

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 16 March 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **16 March 2004** when there were present:

Cllr T Livings (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs T J Capon (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr P K Savill
Cllr D G Stansby

Cllr Mrs M A Starke
Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr P F A Webster

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr M G B Starke

OFFICERS PRESENT

R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
A Bugeja	- Head of Legal Services
C Thomas	- Emergency Planning & Health & Safety Manager
S Garland	- Community Safety Officer
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

ALSO ATTENDING

C Bentley	- Operations Manager, Holmes Place
R Hatter	- Chairman, Rochford Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership

133 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

134 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

The Chairman welcomed Mr Hatter to the meeting, who referred Members to the report into Substance Misuse, which had been commissioned by the Rochford Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (RCDRP) and recently reported to this Committee. Following that meeting, he had written to the Committee in response to their questions.

By way of background information, Mr Hatter informed Members that:-

- The Crime and Disorder Act 1999 had established partnerships across the country.

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- The RCDRP comprised representatives from Rochford District Council, Essex Police, Essex County Council, the Police Authority, the Fire Authority, the NHS Primary Care Trust and the Probation Service as an associate member.
- Since January 2001 a series of strategies had been produced, including the District's current Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy 2002-2005.
- The Partnership comprises 60 other organisations across the District and there are 62 resultant actions across a range of areas, of which substance misuse is one.
- The Partnership aims to ensure that the Rochford District receives adequate support in this area.
- The Drug and Alcohol Reference Group granted money initially to establish a youth project based in Canvey Island.
- The District was granted a sum of money to carry out a study by a consultant into the needs of young people in the area of substance misuse.
- Interviews were carried out with 21 professionals at Sweyne Park School and King Edmund School and the study was published in April 2003.
- The report made 19 recommendations; 14 of which are being completed or are well underway.
- Of the remaining five; three are in abeyance, one is in the early stages of progression and the last is impractical for funding reasons and will not proceed.

Responding to Member questions, Mr Hatter confirmed that:-

- Two years' funding had been made available to the RCDRP for the appointment of an Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator.
- The Responsible Authorities Group had agreed to identify the job description for this role. This will be reported on in due course as part of general updates of RCDRP business to the District Council.
- The RCDRP works closely with local schools in terms of offering appropriate support and literature, which included sponsoring a drug education initiative which provided training for teachers, resources and parents' evenings. They had hosted a 'risk project' that aimed to encourage young people to examine the variety of risks involved in their behaviour.
- There are clear links between alcohol abuse and vandalism, but links between drug abuse and vandalism are not so easy to identify.
- The Essex County Drug Action Team finances services for the Essex Young People's Drug Advisory Service. The service is shortly to be re-tendered.
- The 'Connexions' service is striving to establish 'drop-in' services in schools, as a gap currently exists in this area of provision within the District.
- The two people who had compiled the report had experience of working with young people and drugs issues and the report had been produced in conjunction with local professionals and other organisations in this field,

who had worked with young people across the 'year' bands in local schools.

- Young people are referred through a variety of sources to the Drug Advisory Service and the Community Drug and Alcohol Team. The County Council's Youth Service also provides help.
- Attempts are made to make young people aware of the physical, psychological and psychiatric damage that can be caused by substance misuse.
- The majority of substance misuse within the District is classed as 'unwise use' rather than 'addiction'.
- All intervention supported by the RCDRP is backed by evidence of its effectiveness ; the primary aim is to delay the onset of first drug use and to teach that all substances are potentially harmful.
- The Partnership works closely with the Police to ensure that enforcement plays an adequate part.
- National figures indicate that 45% of people between the ages of 11 and 35 have experimented with cannabis in comparison with 4% across the same age range having used cocaine. These figures are the result of a Government sponsored national survey.
- Young people are generally less likely to experiment with heroin.
- The use of Ecstasy has a relatively high usage amongst a tightly defined group of young people who attend night clubs. Overall, average use equates to approximately 8% of the population.
- The national survey has indicated that the amount of substance misuse varies very little between various socio-economic groups and for this reason it is more difficult to target the problem areas.

135 HOLMES PLACE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) to which had been attached a progress report provided by Holmes Place Leisure Management on the progress and development of the leisure management contract. Members were pleased to note the many successful activities and events being undertaken at the various venues.

Whilst Members were disappointed at the instances of vandalism and assault at Clements Hall, the Mill Arts and Events Centre and the Freight House, they were, however, pleased with the progress that had been made at the Great Waking Sports Centre through the appointment of a new manager.

Attempts were being made to address this at other venues by the introduction of Teen Scene Programmes aimed in particular at the 12-16 age range.

In response to Member questions, it was noted that:-

- Small groups, operating for example on behalf of charities, were permitted to provide their own refreshments at venues, rather than use the catering

facilities available. Under these circumstances, they would not, however, have access to the kitchen.

- Where the caterer has been unable to provide catering for specialised functions, customers have been allowed to make their own arrangements, provided that food hygiene standards are adhered to.
- It was not considered that competition from other health clubs in the area would have any significant impact on the District Council's provision, particularly in the light of the improvements underway at the Clements Hall site.
- Additional security is provided at Clements Hall on a Friday evening when the greatest incidence of vandalism exists.
- The Police have been unable to respond quickly when alerted, due to their lack of resources; they are attempting to address this by changed shift patterns at peak times of demand.
- Closed Circuit Television would be installed at the Clements Hall Leisure Centre as part of the on-going refurbishment programme.
- Members of staff at Clements Hall had been congratulated on their continued commitment to working during the on-going refurbishment of the Centre.
- Air conditioning would be installed in the Freight House building. It was hoped that this would be operational by the Summer.
- Consideration could be given to the re-marketing of the Freight House building.

On a Motion moved by Cllr T G Cutmore and seconded by Cllr P K Savill it was:-

Resolved

That a letter be sent to Essex Police highlighting the criminal activities recently experienced at the various Leisure Sites around the District and requesting that regular patrols be made, particularly at the most vulnerable times. (CE)

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Chairman.....

Date