



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 30th November,
2023

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Sid Khan (Chair), Councillor Sharon Harvey (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Imran Altaf, Karen Ashley, Joanna Kane, Emma Marshall, Jane Spilsbury and Juma Begum (substitute)

Officers:

Sue Hanley, Judith Willis and Bev Houghton

Democratic Services Officers:

M Sliwinski

44. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Holz and Stringfellow. Councillor Begum attended the meeting as a named substitute for Councillor Stringfellow.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

46. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26th October 2023 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 26th October 2023 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

47. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Chair

There were no public speakers on this occasion.

48. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - PROPOSAL FOR A PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) IN REDDITCH TOWN CENTRE

The Community Safety Manager presented a report which detailed a proposal to introduce a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Redditch Town Centre.

The Committee was advised that the report detailed the proposed wording of the order, the geographic location in which the PSPO would apply and the data that had informed the proposal. Partner organisations, including West Mercia Police, had been consulted and an equality impact assessment had been undertaken. The proposed PSPO had the support of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and would help to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the town centre.

The Committee was informed that risks associated with the introduction of PSPO included the risk that public expectations would be raised by the Order, which agencies might not be able to meet. To this effect, it was explained that discussions had been held and would continue with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) who were the primary agency for enforcement of the Order. The impact and effectiveness of the PSPO would also be monitored via the Town Centre Operational Group and Safer Redditch, where any issues or adjustments would be discussed as part of a multi-agency problem solving approach.

Another risk arising from the Order was that the introduction of a PSPO could displace ASB perpetrators to more residential locations outside of the proposed restricted area. This issue had been considered by the operational group and discussions had been held with support agencies and local charities to identify alternative, more appropriate spaces that people affected by the order could be directed toward. The proposed restricted area follows the footprint of previous Designated Public Places Orders (DPPO) and PSPOs and historically there had been no reported increases of ASB in residential areas as a result of an Order being in place.

Once the report had been presented, Members discussed the following points in detail:

- Impact of PSPO on licensed activities in the town centre - It was explained that PSPO did not impact on licensed activities as these were two separate sets of legislation and

requirements. The PSPO enabled an early intervention action to be taken if somebody engages in anti-social behaviour (ASB) as a result of attending an event, however, the restrictions and guidance on PSPO specifically exclude any licensed premise or licensed activity.

- PSPO and restriction on drinking in public spaces – It was explained that the PSPO would not make it illegal to drink alcohol within the boundary of a licensed premise. It only related to a public space so if a person was drinking outside of the boundary of the licensed premise and begins to commit ASB, and do not comply with the requests of the authorised officer, then they could be at risk of enforcement action. It was noted that PSPO also did not make it illegal to carry or drink alcohol in a public space, as long as someone was drinking responsibly and not affecting other users of the space.
- Gating of the alleyways in the Town Centre – It was noted that the gating of alleyways within Church Green Conservation Area had been considered with the informal conversations with businesses in that area revealing they were in favour of a key or a numbered lock access to the alleyway rather than permanent closure. However, due to legal considerations around liability and timescales for proceeding with PSPO proposal, it was decided not to take action with regards to the gating order for the time being. It is expected that the PSPO alongside current restrictions would resolve the majority of the ASB problems in the alleyways area. However, if the risks in those locations persisted after the introduction of PSPO, the Council would revisit the process.
- Feedback on recent use of a 48 hour dispersal order in Redditch – Officers explained that this was a power available to the police, which could be implemented by the district inspector. It was noted that the recent use of a 48-hour dispersal order was as a result of significant concern around anti-social behaviour in the area around Unicorn Hill and the train station, and with this in mind, it was the district inspector's decision to implement that dispersal order. It was noted that a PSPO, if agreed for implementation, would eliminate the need for issuing temporary dispersal orders as similar powers were available to the Police under the PSPO as under the dispersal order.
- Dispersal locations for repeat ASB offenders in the proposed PSPO area – It was noted as mentioned in the presentation that there was a risk that ASB perpetrators could be dispersed to other locations as a result of PSPO. Conversations were being undertaken with the Ecumenical

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Centre in Redditch, as well as the providers of Council commissioned services, to provide support services, engage with the offenders and direct them to more appropriate spaces. It was noted that it was a relatively small core group of people which were causing ASB issues within the area of the proposed PSPO and who were mostly known to the statutory agencies. The Order was around behaviours and, if ASB problems persisted, enforcement action would be taken against offenders. However, it was a staged approach whereby there was an educational and support offer in the first instance.

