

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 1ST DECEMBER, 2010

Present – Councillors Mrs. Fairclough (Chairman), Wild (Vice Chairman), Chadwick, Connell, Critchley, Francis, Harkin, Lord, Mistry (as deputy for Councillor Iqbal), Pickup, Radlett, A.S. Walsh, J. Walsh (as deputy for Councillor Morgan) and D.A. Wilkinson.

Also in attendance

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| Ms. S. Johnson | - Deputy Director of Corporate Resources and Committee Chief Officer Support |
| Mr. I. Mulholland | - Principal Scrutiny Officer |
| Councillor Bashir-Ismail | - Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer |
| Councillor Zaman | - Executive Member for Environmental Services |
| Mr. S. Young | - Assistant Director Policy, Performance and Planning |
| Mr. M. Veigas | - Assistant Director Community Services |
| Mr. K. Roberts | - Head of Service -Community Services |
| Mr. J. White | - Bereavement Services Manager |
| Ms. J. Pollard | - Policy Accountant |

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Iqbal and Morgan

Councillor Mrs. Fairclough in the Chair.

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee held on 6th October, 2010 were submitted.

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Further to minute 25, Traffic Lights and Urban Traffic Control, Members referred to the following issues:-

- problems around the junction near Ikon and the proposal to ban entry into St. George's Road from Higher Bridge Street. The need to make movements at the junction with Topp Way where there was no right turn phase at the traffic lights;
- matters around Greater Manchester Urban Traffic Control Unit not normally permitting two opposing right turn filters at junctions;
- matters concerning the apparent lack of benefit regarding the road hatching for cyclists at Deane Road /University Way; and
- the redundant painted box on the road near Sainsburys and the associated problems.

The Executive Member for Environmental Services indicated that he would look into the highway problems as indicated.

Resolved – (i) That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

(ii) That the Executive Member for Environmental Services' offer to explore the various highway issues as now raised be endorsed and that appropriate feedback be given to Members.

31. MONITORING OF DECISIONS

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report which provided details of the progress of decisions taken at previous meetings of this Committee.

Resolved – That the position be noted.

32. WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report which set out details of the previously agreed Committee Work Programme for the 2010/11 Municipal Year.

Members' views were sought in relation to any further items that they wanted including in the work programme. The report also included information which would aid the Committee in selecting appropriate items for future consideration.

Resolved – That the updated work programme be noted.

33. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SAVINGS AND EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME FOR 2011/2012

Ms. Janet Pollard, Policy Accountant, gave a presentation which updated the Committee in terms of any budget option changes being proposed and possible impacts following the recent HM Government Comprehensive Spending Review. Members were apprised of the options summary:-

Division	2011/12 £'000
Highways and Engineering	£1370
Neighbourhood Services	£605
Waste and Fleet	£180
Community Services	£100
Policy and Performance	£50
Total	£2,305

The Committee was informed of the timeline of savings discussions for each division of the Department together with specific information concerning the envisaged impacts, viz:-

Highways and Engineering

A fundamental review of all highways design and delivery functions, which included a full staff restructure and the implementation of new service levels which would impact on the following areas:

- street lighting;
- general highway maintenance;
- highway and footway reconstruction programmes;
- urgent repairs.
- bridges and structures;
- traffic management;
- highway drainage;
- asset management; and
- management, administration and supervision.

The review would deliver revenue savings of £2,523,200 over the period 2011/12 to 2013/14 and also took into account the forecast reduction in the Highways Capital funding.

Neighbourhood Services

The option was for a full service review which would impact on:

- street cleansing;
- education and enforcement;
- grass cutting;
- landscape design;
- trees and woodlands;
- parks and open spaces;
- rangers and events;
- pest control;
- partnerships; and
- management, administration and supervision.

The review would deliver revenue savings of £1,729,000 over the period 2011/12 to 2013/14 and also took into account the forecast reductions in capital programme funding and other external funding.

Waste and Fleet

Proposed Option 2011/12	£'000
Suspension of a Green Waste Collection (Nov to Mar)	90

Joint Transport Working	30
Joint Authority Working	60
Total	180

Community Services

Option for 2011/12	£'000
Social Needs Transport Review	25
Income Optimisation	75
Total	100

Policy and Performance

- management of cash limited budgets £50,000

Members in their discussions referred to matters around the possible switching off or dimming of certain street lights at night.

Resolved – (i) That Ms. Janet Pollard be thanked for the update presentation.

(ii) That the Director of Environmental Services be asked to look into the national picture regarding the proposals to dim or switch off street lighting during part of the night and this information be reported back to this Committee.

34. BEREAVEMENT SERVICES STRATEGY

Mr. Kevan Roberts, Head of Service and John White, Bereavement Services Manager gave a joint presentation on the Bereavement Services strategy.

By way of background information Members were advised that the following reports had previously been submitted to a Policy Development Group.

- October 2009 – Initial scoping paper setting out the approach to the development of the strategy.

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- December 2009 – report discussing the key operational issues and containing a number of proposals for operational service improvements.
- February 2010 – report presenting various ideas relating to the future development of the service.

