

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

25 September 2014

Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Michael White (Chairman), David Yarrow (Vice-Chairman), Lynne Allen, Teji Barnes, Mohinder Birah, Peter Davis, Patricia Jackson, Carol Melvin and Manjit Khatra</p> <p>Also Present: Sylvia Ladyman (Street Champion (Eastcote and East Ruislip)) and Julie White (Street Champion (Pinkwell))</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Steven Maiden (Democratic Services Officer), Ed Shaylor (Residents Services - ASB & Investigations Team), Lousie Forster (Access Channel Manager) and Kat Reynolds (Community Leadership Coordinator)</p>
13.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Lakhmana with Councillor Khatra substituting.</p>
14.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JULY 2014 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2014 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
15.	<p>DIVERSIFYING THE STREET CHAMPIONS INITIATIVE - FIRST WITNESS SESSION (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>This witness session into diversifying the Street Champions Initiative was divided into two sections; the first dedicated to gathering evidence from 2 active street champions and the second set aside for officers from IT and Community Safety Team to present on the support for Street Champions provided by their service areas. The following is a summary of evidence heard.</p> <p><u>Street Champions</u></p> <p>The Street Champions, from Eastcote and East Ruislip Ward and Pinkwell Ward, presented to the Committee. They noted that they had volunteered for the role to help make improvements to their local areas which, in some respects, were run down and in need of Council intervention. It was noted that many residents did not seem to care about their local environments and that it was rewarding to be in a position to affect change in your area.</p> <p>Throughout the course of the session, Street Champions and Members highlighted the</p>

following points:

- § There was relatively little feedback following the report of an issue in the current system. The Contact Centre did provide a reference number and advised that an issue had been logged but there was rarely a detailed response concerning what work would be undertaken or how long work would take to complete. Street Champions noted that they valued it when officers from the relevant department rang to discuss an issue and provide information on how it would be resolved.
- § The quality of some of the work undertaken by the Council to resolve issues was poor and it was suggested that managers undertake spot checks to ensure a higher quality and longer lasting resolution. Furthermore, it was felt that some of the Council's responses were not joined up or strategic with, for instance, grass cutters leaving grass in road gullies leading to blockages.
- § Street Champions had varying degrees of involvement with their Ward Councillors. Some Ward Councillors had been extremely helpful in getting issues resolved but others had not responded to numerous queries. There was strong support for the idea that issues be reported directly to Ward Councillors as well as to the relevant Council department. This would ensure that Councillors were aware of the issues in their area and could provide assistance if required. It was noted that such a function was not currently possible on the online reporting system.
- § Most reports were submitted through the online reporting system. This was because reporting directly to the Contact Centre involved being on hold for long periods of time.
- § There was a feeling that it would be valuable to have meetings between local Street Champions so that they could share experiences.
- § One Street Champion noted that she did not feel valued by the Council as the only response she received was that an issue was "logged" or "closed". However, it was noted that the events held by the Council to bring Street Champions together were positive and did give a sense that the Council appreciated the work of volunteers.
- § There was a feeling that the cleanliness and upkeep of areas such as Ruislip was significantly better than Pinkwell or Hayes.

Members stressed that it may not be possible to resolve every issue raised by Street Champions but, where it was not possible, the Council should clearly and quickly communicate the reasons for this. It was felt that this would make a positive impact on the experience of volunteers.

It was noted that one of the Street Champions had been a Neighbourhood Watch coordinator but had recently given the role up. She noted that it would be possible to do both roles together but that depended on the size of the road you lived on and whether or not you were working. It was noted that the Police had recently significantly reduced their involvement in Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels. The number of Police officers and Community Support Officers had gone from 6 to 3 and it was felt that this would mean that the same level of support could not be provided to Neighbourhood Watches.

Members stressed that it would not be possible to resolve the specific issues that had been raised during the sessions but that the findings and recommendations of the review would be reported to the Street Champions in due course.

