

Time commenced - 6.05pm
Time finished - 7.10pm

COMMUNITY REGENERATION COMMISSION 19 JANUARY 2004

Present: Councillor Bayliss (in the Chair)
Councillors Baxter, Blanksby, Crosby, Gerrard, Lowe and Willitts

Canon MacDonald and Mr Kazmi – Co-opted Members

In attendance – Councillor E Berry

62/03 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Liversedge.

63/03 Late items to be introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

64/03 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

65/03 Call-in

There were no call-ins.

66/03 Matters referred to the Commission by Council Cabinet

There were no items.

67/03 Responses of the Council Cabinet to any reports of the Commission

There were no items.

68/03 Service Area Budget Review – Funding Issues Related to Crime and Disorder and Young People

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Derby Community Safety Partnership detailing the concerns in relation to sustainability of specific community safety projects. Sharon Squires, Director of Derby Community Safety Partnership, advised that four years ago, none of these community safety projects existed. The rapid growth that had been experienced relied on the external funding received.

Anti-Social Behaviour Team

Funding was available until the end of 2004/05, although there had been a cut of 27%. The team had already reached capacity and would be introducing a priority system to enable them to respond to all calls effectively.

Burglary Reduction Team

Costs had been cut by mainstreaming some of the activities into the police, resulting in a 50% reduction. This project had been a major success.

Domestic Violence Partnership

There was a shortfall of about £5,000 in this area.

Crime and Disorder Core Budget

The key funding issue within this was that of the newly created post of the Director of Community Safety Partnership, which was not wholly funded.

Derby Social Cohesion Project – Normanton

Funding for this project ended in March 2004, no further funding had been accessed although discussions were ongoing with the external funding unit.

Isabella Stone advised that the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was allocated to Derby until March 2006 so it would be likely that projects could be extended for another year. Although the Anti-social Behaviour Team funding was only funded until 2005, did not mean that there was no likelihood that it would continue for another year.

Councillor Blanksby advised that he was concerned that the 5% increase on Council Tax was to the detriment of these projects. He did not want to see these services reduced, as all of them had had major successes. Councillor Evonne Berry advised that the Burglary Reduction Team was an externally funded project and it had shown that it did work. Derby City Partnership would be looking at ways and means to role this scheme out to the whole city, not just Normanton and Derwent.

Councillor Berry stated that there would be no reduction in service delivery, although there would be priorities in accordance with needs. Officers had only been asked to provide details of the work budget pressures and not all of the Community Safety Partnership's activities. If the report had included all aspects of the Community Safety Partnership's work, a positive example of the budget and work being carried out would have been shown.

Councillor Gerrard stated that the Anti-social Behaviour Team was an essential aspect of the service and funding needed to continue. As the Burglary Reduction Team had been so successful, if external funding was not available, the service should be funded by the city council.

Sharon Squires advised that the Community Safety was a priority of local authorities. However, the Community Safety Partnership were not represented on the Chief Officers Group and was in a sense, not part of the local authority. Local authorities should not be expected to pay for everything, as this was a partnership involving the Police and Housing Associations. If the local authority did not support these projects, then the other partners were also less likely to do so. The partnership had tried to ensure that Community Safety was in the Council's priorities; it had been included but not explicitly.

The Community Safety Partnership was not a huge organisation and each team was relatively small. The partnership had tried to sustain funding and tried to get projects mainstreamed. The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund was only £3.5m per year and it was difficult to envisage all projects would become mainstream. The reduction in the Anti-social Behaviour Team funding was to be replaced by Home Office funding. The Council were not forward thinking in how external funding would be replaced. There needed to be more awareness in the Council and within partnership organisations to overcome the difficulties in ensuring projects were mainstream.

Isabella Stone advised that decisions about external funding were not made by Council Cabinet, but by Derby City Partnership. Also no mainstream Council funding had ever been put into the Burglary Reduction or Anti Social Behaviour Teams since they first started several years ago.

Councillor Baxter stated that the suggested cuts in these budgets would impact on costs for Social Services, for example, secure accommodation for offenders, what the Council failed to spend here would be spent elsewhere forcing other budgets to increase.

Sharon Squires advised that one pressure on the Social Services budget was the fact that there were more people in Derby in custody than any other area in the UK. It cost large amounts of money for this service. This hadn't been included in the report as this funding was received from the Home Office. Sharon advised that the Partnership was trying to get the NHS involved in the Burglary Reduction Team, as people who were burgled quite often suffered health problems as a result. Councillor Berry stated that budget pressures were being experienced by all partners.

Councillor Bayliss asked whether the rationalisation in the Anti-social Behaviour Team would result in a compromise in the service. Councillor Berry advised that the level of professional assistance would be the same level as was received currently.

Councillor Bayliss agreed that there should be a citywide project for the Burglary Reduction Team and asked for confirmation that this would be carried out. Councillor Berry advised that a guarantee could not be given at present.

Councillor Bayliss stated that the service provided by the Domestic Violence Partnership was key in providing a safe life for a lot of young people and women and that the Council needed to ensure that this continued at a service level experienced today. Councillor Berry advised that a service would only improve, as there had been a budget increase.

Sharon Squires advised that she could not confirm that the Community Safety Partnership Team could continue to work at the same levels, as it was difficult to predict volume of work in the future. She could confirm, however, that the level of professional delivery would remain the same.

Resolved to recommend to Council Cabinet that the shortfall of £239,389 in the funding of the Community Safety projects be made up by raising the 2004/5 Council Tax by an extra 0.4% in all bands.

69/03 Policy and Regeneration Budgets

Isabella Stone updated the Commission on the implementations of recommendations resulting from the 2002 Service Area Budget Review of the Regeneration and Social Inclusion Scrutiny Commission. It was advised that the main success was the securing of 5% of Neighbourhood Renewal fund for technical assistance. There had been a growth in staff resources in the External Funding Unit. However, recruitment and retention was an issue. The unit was the best performing unit in the East Midlands and Urban 2 was one of the best in the country.

Councillor Berry stated that the staff in the unit were doing excellent work under pressure. This was a specialised area requiring high calibre staff and it wasn't just Derby experiencing problems with recruitment. She asked if members of the Commission could suggest any ways to overcome this recruitment problem.

Councillor Bayliss extended the Commission's thanks to the External Funding Unit for the excellent work that they produce.

Resolved to note the report and convey the Commission's thanks to the External Funding Unit for the excellent work that they produced.

70/03 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

The Commission resolved to consider the following reports at the most appropriate time:

- Community Grants budget
- Community Cohesion Strategy

MINUTES END