With regard to the progress of existing projects and elements of the strategy already underway, the Committee was advised:-

Heaton Cemetery Extension

- in March, 2010 the Executive Member approved the 2nd stage of the physical works; and
- main drainage and civil works were carried out during, June-November 2010.

Cremator Emissions Abatement Equipment

In September 2010, Executive Member approval was given:-

- to fit mercury emissions abatement equipment on two of the existing cremators; and
- to develop detailed plans to extend the Crematorium West Chapel.

Cemeteries Roads/Pathways refurbishment using Graves in Perpetuity Fund

- the 2009/10 work programme delivered improvements at Westhoughton and Blackrod; and
- the 2010/11 work programme approved by the Executive Member in June, 2010 would see further improvements at Farnworth and Heaton.

Memorial Safety Management

- the policy was approved in June 2010; and
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the resource implications were to be considered in the staffing structure review element of the strategy.

Cremation Memorials

- an extended range of memorials were available to customers
- “Sanctums” and granite vase blocks were proving very popular.

Other Improvements

- upgraded Crematorium CCTV system;
- improved drainage at Overdale, Tonge and Horwich;
- replaced Crematorium signage;
- new dogs on lead and dog fouling warning signage in cemeteries;
- used Community Payback resources to supplement the routine maintenance regime in cemeteries and crematorium; and
- developed brochure for customers (produced at no cost to the service).

With regard to key operational issues a December, 2009 Policy Development Group report set out proposals and discussions by Members which included:-

- earlier summer and winter cemetery closing times;
- dogs on a lead and dog fouling warning signs in all cemeteries;
- memorialisation on grave plots policy (build out);
- Lawning Policy;
- extend crematorium service times;
- disused chapels at Heaton, Tonge and Astley Bridge; and

- repair and maintenance of Overdale Drive (approval to use capital slippage to resurface Overdale Drive). [Work completed in March 2010].

In terms of the future the Policy Development Group also considered a report in February, 2010 around:-

- increase in cremation and burial fees for non residents;
- potential for a weekend cremation service with increased charges;
- on line register of burial and cremation records to generate efficiencies and access to genealogy data;
- electronic Book of Remembrance to allow people to view entries at any time;
- introduction of Webcast/DVD/CD services for viewing/listening to funeral services at the crematorium;
- introduction of a Woodland Memorial/Burial Service.
- introduction of pet cremations and cemetery;
- introduction of a coffee shop and florist at the crematorium nearby;
- possible development a one stop shop for bereavement services – amalgamation of Registration and Coroners office; and
- possible introduction of new technology in terms of resomation or promession which might be considered to be more environmentally friendly in future.

With regard to the Financial Considerations, Members were advised of the impact of the Strategy on the financial position in terms of:-

- a Council financial target of £172k for 2010/11;
- the month 6 projection was £207k;

- to achieve the targeted return:
 - in July 2010 the Executive Member approved an increase in fees/charges from 1st September 2010; and
 - employee expenditure had been reduced through prudent vacancy management and by employing less seasonal staff (the longer term staffing position was currently being reviewed); and
- capital spend had also been reviewed for 2011/12 onwards.

In conclusion, Members were advised of the next steps in terms of:-

- Share key issues with stakeholders in December, 2010 including -
 - service users;
 - funeral directors;
 - faith groups;
 - staff; and
 - friends of groups;
- assess the business case for the future ideas options; and
- feedback to the Policy Development Group with a view to finalising the Strategy by 2010/11, financial year end.

Members in their deliberations referred to:-

- recent damage undertaken to dog fouling signs at Farnworth Cemetery;
- matters around the timespan of memorial stones and the current policy not to remind owners when the twenty year agreement was ending.

It was explained that there was the possibility that this information could in future be incorporated into the on-line records facility;

- staffing issues regarding a possible future weekend cremation service and also a need to look at the potential need thereof;
- energy capture matters; and
- themed funerals/cremations.

Resolved – That Messrs. Roberts and White be thanked for their update presentation and that the position be noted.

35. WINTER GRITTING SCRUTINY PANEL

Councillor Critchley presented to the Committee a report of the Members of the reconvened Winter Gritting Scrutiny Panel detailing their findings.

The Committee was reminded that it had been decided to reform the Panel following the bad weather experienced in December 2009 and January, 2010.

The report went on to cite five recommendations to the Executive Member for Environmental Services.

Members in their deliberations referred to:-

- the possibility that information regarding local grit bin facilities could have been referred to on a recent leaflet to all households regarding refuse collection arrangements; and
- the decision to recommend that Templecombe Drive was not gritted but Hillcot Road was.

The Committee was advised that it would only be the flat section of Templecombe Drive that was proposed not to be gritted and that Hillcot Road was proposed to receive treatment

owing to access to two schools.

Resolved – (i) The recommendations contained in the report be submitted to the Executive Member for Environmental Services.

(ii) That the Executive Member for Environmental Services be asked to prepare a report setting out his response to the recommendations contained in this report and that these responses be presented back to the Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee within three months.

(iii) That a copy of the Panel's report be deposited in each of the Members' Rooms.