Officers

The Access Channel Manager provided a presentation on how reports from Street Champions were received and processed by the Council. It was noted that, in the last

12 months, 2,524 volunteers had reported just over 14,000 issues. Every report was given a unique reference number and would be stored against the record of each Street Champion.

The Committee was provided with a demonstration of the online system and advised that the first page that a user would be directed to was a landing page. This contained information on what was and was not within the Council's control with a view to reducing the number of reports on issues that were outside of the Council's remit.

In order to report an issue online, a Street Champion would have to register for the system. Once they had registered, they would be able to log into the system and submit a report or view the status of a previous report. To make sure that a report was directed to the correct department, users were required to select a category under which to report such as ASB or street lighting. The site had been developed in consultation with Street Champions and relevant service areas in order to make it as easily navigable and effective as possible. However, there was a balance to be struck between making reporting easy and getting the right level of information required for action to be taken.

In addition to being able to report an issue with a computer, the site was also available on smart phones and tablets. If residents did not have access to such devices, an issue could be reported directly to the Contact Centre or by using a computer at one of the Borough's libraries with the assistance of a librarian. It was suggested that training sessions could also be provided to those who needed assistance with online reporting.

Members highlighted that, from the evidence of Street Champions, there did not seem to be an issue with reporting issues but there was a clear issue with receiving feedback from the Council.

Officers advised that there were two proposed changes to the service that would help to resolve the lack of feedback. Firstly, officer comments on reports would soon be made available online meaning that residents would have more information on how the Council was responding. Providing such updates was a major area of work for the Contact Centre and it was expected that this would reduce the number of queries that it had to deal with. The new model was currently being trialled in the ASB Team. Secondly, there were improvements to the Council's campaign management with information actively being circulated to residents on what work was being undertaken by the Council.

The Committee was advised that the online system allowed for issues to be reported directly to the relevant department and bypass the Contact Centre. There was also a system in place to ensure that, if reports on a single issue were submitted by multiple people, they would all be assigned to the same officer. This reduced the risk of duplicating workload.

In response to Members' questions, officer advised that Ward Councillors were not currently copied in to Street Champion reports submitted within their wards but that this would be possible. It was agreed that officers would explore the viability of adding a 'tick box' to the reporting page asking whether Street Champions wished to report their issue to their Ward Councillors.

It was agreed that officers would provide the Committee with a breakdown of how many of the 14,000 issues had been resolved, how long it had taken to resolve them and the reasons that issues remained outstanding. Members requested that they be

	<p>provided with this information prior to the next meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>With regard to the Council's involvement with Neighbourhood Watch, the Service Manager of the Community Safety Team advised that the Council provided funding to the scheme. However, there had been recent changes to the committee that coordinated volunteers which had subsequently changed the complexion of the scheme. Since those changes, officers had begun to develop their own database of volunteers which presented the possibility of the Council becoming more active in the operations of the scheme. However, officers were eager that the Council did not take over the initiative.</p> <p>It was noted that there were two broad types of Neighbourhood Watches; one very active in relaying information from the Police to volunteers in their area and the other more passive with volunteers simply reporting incidents as they arose. Officers noted that there was now a diverse range of ways for people to engage in reporting issues to the Council and the Police which would have an effect on Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.</p> <p>Members suggested that, rather than looking to create formal links between Street Champions and Neighbourhood Watch, the Council could direct people to further information on Neighbourhood Watch.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The findings of the review would be reported to the Street Champions following agreement by Cabinet; 2. Officers explore the viability of adding a 'tick box' to the reporting page asking whether Street Champions wished to report their issue to their Ward Councillors; and 3. Prior to the next meeting, officers provide a breakdown of how many of the 14,000 reports had been resolved, how long it had taken to resolve and the reasons behind an issues that remained unresolved.
16.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
17.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 7.24 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Steven Maiden on Democratic Services Officer 01895 250692. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.