

Divisional Community Safety Partnership – Pre Area Committee Event 11th November 2008

Background

At its meeting in February 08, the Inner South Area Committee supported the principle, as part of future area based partnership working, of nominating Elected Members with an interest and the availability to act as champions for the specific LSP and ADP themes dealt with by the thematic sub-partnerships. It was also agreed that the same Elected Members could also be the champion for the Area Committee function/responsibility which is associated most closely with the relevant thematic sub-partnership and ADP thematic priority.

In April 08, the Committee further developed the link between itself and thematic partnerships. It agreed that each partnership would host a public engagement event. A schedule was agreed and the South Leeds Divisional Community Safety Partnership was invited to host their event at the November 08 meeting.

Key features of thematic sub-partnership public engagement events prior to area Committee meetings were agreed by the Area Committee as follows:

- Hosted by Area Committee but co-ordinated by thematic partnership key lead Service/agency although involving a few key agencies & Council Services in attendance.
- Covering a range of issues and themes or could be focused on a few priorities within the thematic partnership's remit.
- Promoted to the wider public including community and resident groups, voluntary sector, forums, Town/Parish Council etc.
- Fun, interactive, participative, informal, NOT a public meeting, informative, consultative, enabling dialogue.
- Feedback to Area Committee, NIPs, local groups/forums.

Aims of the meeting

- To provide the Area Committees with an opportunity to oversee and review the work of the sub group in its efforts to deliver the strategic outcome.
- To do this in such a way as to promote attendance and community involvement in this work, making the committee potentially a more open and accessible meeting.

Format of the meeting

The meeting took place between 5-6pm prior to the formal meeting of the Area Committee on 11th November. It was agreed that a key priority concerning local residents is Anti Social Behaviour (ASB). Therefore, the theme of the meeting concentrated on presenting information and inviting questions on some of the tools that are used to tackle ASB.

The meeting was hosted by the Divisional Community Safety Partnership with representatives from Leeds City Council, West Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Fire Service, Aire Valley Homes and Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation. The agencies present had information stalls and staff to talk to residents about ASB and their agencies responses to local problems. There were presentations about Dispersal Orders, arson in the community and projects to divert young people away from crime. Chief Superintendent Mark Milsom was present and available to talk to residents. After the presentations, residents were invited to discuss issues and ask questions with the range of agencies present. Refreshments were provided and an invitation to remain for the formal Area Committee meeting was extended to all present.

Publicity

A leaflet advertising the event was printed and designed by the Area Management Team. This was sent to Leeds Voice to be circulated to groups on their database in inner south. Leaflets with a cover letter inviting people to the event were sent to all the relevant groups on the Area Management community groups database. Wardens and Area Community Safety Co-ordinators delivered leaflets to approximately 500 properties around the venue five days before the event was due to take place. A press release was issued giving details of the event to the Yorkshire Evening Post. Victim Support sent the leaflet and a letter of invitation to residents in the inner south area who had accessed the service of their ASB officer within the previous three months.

Feedback from the meeting

In total 18 people attended the event; 13 were local residents and 5 were from local agencies. Staff were on hand to complete evaluation forms with residents. Only one form was completed; that person enjoyed the event and would come to another similar event.

“Take Action” cards were also distributed. The aim of the cards was for residents to state what issues they wanted services to take action on. 3 of these cards were completed identifying specific areas where ASB is occurring. These cards have been passed onto the multi agency Tasking meeting for Belle Isle and Middleton. The residents who completed the cards will be contacted to be given feedback about what action has been taken in due course. Many residents who were spoken to commented that they had already made the police aware of the issues of concern in their community and therefore did not want to complete a Take Action card.

Staff also talked to and received some positive verbal feedback from local agencies and residents who attended the meeting.

The agencies who were present at the meeting felt that the evening had gone well. They all reported that it was a good way of engaging with local people and sharing with residents some of the tools that they use to tackle ASB. One agency offered the comment that it was not clear why people were discouraged from asking questions for the floor. Future events may wish to take this on and state more overtly the benefits of having one to one dialogue with services. These benefits would include

greater confidentiality/anonymity, a response that is tailored to their question rather than a generic response leading to a more personal, informal atmosphere. Another agency suggested that “support staff” needed to be more clearly identified so that residents knew who was there and in what capacity.

The presentations were generally well received by agencies. The presentation from the Fire Service contained many visual images and key statistics that set the context and made clear the extent of the problem. Agencies wishing to deliver presentations to a group such as this, would be well advised to recognise the importance of clarity and visual images when delivering their message.

The time, date and location of the meeting had been pre-determined by the schedule of Area Committee meetings. There are clear difficulties for some members of the community being able to access an event at this time. The evening was dark and the weather inclement which may have affected the number of people who attended. Furthermore, it would clash with evening meals and therefore further restrict the number of people who were able to attend.