

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 28 November 2017

Cabinet Response to Recommendations on Anti-Social Behaviour in Staines-upon-Thames town centre

Background

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed a report on anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Staines-upon-Thames town centre at its meeting on 19 September 2017.
- 1.2 The Committee noted that a number of measures had been taken to deal with the problem / perceived problem of ASB from large groups of young people who congregated in the town centre on Sundays, including:
 - an intermediary from the Traveller community helping to resolve issues and enhance community cohesion
 - Surrey Police allocating an additional police resource to patrol the town on a Sunday
 - A six month pilot scheme by Surrey Police around Engagement, Enforcement and Education
 - The Staines Business Improvement District Board (BID) committing to provide two Town Rangers on Sunday afternoons to act as ambassadors for the town and work in partnership with Surrey Police
- 1.3 The Committee remained concerned that ASB in Staines town centre on a Sunday had increased over the past ten years and was driving away residents. Councillors believed the residents' fears were not unfounded and identified a gap in enforcement agencies operating on a Sunday to address the problems, as the Joint Enforcement Team (JET) only operated from Monday to Friday.
- 1.4 The Committee recommended to Cabinet that the Council give consideration to expansion of the JET team and further integration of the JET team with the police.

Cabinet Response

- 1.5 Cabinet considered the above recommendation at its meeting on 22 November 2017.
- 1.6 Cabinet's discussions were assisted by a report from the Group Head of Neighbourhood Services which outlined the background to the formation of the Joint Enforcement Team and explained its role.
- 1.7 Cabinet noted that the JET was formed to deal with the anti-social issues that most affected residents i.e. fly tipping, dog fouling, littering, community protection issues and public open space incursions.
- 1.8 The Chief Constable of Surrey Police had devolved some of the powers under the Surrey Police Accreditation Scheme to JET Officers to enable them to carry out certain community safety functions including the issuing of fixed penalty notices and the power to require names and addresses of those committing anti-social behaviour. It is not the role of the JET to deal with criminal offences.

- 1.9 The Joint Enforcement Team is based at the Council's depot and at no time had they been co-located with the Police at the Council offices in Knowle Green. The Community Safety team, which is located at the Council offices, is considered to be a vital link between JET and other outside bodies such as Surrey County Council and the Police.
- 1.10 Cabinet noted that JET officers had always integrated and worked well with the Police. Both had a mutual understanding of, and respect for, their individual roles, pressures and limitations. An example of this in practice was the support given to JET during recent Traveller incursions.
- 1.11 Spelthorne faces ongoing cuts to funding, rising costs and increasing demand for key services which has created the need for the Borough to find savings across its services. Cabinet noted that if it supported the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and agreed to the expansion of the JET, this would create additional and on-going staffing and operational costs for the Council.
- 1.12 Cabinet is grateful to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for drawing this matter to its attention and acknowledges that this is an issue that needs addressing. Cabinet therefore agreed to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Chief Constable, copying the Police and Crime Commissioner, about the Council's concerns and request the necessary level of visible police presence in Staines-upon-Thames town centre on a Sunday afternoon to deter incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- 1.13 Cabinet resolved not to accept the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the following reasons:
- it was not the role of JET to deal with criminal offences;
 - the recent change in the policing model and police officers moving out of Knowle Green did not have a detrimental effect on the ability of the JET to integrate with the police; and
 - the expansion of the JET would create additional and on-going staffing and operational costs for the Council at a time when it needs to find savings across services.

Councillor Nick Gething – Cabinet member for Environment and Compliance