- Data around ASB in the Town Centre – It was reported that currently Tuesday afternoons and Friday evenings/Saturday mornings were the times of the week with higher reported anti-social behaviour. Currently, it was difficult for the analyst team to find reasons as to why Tuesdays afternoons saw a higher incidence of ASB.
- Concerns about the ability of the Police to enforce PSPO – It was noted that one of the responses to the Redditch Borough Council's consultation on the PSPO detailed the difficulties that Shropshire Council was having with the enforcement and administration of their PSPO in Shrewsbury town centre. It was commented that the response details how despite notices being issued under the PSPO, very few were being prosecuted in Shropshire. Officers responded that the response in part alluded to the specific difficulties experienced in Shropshire, however, Members were assured that significant conversations had taken place within the Council's Safer Neighbourhood Team and with the Police. It was believed that in Redditch the PSPO would significantly reduce the restrictions around enforcement and prosecution and would enable agencies to intervene much earlier and take action to reduce likelihood of significant harm incidents taking place. The Community Safety Manager added that colleagues at Shropshire Council would be contacted for their feedback.
- It was clarified that at the moment, if implemented, only Police Officers would have the power to enforce under PSPO. However, the Order provided for specific Council officers to be granted enforcement powers if authorised by the Council. It was noted that there would be discussions with senior officers and Members as to whether that becomes necessary at the review stage of the PSPO.
- It was highlighted that PSPO would not criminalise young people socialising or spending time in larger groups in the Town Centre. The PSPO was targeted at behaviours and would criminalise people from drinking and then causing

ASB nuisance and would also enable Police Officers to enforce against possession and use of Psychoactive Substances, for example Nitrous Oxide.

- Potential for changing the boundaries (or expanding) the PSPO zone – It was explained that any changes to the PSPO boundary would require a review of the existing PSPO. The proposed PSPO, if accepted, would come in place for a period of three years but there was an option to review at any time within that period. The review process would require any boundary change proposals to go through public consultation and through the committee process.
- Members expressed concern with the possible levels of Police attendance to ASB events and hoped that this would improve considerably with the introduction of the PSPO in the Town Centre. It was asked that feedback on the enforcement of the proposed PSPO order be shared at next year's meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.

RECOMMENDED that

a Public Space Protection Order to restrict Antisocial Behaviour related to Alcohol and Misuse of Psychoactive Substances be implemented.

49. UPDATE ON THE CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL 2023-24 (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Kane, provided an update on the 2023-24 meeting of the Panel which took place on 1st November 2023, where the Panel received a detailed presentation on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP).

The Chair of the Panel summarised the main points discussed at the 1st November meeting:

- The role of the NWCSP and the NWCSP Plan 2021-24, which was refreshed annually and was now in its last year. A new community safety action plan would be developed for 2024-27.
- NWCSP focused on four priorities - Reducing Violence and Abuse; Reducing Theft and Acquisitive Crime; Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour, Damage and Nuisance; and Protecting Vulnerable Communities. Alongside these there were two cross cutting themes that had an impact across the priority areas, namely reducing the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse and reducing reoffending.

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- The NWCSP had been allocated an annual ring-fenced budget from the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) of £139,250.
- Since 2017, the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been allocating significant funding as part of its CCTV Capital Fund across the West Mercia Force area, including Redditch. The NWCSP used its funding allocation to upgrade and enhance the CCTV scheme across its area. However, no further CCTV capital funding for 2023-24 would be provided as the funding priorities of the PCC had now changed.
- The role and setup of the Community Safety Team within the Council was explained including that it was a small team which received calls for advice and support from numerous sources. In September 2022 to August 2023 (inclusive) the Team received 19 requests from Residents, 13 from Elected Members, 24 from Partner Agencies, and 52 Requests from Internal Service with most requests relating to domestic violence, multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) and sanctuary queries including home security assessment.
- The details of community safety programmes and schemes delivered by NWCSP in 2022-23 were shared with Members of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel. The Chair noted that the Panel was impressed by the range of work carried out by the Community Safety Team and the wider Partnership.
- It was highlighted that within Redditch Council there were two fully qualified Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCOs) who provided specialist advice and guidance as it pertains to the built environment.
- The Chair commented that the Panel felt there should be more promotion of NWCSP among elected members, officers and the public. At the meeting, Officers stated that there was a plan to address this through more regular briefings about its work, including to the service managers across the Council.

The Chair further reported that at the Panel meeting of 1st November 2023, the topic of County Lines Drug Activity and prevention strategies used by regional and local agencies was considered. A detailed presentation was given on County Lines and the Chair noted that what was particularly important to note on County Lines was that these criminals operated like a business with a psychological element whereby 'employees' at the bottom of the operation would be threatened with violence and become too afraid to report. It was noted that county lines gangs were also shifting their tactics, for example, with the gangs now more often targeting

young people from relatively affluent areas/neighbourhoods than was the case before.

