

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)**TUESDAY 20 AUGUST 2002 AT 10.30 PM**

PRESENT: Councillor Knapton (Chairman), Councillors, Boaden, Mrs Fisher, Morton, Mrs Parsons and Mrs J Prest (substitute for Councillor Mrs Pattinson).

COS.110/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Atkinson, G Hodgson and Mrs Pattinson.

COS.111/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING DECLARATIONS OF "THE PARTY WHIP")

There were no declarations of interest to be made.

COS.112/02 COMMUNITY SAFETY BEST VALUE REVIEW – PROGRESS REPORT

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted report TC.167/02 providing an update on the consultation and comparison elements of the Community Safety Best Value Review.

The report contained a summary of the key findings following consultation with the community, key partners and focus groups, including one focus group facilitated by NACRO.

Comparison had been made with other Cumbrian Authorities, members of the Historic Cities Group and members of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Family Group. Additional comparative work had been carried out with Authorities that had been granted Beacon status for community safety in town centres. The key points to come from the comparison exercise were submitted.

Comparison had proven difficult as the City Council was in the unique situation of working jointly with Eden District Council on crime and disorder. This was the only example of joint partnership working to this extent in England and Wales and may be used by the Regional Crime Reduction Team as a pilot for other similar joint ventures in the North West.

Members gave consideration to the report and raised a number of issues:-

- a. The Community Safety Officer indicated that the Review Team comprised himself, the Head of Design, the Head of Tenancy Services, the Head of Community

Development, a Police representative and the County Community Safety Officer. The Committee agreed that the Chairman and the Corporate Best Value Officer should also serve on the Review Team.

- b. There was a need to encourage representatives of schools to become more actively involved in the Crime and Disorder Partnership Group.
- c. There needed to be a pro-active approach to the media seeking to raise the profile of the Partnership. It was noted that this was being addressed in consultation with the City Council's Communications Unit, Eden District Council and the Police. A Partnership website was also being investigated.
- d. Training for partners was being progressed County wide through the County Crime and Disorder Practitioners Group which could attract funding for training.
- e. It was noted that one of the principal barriers to effective working was linked to the meeting cycle of the partnership and its task groups. The Community Safety Officer indicated that the number of people attending meetings of the Partnership Group had been reduced from about 40 to 9 and meetings were now held on a quarterly basis rather than monthly.
- f. Members noted that engaging health personnel in partnership activity was proving difficult. Whilst it was recognised that there were changes in the Health Authority structures taking place at present, there would be merit in the Primary Care Trusts becoming engaged in partnership working on crime and disorder issues. The City and County Councils had a role to play in scrutinising the Health Service and this issue could be raised as part of the development of this scrutiny process.
- g. It was noted that the delay in progressing this Best Value Review had resulted from the need to prepare and publish the Crime and Disorder Audit and Strategy to statutory deadlines.
- h. It was noted that the Review was part of a County wide approach including a joint Best Value Inspection which was planned for 2003.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Chairman of this Committee and the Corporate Best Value Officer serve on the Review Team for this Review.

COS.113/02 COMMUNITY SAFETY BEST VALUE REVIEW – NACRO WORKSHOP

Karen Beaumont and Denise Bolger from NACRO were present at the meeting to facilitate a discussion on the challenge and compete elements of the Community Safety Best Value Review.

NACRO had been engaged as consultants on this Review and would be using the information contained in the Town Clerk and Chief Executive's report, along with work undertaken with Members and Officers, to compile a draft final report and action plan looking at each area of the scope of the review. It was anticipated that this would be

presented to the Committee on 10 October 2002.

In response to Members' questions, the NACRO representatives indicated that the consult and compare work carried out to date would, in their opinion, be sufficient to satisfy the Best Value Inspectors.

The NACRO representatives posed a number of questions on the challenge and compete elements of the Best Value Review and Members comments included the following (with further comments being recorded by the consultants in the facilitated sessions and through written notes by Members):-

Why are we providing Community Safety?

There was a statutory requirement on the Council to provide Community Safety, it was also one of the priority concerns of Carlisle residents.

Do we still need to deliver Community Safety?

Members considered that delivering Community Safety initiatives was still necessary. There was a need to ensure that real issues were being tackled "on the ground" and that the inspection culture did not always seem to allow this to happen. The difference between people's perceptions of crime and disorder and the actual position needed addressing.

