

**REGENERATION AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Wednesday 17th September 2014**

PRESENT – Councillors *Surve* (Chair), *Roberts*, *Entwistle*, *Hollings*, *S.Khonat*, *Whalley*, *H.Khonat*, *Whittle*, *Casey*.

Also Present –

Cllr Jan-Virmani	Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services
Sayed Osman	Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods
Mark Aspin	Community Safety Manager
Pete Wareing	Community Safety Team
Gifford Kerr	Head of Service Support to the Committee
Paul Lee	Head of Service Support to the Committee
John Addison	Principal Scrutiny Officer
Sonya PALMER	Scrutiny Officer

RESOLUTIONS

6. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Apologies were received from Councillor Rigby.

7. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th July 2014

At the last meeting of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee it was agreed that a report on Troubled Families would be requested for September's meeting. The Chair confirmed that this request had been postponed and would now be received at the Committee meeting on the 27th October 2014.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2014 be agreed as a correct record.
2. That a report be requested on Troubled Families for the October meeting of the Committee.

8. Declarations of Interest in items on this Agenda

Councillor Ron Whittle declared a personal interest on agenda item 9, Alley Gates, as it referred to a company (Newground) who maintain the Council's alley

gates and is in the same group of companies as Chevin Housing Association, who he works for.

9. Alley Gates

The Chair welcomed the Executive Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods, the Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods and the Community Safety Manager to the meeting to present to the Committee a presentation on the Alley Gate scheme.

Members were provided with the history of the Alley Gate scheme and advised that the programme which was introduced in 2009 as a pilot and developed into a 4 year programme from April 2010 and was due to end in March 2015. It was noted that an application would be made to the Council's capital programme for a further 2 years of funding running to March 2017.

It was advised that to date there had been 121 alley gate schemes in operation and that 325 alley gates had been installed.

Members were told that the primary purpose of the alley gates was to be used as a tool to prevent or reduce crime and anti-social behaviour where it was associated with the use of an alleyway.

The Community Safety Manager informed Members that there was specific legislation to adhere to in order to grant a gating order to install an alley gate.

It was noted that requests for alley gates could come from Ward Councillors and Police Shared Neighbourhood Teams, but the majority of requests coming direct from residents who contact the Council's Community Safety Team. Each Scheme was prioritised using police crime and anti-social behaviour statistics overlaid with a technical and legislative framework, which was then assessed against the cost of installation before a final decision was made by the Executive Member.

In response to questioning from Members it was advised that the technical and legislative framework included consulting with water/utility companies to assess any potential damage that would be caused as a result of installing an alley gate and also assessments would be made against the public highway and the area requesting the alley gate as there could be an additional cost if repair work needed to be carried out first.

It was reported that the current criteria for the scheme was generating expectation and demand that went beyond the original intended use of the scheme. It was noted that there was an expectation that alley gates were a given right on request which in recent years have been made more difficult by the growth in petitions.

It was highlighted that the demand for alley gates at present was high. Currently the scheme was closed to new applications as the Council do not have the

funding to meet the demand. Members were informed that 470 individual requests have been reviewed in the last 6 months, which would cost the Council over £4 million to implement, 125 rationalised schemes went forward for full assessment and 60 of those schemes met the qualifying criteria and could be installed subject to capital programme approval beyond 2014/15.

Members were advised that crime and anti-social behaviour statistics were provided by Lancashire Police Constabulary at the end of each month which was then used to map crimes and anti-social behaviour complaints by location. Applications where by crime and anti-social behaviour was not relevant to the alley would be filtered out.

Members were informed that 1000 questionnaires were sent to a number of properties which had alley gates installed at least 12 months previously, 348 replies were returned with a response rate of 35%. The vast majority of residents, averaging between 90-94% believed crime had been reduced and 83-90% believed anti-social behaviour had reduced as a result of the gates being installed. Members were informed that from a wider benefits perspective:

- 93% of residents stated the gates made them feel safer.
- 74% of residents said the gates improved the local environment.
- 83% of residents felt more inclined to help maintain the alleyway.
- 47% of residents suggested the scheme had addressed issues with fly tipping and littering.
- 11% of residents noted the installation had caused some issues/inconvenience with access to their property.

The Community Safety Manager reminded Members that alley gates were not a panacea problem solver. He added that there had been evidence of displacement to adjacent streets and that alley gates were ineffective against environmental crime. Members were also informed that alley gates had caused some issues with bin collections and lost keys. It was noted that the damage and repair bill for the gates was increasing the more that were installed.

It was reported that the current budget allocation of £100,000 per annum allowed for the installation of approximately 25-40 gates a year when factoring in additional costs of statutory and non-statutory consultations, planning, installation, ongoing maintenance and the cost of keys for residents/businesses.

