evidence-based decisions (the post of Crime (data) Analyst has been copied by all the other CDRP in the County

- by receiving and reading through the minutes of the meetings; and
- by requesting specific presentations on relevant subjects such as prolific and persistent offenders.

16. How would you change the CDRP to improve it / make it more effective?

I believe we should continue with the actions that have been initiated to merge the three North Worcestershire CDRPs into one. As a result of this we should gain a critical mass better value for money.

W. Hartnett October 2007.