

SCRUTINY PANEL B

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Tuesday, 10th March, 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Christian Chapman in the Chair;

Councillors Jim Blagden, Tony Brewer,
David Hennigan, Phil Rostance and
David Walters.

Apology for Absence: Councillor Dale Grounds.

Officers Present: Pete Calladine, Dan Griffin, Jack Harrison,
Mike Joy, Simon Scales, Rebecca Whitehead
and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillor John Smallridge.

SB.13 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

SB.14 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 30 January 2020, be received and approved as a correct record.

SB.15 Scrutiny Review: Community Protection Service

The Chairman introduced the item to the Panel and welcomed the Council's Service Manager for Community Safety, Community Protection Team Leader, and three Community Protection Officers to the meeting.

The Chairman reminded the Panel of the information considered at the previous meeting, including a presentation delivered by the Service Manager for Community Safety and the Community Protection Team Leader, providing the Panel with a background to the service, including its structure, workload, and operating challenges.

The Service Manager for Scrutiny and Democratic Services reminded Panel Members of the terms of reference for the review, as agreed at the previous meeting including; review objectives, indicators of success, methodology, and review involvement.

The report provided further information on the Ashfield Community Partnership Strategic Plan, area-based crime figures for Ashfield recorded by Nottinghamshire Police, and details of the previous scrutiny review of Neighbourhood Wardens in 2009. The Chairman further reminded the Panel of the following areas of interest for the review as identified at the previous meeting:

Understanding Public Expectations and Perceptions

The importance of ensuring Ashfield residents had clarity on the aims of the Community Protection Service and the role of a Community Protection Officer. The Community Protection Service was a key discretionary service provided by the Council, and Members wished to explore appropriate public consultation exercises involving residents and businesses in Ashfield to understand perceptions and expectations.

Monitoring Performance

Members had previously identified managing and monitoring performance as an important aspect of understanding how the Community Protection Service was providing value for money in the District. Members had held initial discussions with Officers regarding potential software improvements that could improve the efficiency of the Service.

Priorities of the Community Protection Service

Officers had previously asked Panel Members to consider the primary objectives of the Community Protection Service, identified as providing a problem-solving approach to addressing anti-social behaviour, environmental, and nuisance related issues that affected the quality of life of Ashfield residents. Members were asked to consider how this could be achieved and what needed to be prioritised to do so.

Reactive and Proactive Work Planning

Members agreed that ensuring a consistent approach to understanding the main priorities of the Service and ensuring work planning was both reactive and proactive was essential.

Partnership Working

Partnership working was intrinsic to the Community Protection Service within the Integrated Services Hub and Ashfield Community Partnership. Members recognised the importance of ensuring these partnerships worked collaboratively and wished to explore this as part of the review process.

As membership of Scrutiny Panel B had changed since the previous meeting, the Chairman introduced the Service Manager for Community Safety to provide an overview of the Community Protection Service, including details of the service plan, any recent restructures, how the Service aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan, and the day-to-day operations of Community Protection Officers.

When setting terms of reference for the review and considering review involvement, Panel Members had previously identified the Council's Community Protection Officers and the importance of including them in the review process as the front-line Officers of the Community Protection Service. Three of the Council's Community Protection Officers were in attendance and were invited to join the discussion and answer any questions put forward by Panel Members.

The Community Protection Team worked between 8am to 10pm utilising three dedicated vehicles, airwave radios accessing the Police operation channel, and body worn cameras. Community Protection Officers had various police accredited powers and were vetted on commencement of their roles. The Community Protection Team provided a varied service seeking to address all forms of public space anti-social behaviour and community safety issues. The service was both reactive and proactive in this approach and primarily operated around schools, parks, estates, town centres, and identified hotspots.

Panel Members took the opportunity to discuss the topic and ask questions of the Officers in attendance, considering, amongst other things:

- the challenges facing the Community Protection Service and how they planned to be met;
- resourcing of the service and the impact the utilisation of airwave radios and body worn cameras has had;
- whether the Service was too operationally complex and if it could be simplified to improve efficiency and outcomes;
- whether the Community Protection Officers should focus more on case work or be more reactive to arising issues;
- the value of a visible presence and recognisable figures in Ashfield's town centres;
- the safety of Community Protection Officers whilst carrying out their roles in the District;
- how the Community Protection Service works in partnership with the Police within the Integrated Services Hub, and how this partnership could be improved;
- the need for awareness and utilisation of the Council's Community Safety Triage Service to be improved Council-wide, ensuring any issues are delegated appropriately;
- how the performance of the Community Protection Service had been measured, and if the Community Protection Officers felt they were unfairly measured;
- the need for Community Protection Officer vacancies to be filled;

- the priorities set out within the Ashfield Community Partnership Strategic Plan and how the Community Protection Service worked towards these priorities;
- all Panel Members identified the Community Protection Service as a vital tool within the District and stressed the importance of providing sufficient resourcing to ensure it offers the most value for money for Ashfield residents.

The Chairman concluded discussions and identified further information required to progress the review at the next meeting of the Panel:

- an update on the progress of the implantation of software improvements within the Community Protection Service, ideally with a practical demonstration;
- information on any funding opportunities available;
- potential public consultation exercises to be discussed by the Panel;
- how communication could be improved with Councillors, Ashfield residents, and partners;
- how the successes of the Community Protection Service could be better communicated through the Council's website and publications such as Ashfield Matters.

The Chairman and Panel Members thanked the Officers for their attendance at the meeting and commented that the discussion had been extremely informative and beneficial to the progression of the review.

RESOLVED that

- a) in readiness for the next meeting of the Panel in June/July 2020, the Service Manager for Scrutiny and Democratic Services be requested to extend an invitation to a representative from the Police to discuss the relationship between them and the Council's Community Safety Service;
- b) the telephone number for the Council's Community Safety Triage Service be provided to all Councillors to avoid Community Protection Officers being directly contacted.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm

Chairman.