

MINUTES OF GRAFFITI TASK GROUP

7 APRIL 2022

PRESENT:

Members of the Task Group: Councillors Rabin (Chair) and Srivastava

Officers: Tom Kittendorf (Chief Officer – Leisure and Wellbeing), Henry Biddington (Environmental Health and Community Safety Manager) and Veronika Beckova (Democratic Services Officer)

NOTE *The meeting considered outstanding items listed on the agenda for 17 March 2022 where the meeting was adjourned due to technical issues with the live stream.*

6. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2022 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

7. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Councillor Ms Watson-Merret.

8. CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP

Due to work commitments, Councillor Ellis was unable to continue serving on the Task Group and was replaced by Councillor Srivastava to represent the Labour Group. The Chair welcomed Councillor Srivastava to the Task Group.

9. PREVENTION – DISCUSSION WITH JONATHON TOY, SERVICE MANAGER FOR TRADING STANDARDS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY AT WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

As Mr Toy was unable to attend the meeting, an invitation would be extended to him to attend a future meeting of the Task Group.

10. REPLACEMENT

At its previous meeting, the Task Group agreed that 'Replacement' would focus on collaborative, constructive activities to create a welcomed and locally relevant art that develops local identity and generates community pride.

A key principle of the Notice of Motion (NOM) was to look at highlighting areas of graffiti hotspots and cite examples of community arts such as the iconic Icarus and Mermaid mural in Brownsover. The Chair proposed to use the mural as an example.

Over the years, gangs have avoided the mural as they recognised that there was a level of pride within the community for this piece of art.

Identifying areas of graffiti hotspots and involving the community in creating locally relevant art would serve to prevent graffiti in the future.

The Chair was in conversations with James Bennett, founder of Reel People. Mr Bennett was involved in creating two urban festivals in Nuneaton which were well attended and benefited communities in Nuneaton. Mr Bennett also worked with Coventry City of Culture in creating an urban art trail highlighting graffiti hotspots in Coventry. The project engaged gangs and youths related to gangs in creating new urban art and was further supported by Coventry City Council.

Involving the community and engaging with gangs and youths related to gangs in creating urban art would serve as a way of replacing and preventing future graffiti in Rugby's hotspots.

11. SUPPORT

At its previous meeting, the Task Group agreed that 'Support' would focus on support and advice for communities wishing to tackle tagging, collaboration with third parties whose property is affected such as BT's green cabinets.

At the last meeting, Cllr Douglas volunteered to collate information relating to graffiti removal, reporting, prosecution, etc. The suggested webpage content was circulated to members of the Task Group via email in advance of the meeting. The content was agreed subject to the following comments:

- Inclusion of incidents of graffiti reported and action taken in 2021 and 2022 to date including locations and type of graffiti to provide context; information on possible funding streams for community groups; and links to the Council's Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the Police and the Council's Community Safety Wardens (CSW) together with information on anti-social behaviour.
- Emphasise the importance of public's assistance in terms of identifying areas as soon as seen together with graffiti's exact location (to pinpoint the location, an app such as what3words could be used).
- Ability to upload photographs of graffiti when reporting to assist with intelligence and policing.

It was agreed that a conversation with the Council's Communications Team was needed to offer their opinion on the content, the design of a webpage on the subject of graffiti and the ability to upload photographs.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

Collaboration

The Task Group was informed of an example of graffiti on a bridge owned by the Canal and River Trust. The Trust did not have the resources to clear the graffiti and provided the Council with the approval to clear the graffiti on their behalf.

The most popular areas for graffiti were green telecoms cabinets, bus shelters, traffic lights, traffic signal boxes and other street furniture. These areas were not the Council's responsibility. The suggested solution to issues around land responsibility was collaboration with third parties. The Environmental Health and Community Safety Manager would investigate the possibility of third parties' agreement to graffiti removal on their behalf by Rugby Borough Council and reimbursement for services rendered.

Prevention

During their patrols, the CSW looked out for tags and reported graffiti. Through the CSP, officers liaised with the Police and through the Council's anti-social behaviour meetings liaised with young people. CSW also had connection with On Track who worked with young people. Part of the prevention work could be undertaken through the work of the CSP, particularly around tagging, gang members and youths related to gangs.

Projects

The Chair was in conversations with Mr Bennett and Reel People to refresh an area of Crowthorns in the Newbold and Brownsover Ward which could be used as a future example of locally relevant art supported by the community. Warwickshire County Council were willing to give permission for the Icarus and Mermaid mural to be refreshed and for creating art on the other side of the existing mural. Subject to funding, the project would either commence or be completed in June 2022.

This year, GE Energy were celebrating 120 years of existence in Rugby. To mark the occasion, GE Energy were investigating the possibility to use a large wall close to the Edison Place Play Area on Technology Drive to involve the community in creating a montage of 120 year of GE Energy as a backdrop to the play area.

Timescales for individual projects would vary.

In terms of costs for community projects, artists heavily discounted their work. Funds could be secured through funding streams available or by community fundraising.

With regards to project management, the Council's Social Inclusion Team – On Track – would assist with linking up the artist with the community, in particular young people. Interested parties could also form their own teams to coordinate the project with all the necessary information available on the graffiti webpage.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Chair suggested for the Task Group to create and fund a project to mark the Jubilee at the Whitehall Recreation Ground as this location was well known hot spot for graffiti.

The Chief Officer for Leisure and Wellbeing noted that the Jubilee year ran from 6 February 2022 to 5 February 2023. A working party was established by Cabinet to consider the celebrations. Any suggested actions would be welcomed by the working party and could be completed over the next few months. The plan of work within the

Whitehall Recreation Ground included the bandstand restoration, a plaque to acknowledge that the bandstand was refurbished in the Jubilee year and a footpath.

The skate park within Whitehall Recreation Ground was a possible location for street art. Engagement with users of this facility would be required to ascertain how naturally street art would fit with the skate park.

The Task Group agreed to the following actions to be taken forward:

- An invitation to attend a future meeting of the Task Group be extended to Jonathon Toy, Service Manager for Trading Standards and Community Safety at Warwickshire County Council to outline his work in community safety, with the Police and his experiences in working with gangs and youths related to gangs including graffiti art. Through Mr Toy, an invitation be extended to the Police to attend the meeting to share their experiences.
- The Chief Officer for Leisure and Wellbeing to investigate possible funding relating to community art projects.
- Ward Councillors to be consulted to identify areas of graffiti hot spots that may not be known.
- The Environmental Health and Community Safety Manager to investigate the possibility of third parties' agreement to graffiti removal on their behalf by Rugby Borough Council and reimbursement for services rendered.
- The Chief Officer for Leisure and Wellbeing to consult with the Council's Communications Team on the suggested graffiti webpage content provided by Cllr Douglas subject to an update to include comments made during consideration.
- The Chief Officer for Leisure and Wellbeing to circulate a draft webpage content to the Task Group for review prior to the next meeting. The final draft be presented at the next meeting of the Task Group.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Task Group be agreed via email.

CHAIR