Why are we providing Community Safety in this way?

Community Safety was provided by way of a designated Community Safety Officer operating within the Crime and Disorder Partnership with Eden District Council. The Committee considered that this was an acceptable way of working, particularly as the partnership approach had proved successful in obtaining funding for specific initiatives.

There was a need to raise the public profile of the Partnership and to seek to narrow the gap between people's perception of crime and disorder and the reality.

The expertise of the Community Safety Officer should be used internally in the City Council to raise awareness of Community Safety issues which impacted across a whole range of services.

Members also considered that more Police and Neighbourhood Wardens on the streets would be helpful.

Are we providing what the users want?

The Committee considered that Officers could not deliver Community Safety initiatives without assistance from partners. The public would like to see more police on the streets. The public perception of crime against the actual position needed addressing. The public expected the Council to tackle their priorities in respect of crime and disorder.

There was a need to put in place a Communications Strategy to assist in getting information over to the public.

Could someone else provide it better?

Ensuring the best use of resources within the Partnership, tapping into the wider community

and getting the Health Authority on board were issues that needed to be addressed. There was scope for more effective partnership working. At present the Partnership was operated on an "equal partners" basis. There may be merit in one agency taking the lead role or the possibility of an independent person/body managing the partnership arrangements.

The local media should be asked to participate in the partnership so that they could take away a positive message about the Crime and Disorder Partnership initiatives. Better management of the media with assistance from the Council's Communications Unit was being investigated.

Who else delivers Community Safety on behalf of others across the public, private and voluntary sector?

Who has a reputation for being top class at delivering this function?

Would it be feasible or desirable to expose this function, or part of it, to competitive tender or to seek a partnership deal?

The Committee considered that the City Council acted as co-ordinator for the delivery of Community Safety services and that it would be difficult to quantify and specify the role and function of Community Safety. Output measurement would be especially problematic in any contract situation.

There may be scope for the statutory Audit process to be contracted out.

Community Safety should be a key element in other Best Value Reviews and it was noted that the Community Safety Officer was involved in the Regeneration Review. Members considered that the Corporate Best Value Officer should seek to involve the Community Safety Officer in other Best Value Reviews where appropriate.

The City Council was obliged to compare with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Family Group of Local Authorities set by the Home Office. Two of these Local Authorities, Tewksbury and Eastleigh, had achieved Beacon status in Community Safety activities. However, a direct comparison was difficult given that each area had its own particular problems to address in terms of Community Safety.

Carlisle was doing well on town centre safety and was looking to achieve a Safe Shopper Award.

Who can we join up with to deliver economies of scale in delivering Community Safety?

Members considered that there was a wide ranging group involved in Community Safety at present. The City Council worked in partnership with Eden District Council and extending links with the County Council and other District Councils could be considered. There may also be merit in getting the media and the business community more involved.

The new organisational structure should promote greater internal co-ordination for Community Safety activities. It was noted that Executive report formats had a section for crime and disorder implications but that it was often not properly addressed by the report writer. Developing a working relationship with the Carlisle Housing Association on Community Safety would also be relevant.

Who can we join up with to deliver economies of scale in buying Community Safety?

The Council had a statutory responsibility for Community Safety and Members did not consider that the function should be put out to outside organisations as they may have different agendas to the Council.

An approach could be made through the Health Action Zone to promote Health Service involvement in Community Safety. An input into regeneration initiatives generally was also desirable.

The partnership approach had been successful in attracting funding for Community Safety initiatives.

At the conclusion of the workshop session the NACRO representatives indicated that they would look at the consultation and compare information and prepare information on the compete and challenge elements of the Review taking into account the Committee's comments. A final report and action plan on this Best Value Review should be available for consideration by this Committee at the meeting on 10 October 2002.

The NACRO representatives had noted the Committee's concerns over involving representatives of schools and the Health Authority in Community Safety and would seek to address these issues as part of the Best Value Review.

The Chairman thanked Karen Beaumont and Denise Bolger from NACRO for the way they had conducted the workshop session.

A Member considered that the Committee may wish to invite representatives of partner organisations to a future Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss Community Safety issues.

RESOLVED – That the above comments be referred to the Community Safety Officer and NACRO for consideration when preparing the Community Safety Best Value Review report.

[The meeting ended at 12.30 pm]