

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel – Report From the Chair of the Panel, Councillor Bill Hartnett, regarding the meeting of the Panel on 15th July 2010

As part of the terms of reference I understand that as Chair of the Redditch Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel I need to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after each meeting. (This is in addition to consideration of the formal minutes of the meeting).

This was the first meeting of the panel this year. There is a co-opted member of the panel, Cllr Ms Sheila Blagg, who is the Chair of West Mercia Police Authority.

All Members of the Council were invited to attend a training event on 17th June prior to the Panel meeting to get an understanding of and to receive a background to the work of the panel.

Following that training it was clear that one of the key roles for the panel is to review the current, future and potential work of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership.

When planning the meeting agenda I undertook some research of how other such panels around the country operate and I have been in touch with other Chairs around the UK. It seems Redditch is “ahead of the game” with respect to how far we are along in the process of setting up meetings, writing terms of reference and producing protocols.

I was keen for the Panel to understand the business and work load of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership so I included the last four sets of minutes of the partnership in the agenda, so as to enable members to fully understand the issues currently being undertaken by the partnership. It was clear that the partnership is doing well and is in control of events. We noted the range of topics covered by the partnership including the topics which were referred to the scrutiny panel by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and by a member of the Council.

I also posed five written questions to the Partnership in advance of the meeting (which was considered as an agenda item). This was to establish: what the “hot issues” are; how the partnership is dealing with those hot issues; and what are the major issues facing the partnership. This proved to be useful and may be repeated again at future meetings.

Following that we resolved to advise the Partnership that that this Panel could be used as a channel to help communicate the positive achievements of the Partnership to both the Council and the wider public.

The panel discussed the two referrals which had been sent for members’ consideration.

The panel first considered a referral from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding “the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls”. The Panel had the benefit of a detailed (confidential) PowerPoint presentation which addressed this subject, giving details of: the number of incidents both in the county and in Redditch, which included the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls; links to alcohol abuse; the number of offences; the types of offence; the number of repeat offenders; the victims of sexual offences; and the future planned work of the partnership (or next steps).

The panel was further advised that a full report was going to a future partnership meeting.

Following a discussion the panel were of the unanimous opinion we had investigated this matter fully and was satisfied with the work the partnership is doing on this matter and we consider that the referral is now concluded.

The Panel based this conclusion on several factors including: the minutes of the previous partnership meetings; the PowerPoint presentation; and the reassurance that work is still ongoing and a future plan of action is in place. The attendance of expert witnesses at future meetings of the Panel should help to clarify this matter further and full reports will be delivered back for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A second referral (submitted by a member) was discussed briefly. Having taken advice from the Chair of the partnership it was referred back to the member who raised the issue. Since the topic was referred it has been added to the Work Programme of the partnership and it was felt that this could lead to duplication. The Panel awaits a reply from the member for their advice on their preferred course of action but there is some evidence to suggest that the matter is already being dealt with by the partnership.

The panel then went on to discuss our Work Programme. The Panel intends to review the contents of the government’s white paper on Police, *Policing in the 21st century: Reconnecting Police and the People*, which amongst other issues discusses the abolition of the Police Authorities to be replaced with the direct election of Police and crime commissioners. A further topic for the Panel will be to consider the budgets of some of the various agencies within the partnership. This was chosen given the government’s recent announcement of spending reductions of up to 25% for public services. The Panel shall be paying particular attention to how the reductions will affect the delivery of services which could adversely affect crime and disorder in Redditch. The panel has agreed to write to the Chair of the partnership requesting that this be placed on an agenda of a future partnership meeting.

CLLR W. HARTNETT.

Chair Redditch Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel