

Minutes

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

16 October 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 John Morse</p> <p>Also Present: Katerina Paterson (Street Champion (Uxbridge South)), Murtaza Amin (Street Champion (Townfield)) and Ann Giddens (Street Champion (Pinkwell))</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Steven Maiden (Democratic Services Officer), Charlotte Stamper (Communications Manager) and Helena Webster (Community Engagement & Town Centres Team Leader)</p>
18.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Councillor Lakhmana with Councillor Morse substituting.</p>
19.	<p>TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2014 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 25 September 2014 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
20.	<p>DIVERSIFYING THE STREET CHAMPIONS INITIATIVE - SECOND WITNESS SESSION (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The second witness session into diversifying the Street Champions Initiative was divided into two sections; the first dedicated to gathering evidence from 3 active street champions and the second set aside for officers from the Corporate Communications and Community Engagement teams to outline the support that their service areas provide for the initiative. The following is a summary of evidence heard.</p> <p><u>Street Champions</u></p> <p>The Street Champions present at the meeting were from Townfield, Uxbridge South and Pinkwell wards and had actively been reporting issues in their local areas for varying lengths of time. Two volunteers had been part of the initiative from its introduction and noted that the system was more efficient in the early days as issues were logged and progressed more quickly. It was also noted that there used to be regular local meetings that were valuable and as they allowed volunteers to meet and hear from officers and representatives from the Police etc. Witnesses advised that these meetings had now been stopped.</p>

Each of the volunteers advised that they had decided to become Street Champions as they wished to make a positive impact on their local areas and to develop their communities. All three volunteers noted that the main and persistent issues that they reported to the Council related to rubbish and fly tipping. There was concern that not enough was done to prohibit people from continually fly tipping and that this led to the same areas needing to be cleared repeatedly. It was suggested that CCTV be used to monitor areas that were prone to fly tipping.

A Street Champion suggested that the Planning Department might be asked to use the network of volunteers to advise them of upcoming planning applications in their local areas. This would ensure that they were kept informed and could relay this information to residents in their local areas.

The Street Champions did not have a great deal of involvement with their Ward Councillors and noted that they would appreciate the development of closer ties.

On a practical level, volunteers highlighted that there were some issues with computers not remembering their details so that they had to fill in their full details every time. Furthermore, the information required for reports was, at times, prohibitively detailed. Officers noted that this area would be looked into as the system should automatically store details.

As in the previous witness session, Street Champions noted that there appeared to be a lack of joined up thinking with some Council services. An example was provided on how the Council managed refuse collection. Members suggested that this was an issue that could be raised with the relevant officers but also noted that residents needed to be better educated on waste management.

Two of the Street Champions noted that they were Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and advised that the two roles worked well together. The third volunteer advised that he would be very interested in becoming involved in the Neighbourhood Watch scheme as there were a number of issues that he would like to report that did not fit into the Street Champion's remit.

Corporate Communications

Witnesses advised that Corporate Communications did not have any direct contact with Street Champions but that they were reached through standard communication such as Hillingdon People. With regard to some of the issues raised by the Street Champions (as above), it was noted that information was also regularly sent out on issues such as refuse collection and waste management. On this point it was noted that there was generally a high level of satisfaction with waste services but that, due to a relatively transitory population within the Borough, this message needed to be regularly communicated.

The Committee was advised that there was potential to improve how the Council communicated with Street Champions through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. However, these were very resource heavy options as there was an expectation from users that they would be responded to on demand. Witnesses recommended that, prior to considering the implementation of another layer of communication dedicated to Street Champions, research should be undertaken to ascertain exactly what they wanted and whether they wished to be provided with different services to those available to all residents.

Witnesses acknowledged that there were residents who did not have access to a computer / smart phone and who were unwilling to go to the library to report an issue. Although work was done not to alienate residents who did not wish to use the internet, it was noted that the Council was encouraging people to report online because this was much more efficient and cost effective.

With regard to demographics, witnesses advised that, based on anecdotal evidence, younger people seemed to have less time to engage in reporting issues and becoming Street Champions. Consequently, it was suggested that the Council might focus on making better use of those portions of the Borough's population that did have the time and will to report issues.

Members confirmed their commitment to the introduction of a tick box on the Street Champion reporting system asking whether they wished to inform their Ward Councillors of an issue. It was noted that this would not amount to too many emails for Ward Councillors to deal with and that it was important that links between volunteers and elected representatives were strengthened.

Community Engagement

Witnesses advised that the Community Engagement team oversaw the Chrysalis Programme and the Ward Budget Scheme and was also currently conducting a pilot project into the Street Champion and Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

The Committee was advised that the majority of the roughly 4,000 Street Champions volunteered in the early stages of the initiative in 2006. At this time volunteers were provided with a cheque book to report issues and a range of incentives. As a high proportion of these volunteers now did not report, it was suggested that the Council might contact those who were now inactive and ascertain whether they wished to continue as Street Champions. This could also be used as an opportunity to ask additional questions such as whether they would like their details to be shared with Ward Councillors.

With regard to the regular meetings with Street Champions, witnesses advised that these meetings had been stopped temporarily whilst the Street Champion pilot project was underway. The Community Engagement Team was eager not to over consult during the pilot and the meetings (or a replacement) would be reintroduced at a later date. In the past the meetings had been standardised across the Borough but officers were currently assessing other ways to connect volunteers and disseminate information. The future make up of meetings and / or communications would be based on research as to what Street Champions wanted and needed.

Witnesses provide a breakdown of the demographics of Street Champions and how they are reporting. The data was several years out of date but indicated that there was a 65 / 35 % split on issues being reported online / offline. It was expected that an even higher proportion of volunteers were now reporting issues online. Volunteers were also predominantly white which meant that there was an opportunity to diversify the initiative.

With regard to the pilots being undertaken by the Community Engagement Team, the Committee was advised that an Academician had been allocated to progress the project. The pilot would be taking place November 2014. The Academician would be in a position to provide more up-to-date information and data on the current

	<p>demographics of Street Champions and report this to the Committee. He would also be progressing a leaflet promoting online reporting that would be made available to the Committee at their next meeting.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Officers investigate the issue of the reporting system not storing the details of Street Champions; 2. Officers provide up-to-date data on the demographics and reporting habits of Street Champions; 3. Officers make available the leaflet on online reporting for the next meeting of the Committee; and 4. The evidence provided be noted.
21.	<p>CONSIDERATION OF BYELAWS FOR PARKS (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>Officers provided a brief presentation on the report which was previously entitled "Byelaws for Parks". Since its inclusion on the Cabinet's Forward Plan, the item had changed focus and now concerned "The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: Public Spaces Protection Orders".</p> <p>Members raised concerns that this paper had only been circulated to the Committee one day in advance of the meeting. It was noted that this was insufficient time to consider fully the report and propose comments to Cabinet. There was also concern that the paper was not published 5 clear working days in advance of the meeting as per the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.</p> <p>Officers advised that this report was not a report for the Committee but for the Cabinet. Consequently, it had been made available as soon as the Cabinet agenda was published. However, it was agreed that the Committee's concerns would be relayed to the Cabinet and senior officers in Democratic Services.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Committee's concerns about the delay in receiving this report be relayed to the Cabinet and senior officers in Democratic Services; and 2. The Report be noted.
22.	<p>FORWARD PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted.</p>
23.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 7.25 pm.</p>

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