

STRONGER COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD

4 NOVEMBER 2020

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(VIRTUAL MEETING)

MINUTES

Present: Councillor R Grinsell (Chairman); Councillors S Ashraf MBE, J Butler, C Buxton-Sait, J Fairburn, P Hogarth MBE, Mrs A Mackenzie, M Parker and M Wilson.

Apologies:

None.

Report authors/witnesses in attendance:

Mrs Alison McGrory (Assistant Director – Communities & Partnerships).

Gillian Crabbe (Community Safety Partnerships Lead).

Mark Andrews (Head of Planning Design and Engagement).

Sheron French (Projects, Programmes & Engagement Manager).

Ellie Dukes (Policy & Engagement Officer).

External Witnesses in attendance:

Inspector Vicki Stott (West Midlands Police Partnerships Inspector).

Ryan Forrester (West Midlands Fire Service - Station Manager Solihull Fire Station)

Diane Rhoden (Interim Deputy Director of Nursing & Quality – NHS Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group).

Kirsty Baker (Head of Coventry & Solihull Reducing Reoffending Partnership).

Andy Wade (Head of National Probation Service - Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire).

Ian Reid (Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games CEO).

Lee Marsham (Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Government Relations Manager).

Cabinet Members in attendance by invitation:

Councillor Mrs A Rolf – Cabinet Member (Stronger & Safer Communities) and Chair of the Safer Solihull Community Safety Partnership.

Councillor J Tildesley – Cabinet Member (Leisure, Tourism & Sport).

Councillor K Hawkins – Cabinet Members (Environment & Highways).

Other Elected Members in attendance by invitation:

None.

1. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Councillor A Mackenzie declared a non-pecuniary interest – Agenda Item 8 Neighbourhood CIL – Cllr Mackenzie declared that her mother was a current resident at Elizabeth House Nursing Home and Shirley Old People's Welfare Committee Limited had applied for NCIL funding within the Shirley East ward.

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2. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no questions or deputations.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last (virtual) meeting held on 9 September 2020, was submitted for review and approval.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes from the meeting held on 9 September 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

4. SAFER SOLIHULL PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL OVERVIEW REPORT

In attendance: Mrs Alison McGrory (Assistant Director – Communities & Partnerships); Gillian Crabbe (Community Safety Partnerships Lead); Inspector Vicki Stott (West Midlands Police Partnerships Inspector); Ryan Forrester (West Midlands Fire Service - Station Manager Solihull Fire Station); Diane Rhoden (Interim Deputy Director of Nursing & Quality – NHS Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group); Kirsty Baker (Head of Coventry & Solihull Reducing Reoffending Partnership); Andy Wade (Head of National Probation Service - Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire); and Councillor Mrs A Rolf – Cabinet Member (Stronger & Safer Communities) and Chair of the Safer Solihull Community Safety Partnership.

The Board considered a detailed report and a number of separate updates/presentations; all of which set out the current work of the Safer Solihull Partnership and the contributions from the individual statutory agencies toward the community safety agenda and key priorities. Some of the Partners also gave an update on partnership work to tackle hate crime and how the Partnership itself had adapted to the challenges brought about by Covid-19.

As a result of the annual update, the following questions and lines of enquiry arose:

- Councillor Wilson who represented the Smith's Wood Ward explained current difficulties that he had experienced with lines of communication to the local Neighbourhood Policing Teams and asked if anything could be done to make improvements. He gave examples of traffic based offences, made known to him from his local community, which he had reported with no apparent action from either the Police or the wider Partnership. West Midlands Police asked for further information to be provided outside of the meeting and undertook to follow up the concerns highlighted.
- Reported increases in racially motivated incidents gave rise for concern and it was acknowledged that this was a significant challenge for all Partners. Further information was requested as to what was being done to tackle this; specifically what work was being undertaken by the Partnership to identify links to triggers, perpetrators and affected ethnic groups. West Midlands Police suggested that further analysis was needed and this could be brought back to a future meeting if required. The Board was asked to note that although the statistical percentages within the presentation were high, the actual number of offences within Solihull, in comparison with the wider West Midlands, was low and not linked to any single attributable reason. Furthermore, West Midlands Police explained how their early interventions were triggered, victim support offered and proactive community work with e.g. faith groups.
- The reported data for Solihull between mid-July to mid-October indicated that stop and search ratios for Black/Asian individuals compared to White individuals remained high as a proportion. This gave rise for concern and was perceived to have a

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negative effect on positive day-to-day Partnership engagement with those communities. West Midlands Police acknowledged the concerns and advised that a number of improvement points were already being examined by the Police particularly around better data collection, use and reporting.