In response to questions regarding what statutory consultations must be carried it was advised that:

- The Council must publish on their website and in a newspaper, circulating in the area, a notice setting out details of the gating order being sought inviting written representations within 28 days.
- A notice must be placed on the relevant highway.
- A copy of the notice must be sent to occupiers of adjoining and adjacent properties, authorities whose land the highway passes through, chief

officer of police, fire and rescue, NHS, any local access forum, service maintainers, utilities, communication providers and interested persons or those who request a copy or ask to be notified.

Members were advised that the Council currently publish in the Shuttle due to costs being cheaper than the Lancashire Evening Telegraph.

A breakdown of all costs associated with the installation of an alley gating scheme were advised as follows:

- Gate - £1943.00 each (usually 2 required per alleyway)
- Pedestrian gate - £800 - £1,200 (rarely required – currently there are 4 in BWD)
- Infill panels - £100 per metre
- Fencing - £130 – £140 per metre
- Keys - £6.00 each
- Maintenance and repairs - £6,000 per annum
- Planning - £195 per application
- Publishing consultation - £1,000 (Shuttle – 6 orders per page)
- £ 1,000 (Telegraph – per order)

The Executive Member advised the Committee that the Council was looking at possible cost saving measures for 2015/17 and provided a summary of his recommendations, which Members were asked to consider:

1. No more applications would be accepted for alley gates.
2. Alley gates were not a default solution to neighbourhood ASB and crime issues but could help in certain circumstances.
3. An application to the capital programme would be made for a 2 year £100k per annum programme to complete the highest need schemes in the borough of those that have already applied to run from April 2015.
4. Residents would pay for keys (£10.00) as a contribution to the scheme, all residents must agree as a pre-requisite to the scheme being implemented.
5. Ward Councillors would be required to complete the statutory consultation and agree resident sign up to the £10 contribution.
6. The alley gating programme would be tendered with a view to securing a contractor that is both cost effective and supportive of local training and employment opportunities for young people.
7. A scheme would be set up to offer advice and guidance to residents and landlords who wish to self-finance their own schemes.

Following the presentation, Members held a detailed discussion and raised several questions. The Executive Member and the Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods informed Members that:

- The £4 million to install all 470 individual applications was a worst case scenario figure.
- Lancashire Constabulary would not contribute towards the funding.
- The Council's Environment department would not be in a position to support funding as the scheme was not introduced to reduce environment crime and the scheme was currently putting strain on the Environment department.
- Discussions had already starting taking place with a multi-million pound company regarding the possibility of them manufacturing the alley gates and the Council would ensure they obtained the most cost effective contract.

The Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods informed Members that the Council welcomed support from the Committee and their recommendations would help shape and structure the future of the alley gate scheme.

RESOLVED-

1. That the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services, the Director for Environment Housing and Neighbourhoods and Officers be thanked.
2. That the Committee would agree and finalise their recommendations in relation to the alley gate scheme as soon as possible.

10. Update on the 12 Point Plan Task Group

The Principal Scrutiny Officer highlighted to Members a copy of the notes from the 12 Point Plan task group held on 7th August 2014.

Members were reminded that following on from the task group meeting a site visit had been arranged for Members to walkthrough the Cathedral Quarter development and new bus station on Thursday 18th September 2014 at 4.30pm.

RESOLVED-

That the notes of the task group meeting on 7th August 2014 be noted.

11. Update on the Performance/Downsizing of Environment and Highways Task Group

The Principal Scrutiny Officer highlighted to Members a copy of the notes from the Performance/Downsizing of Environment and Highways task group help on 12th August 2014.

Members were informed that following on from the task group on the 12th August 2014 it was agreed that a further two task groups would be arranged to receive information on the Environment and Public Protection portfolio.

The Vice Chair of the Committee informed Members that at the recent task group meeting on 15th September 2014 Sayyed Osman, Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods and Tony Watson, Head of Environment provided Members with information relating to the Environment portfolio.

At that meeting the following was agreed:

- Due to the size of the portfolio a further meeting would be arranged to receive information on grounds maintenance and cemeteries/crematoriums on 30th September 2014.
- The Public Protection Task Group meeting arranged for the 30th September 2014 be re-arranged to the first week of October.

RESOLVED –

1. That the notes of the task group meeting on 12th August 2014 be noted
2. That the Task group would to receive information on the remainder of the Environment portfolio at a meeting on 30th September 2014 at 5.00pm
3. That the task group to receive information on the Public Protection portfolio originally arranged for 30th September 2014 be re-arranged to a later date in October 2014.

12. Committee Work Programme

The Principal Scrutiny Officer reminded Members of some of the key issues and discussions that had taken place with the Executive Member, highlighting the main issues of debate that had been raised.

Members agreed that they would finalise recommendations into their review of the Empty Property Strategy at the Committee's January 2014 meeting.

It was agreed that at the 27th October 2014 meeting, Members wished to receive an update on waste procurement and a presentation on troubled families as well as a report on selective landlord licensing.

RESOLVED –

That the update on the work programme be noted.

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....