

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD** 21st November 2011

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### **Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area Inquiry – 12 Month Review**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs. M. Sherrey – Community Services, Older People, the Young and Vulnerable People.
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ms. A. Heighway – Head of Community Services.
Wards Affected	<b>Alvechurch</b>
Ward Councillor Consulted	No
Non-Key Decision	

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Board with an update following the 12 month review of the Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area Inquiry.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That the Board notes the report on the 12 month review of the Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area Inquiry.**

#### **3. KEY ISSUES**

##### **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications for the purpose of this report.

##### **Legal Implications**

- 3.2 There are no Legal implications for the purpose of this report.

##### **Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.3 The Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) Inquiry was undertaken following the receipt of 3 petitions at the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board (JOSB) meeting held on 15th June 2010. One petition called for the MUGA to be removed and claimed that it attracted anti-social behaviour into the local neighbourhood. The two others supported the MUGA facility as a community resource that should remain at its present location.
- 3.4 The JOSB resolved that an Inquiry should be held into the future of the MUGA facility to investigate the reported crime and disorder issues and the future options for the MUGA.

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- 3.5 The Inquiry considered evidence from local stakeholders, including local residents, the police, young people and youth services. The Inquiry received data for Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) around the MUGA and the Alvechurch area and examined other possible sites identified for the relocation of the MUGA and the consultation carried out with local residents and young people on the location of the MUGA and the feasibility and risk assessments carried out by West Mercia Police and the Council. It also carried out site inspections of the Alvechurch MUGA and other MUGA facilities in the District in order to assess how the geographical and structural dimensions of the site might affect ASB.
- 3.6 The report on the investigation was approved by the JOSB at its meeting held on 5th October 2010 and considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 3rd November 2010. The 11 recommendations put forward were approved, with only slight amendments to the wording in some cases. These amendments together with a progress report on the implementation of each recommendation are detailed below.

3.7 **Recommendation 1**

<i>That the Alvechurch MUGA be left in situ.</i>
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The MUGA remains in situ.

3.8 **Recommendation 2**

<i>That the Community Safety Officers for Alvechurch make periodic house calls to vulnerable residents living in close proximity to the MUGA.</i>
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<b>Cabinet amended to:</b> That the Community Support Officers be requested to continue to make periodic house calls to vulnerable residents living in close proximity to the MUGA.
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Initially, contact details of the Community Safety Team and the Local Policing Team were made available to residents who lived around the MUGA location. Either the Community Safety Team or Local Policing Team responded to all reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB) through house calls or if deemed necessary care plans were implemented for residents that had been assessed as vulnerable.

Since April 2011 West Mercia Police have implemented new ASB reporting criteria and which involves a risk assessment to measure the vulnerability of each caller. This new way of receiving reports ensures that vulnerable residents receive the appropriate level of response and support.

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### **3.9 Recommendation 3**

*That the Alvechurch Community Together (ACT) Trust consider extending the opening hours of the Alvechurch Youth Club until the later time of 10pm in the evening for the older teenagers to actively discourage young people from socialising around the MUGA area late in the evening.*

**Cabinet amended to:** to relate to “the Lounge” Drop in Centre.

A response was received from ACT in January 2011 (Appendix 1). ACT has been invited to comment further as part of this review and a response is currently awaited.

### **3.10 Recommendation 4**

*That the Alvechurch Youth Club carry out targeted outreach work on the MUGA itself to engage with the young people who use the site as a social meeting point in the evening after dusk.*

**Cabinet amended to:** “that ACT youth workers be requested to carry out targeted outreach work to positively engage young people and encourage them to join the youth club and that youth workers run organised activity sessions at the MUGA.”

As per Recommendation 3 above.

### **3.11 Recommendation 5**

*That the Performance Management Board monitor the levels and types of reported Anti-Social Behaviour at Swanslength over the next 12 months to assess the levels of reported ASB compared to the previous 12 months. This should also be compared to general ASB trends across the district.*

**Cabinet amended to:** That the situation be monitored by the relevant Portfolio Holder rather than the Performance Management Board.

Two indicators were included on the 2010/11 performance report, levels of ASB in Alvechurch and levels of reported ASB at Swanslength (MUGA location). These indicators were reported on from November 2010 and back dated to April 2010. The indicators evidenced a 60% decrease in reported youth related ASB at Swanslength which was greater than the 45% decrease across Alvechurch Ward and greater than the 27% decrease across the district.

The purpose of this recommendation was to compare the level of ASB reporting to the previous year. Since April 2011 it has not been possible to report on levels of ASB as a direct comparison to the previous year, due to changes in the way ASB is recorded by West Mercia Police.