- Individual criminality within legitimate protest groups (and/or those groups potentially being portrayed as criminal groups) was also highlighted and further information was requested as to how the Partnership tackled that without undermining the overall role and purpose of those groups. West Midlands Police outlined their education and engagement work to ensure that national movements, such as e.g. BLM, were not seen as being criminalised in anyway.
- Within the Castle Bromwich Ward (Smith's Wood Ward also), car cruising was now an ongoing local issue. West Midlands Police were asked if those activities were now taking place due to displacement from other targeted areas within Solihull (e.g. NEC and A34 corridor). The Board asked what was being considered by the Partnership to address those community concerns. West Midlands Police acknowledged that crime displacement to other areas could and did happen. The Board was advised of all enforcement options and resources that were being used by the Police to specifically deal with car cruising within Solihull. The Board was also advised that continued local reporting was vital and this allowed West Midlands Police to build their intelligence profiles for targeted operations.
- The Board noted the fall in Robbery offences this year which they perceived to be as a direct result of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. In addition, clarification was sought on the current Force process for s.59 Notices. West Midlands Police acknowledged that the first national lockdown had triggered positive reductions across a number of crime types. The Board was advised that whilst offences were beginning to increase again from those low numbers, those increases were slower in Solihull in comparison with the rest of the West Midlands. The Police further acknowledged the yearly challenges arising from the darker nights and explained their approach to that work. In terms of s.59 Notices, West Midlands Police also gave assurances that all lines of enquiry were being pursued on a case by case basis and the Covid-19 restrictions were not hindering the normal processes in place by the Force to prepare for prosecutions.
- As discussed by the Board at its last meeting, domestic abuse had increased during lockdown at this had a profound effect on victims directly and the wider family. The Board asked if there was now any new guidance/initiatives to consider in light of the second national lockdown. West Midlands Police acknowledged the concerns, specifically the impact on children, and explained that agreed data sharing was undertaken daily with schools regarding children who had witnessed domestic abuse to raise awareness with key staff and to trigger in-school support as necessary.
- The Board endorsed the individual work of West Midlands Fire Service within Solihull and across the wider region. Their contributions to Operation Shield was acknowledged which gave additional opportunities to identify and help elderly and vulnerable residents during the first Covid-19 lockdown.
- West Midlands Fire Service were asked to explain how they had prepared this year for November 5th given the different circumstances arising from the ongoing pandemic and the greater likelihood of household fireworks linking to antisocial behaviour. The Board was advised of the joint approach for the community campaigns being undertaken this year together with the ongoing licensing work with firework retailers. To date, no firework related injuries had been reported with Solihull, nor any significant firework related ASB as had been seen recently in Birmingham.

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- In terms of the Youth Offending Service and the NHS work being undertaken to identify “health gaps” within young people, the Board sought confirmation as to the inclusion of mental health support and special educational needs in that service. Members also highlighted the perceived links to hate crime, both from a perpetrator and victim perspective having regard to mental health and SEND. Issues surrounding safeguarding and modern day slavery were also highlighted, specifically the availability of additional advice and guidance to support existing resources that were available through GP surgeries. The NHS CCG explained the current work being undertaken to strengthen mental health support and SEND for young people, together with the current advice and guidance resources available Monday to Friday and extended out-of-hours facilities for a number of support services.
- In considering domestic abuse, the Board asked how the Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) training project had been delivered during the pandemic and how the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC’s) had been operating during the same period. The NHS CCG explained that no IRIS training had taken place during the first Covid-19 lockdown given the GP training already undertaken to support their patients who were affected by domestic abuse. IRIS, a nationally led training initiative, would be moving online in the near future. MARAC’s had continued as normal.
- The National Probation Service referred to their guidance and procedures for the assessment and management of hate crime. In that regard, the Board sought further information as to the self-assessment tool which was highlighted by NPS as being “culturally competent”. Secondly, the Board sought additional information on the extremism threshold for post-sentence referrals. NPS explained that the self-assessment tool was used by staff to ensure that, in working with hate crime, they were aware of the particular challenges and likely behaviours to look out for. In terms of the extremism threshold, NPS explained that this was measured by specialist assessment tools used by trained staff to operate those. For the future (by January 2021), NPS was also establishing a national security division manned by fully specialist staff.