(iv) That the Director of Environmental Services be asked to convey to the winter gritting teams the Committee's appreciation of the good work already undertaken.

36. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Director of Environmental Services submitted a report which outlined the performance of the Environmental Services Department during the second quarter of 2010/11.

The report reported on performance in the following areas-

- cleanliness;
- parks and open spaces;
- waste and recycling;
- highways;
- internal business performance – sickness absence, national indicators, service improvement action plans complaints, telephony.

The report also provided details of improvement actions to improve performance in 2010/11.

Members discussed matters around the problem of dog fouling and the enforcement need, persistent offenders, and its publication, including possible use of Bolton Scene.

Resolved – (i) That the Performance Monitoring Report be noted.

(ii) That the Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer be asked to explore matters around the possible publication of an article in the Bolton Scene concerning Dog Fouling and the highlighting of enforcement action as a deterrent.

(iii) That the Director of Environmental Services be asked to inform all Members of this Committee of the process for tackling dog fouling offenders.

(iv) That all Members of this Committee be notified of the work of the Community Payback Scheme for offenders in Bolton in relation to the work of the Department, including details of the various work schemes that can be nominated by Members.

37. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Environmental Services submitted a report which outlined the financial position for the Environmental Services portfolio for 2010/11 financial year, as at the end of quarter two.

Resolved – That the position be noted.

38. MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The following questions were submitted by Councillor J. Walsh in accordance with Council Standing Order 36. The answers were prepared and circulated by the Executive Members for Environmental Services and Cleaner, Greener, Safer.

The Executive Members proceeded to give verbal explanations at the meeting.

1. Explain the philosophy applied to each of the budget proposals for the Portfolio.

The Executive Members advised that: The overall philosophy was set out in a report approved by the Executive on the 22nd November titled “Spending Priorities and Savings Approach”. This was circulated for information. As set out in that document, in considering savings options, the major priorities of Economic Prosperity and Narrowing the Gap, along with minimising the impact on the most vulnerable citizens in the Borough, were taken into account when putting together the savings proposals. In addition, wherever possible, efficiencies were the first areas to be considered, although the practicalities and deliverability of savings by next April also had to be taken into account. This approach was set out in the Corporate Equality Impact Assessment, also agreed by the Executive on the 22nd November 2010, a copy of which was circulated at the meeting.

2. Say how the policy options met the Council’s twin aims as set out by the Leader of the Council viz Economic Prosperity and Narrowing the Gap

The Executive Members advised that: The objective in identifying savings was to wherever possible ensure that they did not significantly impact on the Council’s twin aims. As can be seen from the options put forward, this was by and large achieved.

3. Explain into which of the 3 categories

- **“efficiencies which do not impact on front-line delivery”**
- **“a mix of efficiencies and reductions which also did not impact on front-line delivery, and**
- **“charging outside agencies not service users more,**

Each of the budget proposals fell.

The Executive Members advised that: Rather than analyse it into the 3 above categories it was felt to be of more benefit to analyse them as follows

A = Efficiencies – no impact on front-line

B = Efficiencies – some impact on front-line

C = Charging (*charges not to the general public)

D = Savings with impact on front-line delivery

For information, the savings options were analysed over the above categories in a document circulated at the meeting.

4. Tell the Committee which of the budget proposals the Executive Member personally proposed and which were left to Officers?

The Executive Members advised that: The Executive Members advised that they had asked the Officers to prepare a list of proposals to meet the target set by the Council. The Executive Members then discussed these proposals with the Director to evaluate them against the savings priorities and to ensure that they were robust. The proposals were then agreed as the ones to go forward formally into the Council's budget processes which included being considered by individual PDGs and the Corporate Budget PDG where all Members had the opportunity to consider and comment on the proposals and put alternatives forward if they wished to.

This was also part of a wider corporate process which involves the Leader of the Council, the Executive, the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Resources and the Executive Management Team which tests and scrutinises the thinking behind all the options, their impact on the Council's priorities and ways in which any impacts could be mitigated. This process was set out in the corporate EIA which was circulated.

Members in their deliberations referred to the effect on frontline services and matters around the option to close Animal World

in Moss Bank Park. Also mentioned was that Animal World was not a statutory provision and at present it was only an option for consideration.

The Committee also received the extract of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee.

- (a) Environmental Services Policy Development Group held on 4th October and 8th November, 2010.
- (b) Cleaner, Greener, Safer Policy Development Group held on 3rd November, 2010.
- (c) Executive Member for Environmental Services held on 25th October and 22nd November, 2010.
- (d) Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer held on 23rd November 2010.

Members in their discussions referred to the extensive decision monitoring appendix to the minutes of meetings of the Executive Member for Environmental Services and its possible future rationalisation.

Resolved – (i) That the Members' questions and responses presented in accordance with Standing Order 36 be noted.

(ii) That the minutes of the various meetings, set out at (a) to (c) above, be noted.

(iii) That the Director of the Chief Executive's Department be asked to explore the possible rationalisation of the Decision Monitoring Appendix to the minutes of the Executive Member for Environmental Services.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and finished at 7.42pm)