Following the update provided by Councillor Kane, the Committee discussed the topics covered in the update in detail as follows:

- Tactics used by County Lines gangs – Members commented that anecdotal evidence showed that a common tactic used by county lines criminals was buying / giving young people disposable vapes to carry favour and make young people feel they owe a favour. It was noted that it was a simple, inexpensive way of targeting young people and getting them ‘on the side’ of criminals.
- Officers noted that the issue also extended to premises selling vapes to underage users, with such premises potentially acting to facilitate organised crime. This had been raised through and monitored by the County Council’s trading standards and the multi-agency targeted enforcement group.
- Work of schools to inform children and young people of tactics used by county lines gangs – It was noted that schools had a key role in acting as the first line of defence against young people becoming involved in county lines and other criminal activity. Pupils were informed about how to avoid getting involved in those activities through regular school assemblies and these topics were covered in PHSE curriculum. In addition, pastoral departments in schools provided the opportunity for young people to raise any concerns directly with staff and involve agencies if necessary.
- The Respect Programme – this programme delivered bespoke one-to-one mentoring, classroom sessions and whole school assemblies. It was explained that this programme had now been operating for more than 10 years and was a mentoring programme tailored particularly to young people referred to the scheme as being at risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of crime. It was a tiered approach, so as part of the programme, if requested or referred, the programme’s qualified mentors and youth workers would deliver presentations in schools on particular subjects as requested by the school. It was highlighted that this was a scheme specific to Redditch and Bromsgrove and because of the nature of information shared the training and mentoring had to be provided by appropriately trained professionals.
- It was commented that county lines was a cross boundary issue, and as such it was imperative that agencies worked

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collaboratively and shared information across administrative boundaries in a timely and effective manner.

- Sharing resources on crime and county lines prevention in ward surgeries – It was noted that the Community Safety Team would soon be updating its promotional materials and leaflets, and these would be shared with Members.

RESOLVED that

The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel Update be noted.

50. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

It was requested that the following item be added to the work programme of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group (a sub-committee of Overview and Scrutiny):

- Finance and Performance Monitoring Outturn Report 2023/24

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated with items from the Executive Committee's Work Programme as detailed in the preamble above.

51. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

It was requested that the following overview item be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme:

- Disabled facilities grants (DFG) – a report highlighting obstacles that the Borough Council faces in spending the grant, how these obstacles could be removed, and how the grant had been spent by the Council over the last few years.

RESOLVED that subject to changes detailed in the preamble above the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.

52. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS

Updates on the Task Groups and Working groups were provided as follows:

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a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group, Chair, Councillor Kane

Councillor Kane reported on the meeting of Budget Scrutiny Working Group which took place on 30th October 2023 and noted that main concerns voiced at that meeting concerned the Council's capital programme and the potential strains on the Council's capital project budgets, and budgetary pressures within the Medium Term Financial Plan process.

Councillor Kane reported that another meeting of Budget Scrutiny Working Group took place on 29th November 2023 at which the following recommendations to the Executive Committee had been proposed in respect of the Finance and Performance Quarter 2 Report 2023/24:

Recommendation 1: *"That the Executive Committee ask for an officer report that provides a model of the financial implications of an unusually high demand for emergency housing support."*

Recommendation 2: *"That, referring to the Strategic and Operational Performance measures stated in Appendix F of the Report (subsection Work and Financial Independence), it be recommended to the Executive Committee that they examine the Essex / Preston models that link skills to Procurement."*

During discussion of the Budget Scrutiny meetings, Members expressed concern about temporary accommodation, particularly the availability of suitable accommodation and the need to reduce the number of residents that needed to be housed in bed and breakfast accommodation over the longer term. It was requested that up-to-date data on the number of residents currently in Council's temporary accommodation, including the breakdown of the trend over the recent weeks on people housed by each type of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast accommodation, be provided to Members. Officers undertook to provide this information.

Members also discussed the importance of social value within procurement and how the Council could look towards other procurement models (Essex / Preston) models with regard to how the Council could promote social value.

On being put to the vote, the recommendations made at the meeting of Budget Scrutiny Working Group of 29th November 2023 were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, subject to the slight changes of wording as reflected in the recommendation statement below:

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Recommendation 1: That the Executive Committee ask for an officer report that provides a model of the financial implications of an unusually high demand for emergency housing and temporary accommodation support.

Recommendation 2: That, referring to the Strategic and Operational Performance measures in Appendix F of the Report (subsection Work and Financial Independence), it be recommended to the Executive Committee that they examine the Essex / Preston models that link skills and developments to social value within Procurement

- b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Holz

Councillor Holz reported that the meeting which was due to take place on 4th December 2023 had been cancelled and the next meeting was now due to take place on 8th January 2024.

- c) Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group – Chair, Councillor Khan

Councillor Khan reported that there had been no meetings of the Task Group since the previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The next meeting was due to take place on 12th December 2023 and data and actions requested in preparation for that meeting were being provided by Officers.

RECOMMENDED

- 1) That the Executive Committee ask for an officer report that provides a model of the financial implications of an unusually high demand for emergency housing and temporary accommodation support; and**
- 2) That, referring to the Strategic and Operational Performance measures in Appendix F of the Report (subsection Work and Financial Independence), it be recommended to the Executive Committee that they examine the Essex / Preston models that link skills and developments to social value within Procurement.**

53. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Marshall had submitted written reports on the following meetings of external scrutiny bodies she attended:

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- West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 19th October 2023
- West Midlands Combined Authority Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny – 30th October 2023
- Worcestershire Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 13th November 2023.

The Committee thanked Councillor Marshall for providing comprehensive reports from the meetings of these external bodies.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies updates be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.02 pm