RESOLVED

That the current contributions made by the individual statutory authorities toward the community safety agenda and ongoing key priorities be noted and welcomed.

5. BIRMINGHAM 2022 COMMONWEALTH GAMES UPDATE

In attendance: Mrs Alison McGrory (Assistant Director – Communities & Partnerships); Ian Reid (Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games CEO); Lee Marsham (Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Government Relations Manager); and Councillor J Tildesley – Cabinet Member (Leisure, Tourism & Sport).

The Board received an overview report and informative presentation from representatives of Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. This set out a general update on progress and gave supporting information as to the role of Solihull MBC as a Host Authority.

As a result of the presentation, the following questions and lines of enquiry arose:

- The Board invited the Organising Committee (OC) representatives to give assurances that the Games would bring wide-ranging benefits into Solihull and sought examples as to how this would be achieved. In response, the Board was advised that the presentation outlined a number of opportunities and the OC undertook to work with Solihull to maximise those. It was acknowledged that Solihull was a significant Host Partner and a key regional hub. The OC explained that

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promotion and advertising would be increased once the marketing campaigns were launched and current social media activity was consistent across the West Midlands region to date. The OC also highlighted the importance of self-promotion for Solihull's assets, such as tourist destinations and hotel provision; together with the need for Solihull to work in isolation and/or with the OC where appropriate to maximise those opportunities. The OC envisaged significant economic benefits for Solihull given the number of people coming into the region at Games time itself. The OC also emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Games was not just a short term benefit for Solihull.

- In support of the report, Councillor J Tildesley – Cabinet Member (Leisure, Tourism & Sport) highlighted the information that his Portfolio had received on three occasions over the last 12 months. Cllr Tildesley stated that he was extremely positive regarding all of the current work ongoing within Solihull which now included the establishment of an internal Project Board and the work being done to promote Solihull's public and private sporting facilities for event/training use.
- The Board highlighted the recent redundancies that had been announced at the National Exhibition Centre and also the impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality business overall. The OC was asked for assurances that robust plans were in place to restart the NEC business in time for the Commonwealth Games and, in addition, what impact was envisaged from the development of HMRC border facilities at Car Park 6, Birmingham Airport on the local transport infrastructure. In response, the OC gave assurances regarding the ongoing regular dialogues with the NEC and advised that the core staff who were required to help deliver the games were not part of the redundancy process. In terms of the HMRC facility, the OC did not envisage any major impact on the delivery of the Games.
- The Board sought further information as to the role of Solihull's internal Project Board and was advised that its key function was around the local delivery of the Games infrastructure as defined by the OC (such as highways and public realm) together with other local flexible options beyond the key OC requirements (such as the cultural and arts offer). Regular information sharing was expected to begin in the very near future with regular progress updates on key milestones being given to Elected Members.
- The Board made reference to the climate emergency and the need to reduce net carbon emissions in Solihull to improve air quality. Members asked if all aspects of the Games would take that commitment into account. Suggestions included the use of recycled materials and limiting single-use plastics. Means of transport for athletes and Games officials should also be via electric vehicles to ensure the Games were as "green" as possible. In response, the OC outlined their ambitions and commitments to deliver "the greenest Commonwealth Games ever" by maximising the use of low emission vehicles and minimising the use of single-use plastics. The OC emphasised that they were working toward a very low-carbon (or potentially even carbon neutral) Games and current work was ongoing to understand the overall carbon footprint of the event.
- The Board also sought further information on the current diversity of the OC Board. Members were advised that, through recent work, the diversity of that membership was now representative of the West Midlands region. Further information was also provided by the OC in support of other work being undertaken towards the overall equality, diversity and inclusion agenda covering all aspects of the Games. In response to a question regarding the impending deadline for the Hometown Hero's, the OC explained that this campaign had been live for a number of weeks and the OC was confident that applications would be received from within Solihull.

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- A separate Legacy and Benefits Committee had also been established by the OC which consisted of civic leaders, local residents, teachers and cultural organisations. A significant amount of work was being undertaken in support of a number of future legacies from the Games which included investment toward jobs and skills, long term behavioural change and the overall pride of the region.
- In respect of the Council Plan ambitions, specifically new volunteering opportunities to support the Commonwealth Games, the Board highlighted that opportunities that arose should, ideally, be paid opportunities to help strengthen disadvantaged communities and ensure they were not disadvantaged further. The OC advised that they were very confident that there were a significant number of paid contractor-related opportunities and individuals could get involved in that way. In contrast, the OC acknowledged that some people wanting to be involved in the delivery of the Games would not want to be bound by employment conditions and/or would have some spare free-time to offer to the Games and, hence, would favour traditional volunteering.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the presentation be noted and current progress in preparing for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games be welcomed.

