

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET – 8 SEPTEMBER 2020

Recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 July 2020:-

SCRUTINY ON ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Members considered the report of the Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) setting out the findings of the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SOSC) sub-committee on anti-social behaviour.

The scrutiny had started in March 2019 and with the election, purdah and Covid-19 promoting delay.

The report set out the scope of the scrutiny, aims and objectives and findings.

Members noted that:

- ASB was “very low” and there was a higher prevalence of ASB in Welwyn Garden City than Hatfield.
- It was not easy to ascertain if ASB was committed by young or old people due to the limitations of police data.
- Perpetrators might not always be resident in borough and could come as far as London. Welwyn Garden City was an attractive place for young people with good public transport connectivity, a relatively safe public realm, free Wi-Fi and fast food outlets and the Howard centre. It was understood that young people want to feel safe themselves.
- There was a fair spread of youth diversionary activities between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield, however those delivered by organisations such as the borough Council and County Council were more targeted for those demonstrating vulnerabilities compared to those delivered by non-statutory organisations.
- There could be a gap in provision as there was a lot of sport orientated activity which did not appeal to everyone.
- The scrutiny panel found that Council teams were doing an excellent job in providing youth diversionary activities.
- From April 2020 a one off increase of £50K would be added to the budget for youth provision. Full council approved this as part of the budget setting. The Panel wanted to ensure that the recommendations from the scrutiny report influenced how that budget was spent. Suggestions were to support KGV Wheels Park and the voluntary sector as well.

Members welcomed the report and the following points were raised:

- It was suggested that the Youth Council or Hertfordshire County Council could help in finding out how best to communicate with young people, so they could access information about youth activities.

- The sub-committee did look at ASB case load and response time for cases reported and it was felt that resources were sufficient if the level of ASB in the borough remained the same.
- Members were concerned about the level of ASB at King George V park and Moneyhole Playing Fields, and the possibility of further police monitoring. Officers advised that the important message was for the public to report incidents to the police. The police could then look at potential hotspots and decide how to deploy their limited resources on a daily basis.
- The Positive Pathways project, which was unique to Welwyn Hatfield and funded by Youth Connections and WHBC, engaged young people positively away from negative behaviours. The Executive Member, Regeneration, Economic Development and Partnerships advised that the Streetwardens were doing more calls to hotspots.
- Some Members commented that the report would have been more complete had it included detailed mapping on ASB activities and free youth provision across the borough, in particular the correlation between youth activities and ASB hotspots, such as Welwyn Garden City Town Centre and Woodhall shopping parade.
- Members supported the idea of using the extra budget to support the Wheels Park at King George V park.
- Members felt that the County Council had a greater responsibility in plugging the gap in youth provision.

Members suggested that the fifth recommendation in the report be amended to not only look at the impact of the grant but at the progress on all the recommendations in the report.

Councillor P.Zukowskyj and Councillor G.Hayes then forward an additional recommendation to those in the report:

“For the Executive Member to take our findings to County and lobby them for more resources in the Welwyn Hatfield area”.

Councillor M.Cowan then put forward a further amendment to the previous suggested additional recommendation:

“For Officers to engage voluntary and charitable groups in the Welwyn Hatfield area and encourage them to provide more youth activities.”

It was then put to the vote and

RESOLVED:  
(Unanimously)

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to the recommendations set out in the report on the Anti-Social Behaviour Sub-Committee (1 – 5, as amended) as well as the additional recommendation (6).

1. To review the current method of communicating with young people so that they are able to access the information they require regarding youth provision and activities available to them and to consider if there are any additional methods that could improve the reach. This should include providing a table of the available activities.
2. That the budget provision of £50,000 for more youth services to reduce anti-social behaviour, agreed by Cabinet for the 2020/21 budget, be ring-fenced and carried over to the next municipal year if not used. This is because of delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and Purdah, which may lead to an under spend.

3. That the group support the use of some of this additional budget to be used to modernize the Wheels Park at King George V.
4. That this budget could be used in part to provide a small grant fund for one year, in addition to the current community grant fund and to be applied for in the same way, to be made available for youth provision (11-19 year olds). The provision would have to be sustainable and would have to be in addition to what is currently available.
5. Subject to agreement of Recommendation 4, that a report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time to look at the impact of the grants and other recommendations in this report.
6. Additional recommendation: For the Executive Member to take our findings to Hertfordshire County Council and lobby them for more resources in the Welwyn Hatfield area and for Officers to engage with voluntary and charitable groups in the area to encourage them to provide more youth activities.