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It is possible to report that according to West Mercia Police's ASB records, from April 2011 to October 2011 there has been 160 reports of ASB across the Alvechurch Ward, 75 of these have been in the village of Alvechurch with 4 in the Swanslength area; a substantial reduction in previous years.

### **3.12 Recommendation 6**

*That Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership monitor the levels of reported Anti-Social Behaviour around the MUGA to identify emerging issues of ASB and coordinate remedial action in partnership with the local police service and the Bromsgrove District Council Community Safety Team.*

**Cabinet amended to:** "that Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership continue to monitor..."

Bromsgrove has continually monitored levels of reported ASB at the MUGA location through the data reported to the Performance Monitoring Board and more recently due to changes in West Mercia ABS reporting through our own performance monitoring framework. As a result of large decreases in reported ASB, there has not been a requirement to tackle emerging issues at the MUGA location. However the Community Safety Partnership will continue to monitor levels of ASB over the coming months.

### **3.13 Recommendation 7**

*That West Mercia Police allocate a higher level of uniformed presence of the Swanslength area between 9pm and 1am at night.*

**Cabinet amended to:** "that West Mercia Police be requested to continue monitoring the vicinity of the MUGA after 9pm in the way they did in the summer."

Chief Inspector Angela Burnet response to this recommendation was as follows:

*"West Mercia Police will continue to Police the area and vicinity of the MUGA at Alvechurch as necessary, based on intelligence and information (i.e. in an intelligence led way). If this requires additional patrols and other interventions, as was the case in 2010 that is what will happen.*

*I am sure the panel will agree that the reductions in reported Anti Social Behaviour in that area have been considerable following the multi agency and partnership approach to the issues in 2010."*

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### **3.14 Recommendation 8**

*That the street lighting located near to the MUGA facility be relocated further away from the MUGA site to discourage this area from being a social meeting point for people in the evening.*

Bromsgrove CSP has funded the relocation of street lighting in Swanslength; this was achieved by using funding allocation to the CSP from Worcestershire County Council for street lighting improvements to improve community Safety.

Street lights which were bleeding light towards the MUGA facility have been relocated to the opposite side of the road creating a new safe pedestrian route through Swanslength, removing the light from the MUGA deterring use of the facility late into the night.

### **3.15 Recommendation 9**

*That the full length of the perimeter wall running alongside Swanslength be removed and the ground re-banked to remove the makeshift seating that the wall provides for people using the MUGA area as a social meeting point in the evenings.*

During the investigation there was anecdotal evidence that the wall was providing a seating area for young people to loiter late into the evening; this wall was well lit by nearby lighting columns. Three quotes for the removal of this wall have been obtained; the cost of these works was estimated at between £3-4,000.

Since the removal of the lighting columns, the basket swing and in conjunction with other measures outlined within the recommendations, ABS in Swanslength has significantly reduced. The Parks and Recreation Department suggest that this may now not be required due to the reduction in ASB that has already been achieved and due to the financial implications of the work being carried out. However, should the position change at Swanslength then the removal of the wall would be reconsidered.

### **3.16 Recommendation 10**

*That a programme of landscaping be completed to create an open space recreation ground to increase visibility of the site and reduce the number of ASB acts that are obscured by undergrowth.*

The Community Safety Team arranged for a work party from the West Mercia Probation Trust Community Payback scheme to remove all of the undergrowth between the MUGA and the highway to increase

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visibility for policing; maintenance will be programmed into the work schedule.

### **3.17 Recommendation 11**

*That the seating panels provided as part of the MUGA facility be removed and replaced with blank panels and that the swing frame and seat be removed altogether.*

The basket swing has been removed and only the frame remains – the Parks and Recreation Department will seek an alternative location within the district to relocate this piece of the equipment pending approval from the appropriate elected member.

Since the removal of the lighting columns, the basket swing and in conjunction with other measures outlined within these recommendations, ASB at Swanslength has significantly reduced. The Parks and Recreation Department have therefore suggested that the seating panels are not removed due to the reduction in ASB that has already been achieved and due to the financial implications of this work being carried out. However, should the position change at Swanslength then the removal of the seating panels would be reconsidered.

### **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

3.18 None for the purpose of this report.

## **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

4.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## **5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – ACT Response January 2011

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

JOSB Alvechurch MUGA Inquiry Report – October 2010

## **AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Chris Santoriello-Smith – Senior Community Safety Project Officer  
E Mail: c.santoriello-smith@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk  
Tel: 01527 881485