6. NEIGHBOURHOOD PROPORTION OF THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY – SUMMARY AND ASSESSMENT OF BIDS FOR 2020 FUNDING

In attendance: Mark Andrews (Head of Planning Design and Engagement); Sheron French (Projects, Programmes & Engagement Manager); Ellie Dukes (Policy & Engagement Officer); and Councillor Mrs A Rolf – Cabinet Member (Stronger & Safer Communities).

The Board received an update on the Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) and considered a broad overview of the draft bid allocations for the 2020 round of funding.

For the draft 2020 allocations and prior to the introduction of the report by Officers, the Chairman recommended that, to ensure complete transparency, the Board should not be drawn to consider the detailed merits of any individual applications. Some Members of the Board represented the Wards from which the applications for funding had originated and may or may not have been involved in supporting the submission of the individual bids.

As a result of the report, the following questions and lines of enquiry arose:

- In comparison with last year, the 2020 applications appeared to originate from well supported organisations who, no doubt, had the skills and expertise to apply for funding. Previously, the Board had tried to encourage smaller groups and/or individuals to make applications and assurances were sought that everything was being done to promote NCIL within the community. The Board also suggested that further refinements to the process should be considered to strengthen the availability of support to potential applicants given that some applications this year had lacked the required level of project detail. The Cabinet Member suggested that additional work could be undertaken with, e.g. Parish and Town Councils to help identify smaller groups who may have projects suitable for funding given their close links with their local communities.
- From the report, the Board highlighted the six projects that would be reviewed in the New Year and sought further information from Officers as to what work had already been undertaken with those applicants to seek the full project information and costings. Officers explained the typical support that was available for applicants and the challenges that Covid-19 had brought about for this year's round of bidding.

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Officers also explained that some applicants were more proactive in seeking the support needed to submit complete bids. Others were not which resulted in the need for the post-submission work that the report detailed.

- Further information was requested on the allocation of funding and the considerations given to those applications, specifically, where there were obvious cross-boundary impacts from a planning development. Officers explained the current NCIL criteria and how it was applied, as simply and logically as possible, to projects that were located near to a boundary. The Cabinet Member also had discretion to take account of any projects that had clear cross-boundary or Borough-wide benefits within the allocation of funding when making a decision.
- The Board also asked how applications made for individual Wards were determined when they had clear benefits for neighbouring Wards as well. Officers explained that in those circumstances, the Cabinet Member would be invited to make a decision based on such scenarios. If no applications were received from an individual Ward, then the Cabinet Member could be invited to utilise those unallocated funds for a lower-placed project originating from a neighbouring Ward but with clear benefits to those cross-boundary communities. The Cabinet Member recalled how adjoining Wards, affected by a development, could benefit from a project and how NCIL monies could potentially be jointly allocated. In addition, any reallocation of unused funds would always be considered in consultation with the Councillors from the Wards which unused funds may be drawn from to avoid depriving those Wards of potential projects in future years.

RESOLVED

That subject to the comments and views recorded in the preamble above, the Board made the following unanimous **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the **Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Stronger & Safer Communities**:

- (i) That the proposed allocations for the 2020 Neighbourhood CIL, as set out in the report, be supported;
- (ii) That further work be undertaken by Officers to aid the completion of six further incomplete funding applications as set out in the report and, where able to, those applications be reviewed again in the New Year by the Cabinet Member;
- (iii) That the Cabinet Member exercises discretion, in consultation with Officers, to make any refinements to the funding allocations as deemed necessary in advance of her Cabinet Decision Session to ensure this year's funding allocations are as beneficial as possible to Solihull's communities; and
- (iv) That Officers continue their work to strengthen the awareness of NCIL funding within local communities. This should now include additional consultation with e.g. Parish and Town Councils to help identify smaller, informal community groups that could still have valid projects to bring forward.

7. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

The Board received its draft Work Programme for the remaining meetings in 2020/21.

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RESOLVED

That the Board's remaining Work Programme for 2020/21 be received and noted.

(End time 8.45pm)