

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING, 2ND DECEMBER, 2009

Present – Councillors A.S. Walsh (Vice Chairman), Chadwick, Connell, Harkin, Hollick, Iqbal, Mistry (as deputy for Councillor Hornby), Morgan, J. Rothwell, R. Silvester, J. Walsh and D.A. Wilkinson.

Also in attendance

Ms. S. Johnson	Deputy Director of Corporate Resources and Committee Chief Officer Support
Mr. I.D. Mulholland	Principal Scrutiny Officer
Councillor Bashir-Ismail	Executive Member Cleaner, Greener, Safer
Mr. M. Cox	Director of Environmental Services
Mr. S. Young	Assistant Director Policy and Performance
Mr. J. Kelly	Head of Highways and Engineering Development Services
Ms. G. Hughes	Head of Community Safety Services
Ms. S. Schofield	Assistant Director Neighbourhood Services
Ms. J. Pollard	Policy Accountant
Ms. S. Rigby	Landscape Regeneration Manager
Ms. J. Sellars	Chartered Landscape Architect

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hornby, Higson and Councillor Ibrahim as Executive Member for Environmental Services.

Councillor A.S. Walsh in the Chair

33. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of meetings of the Committee held on 7th October, 2009 and 19th November, 2009 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

34. 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.

35. 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 2009/10 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.

Members in their discussions referred to the issue of a United Utilities Partnership Working update being given to the next meeting.

Members raised issues around recent works on Chorley Old Road, the progress of street lighting connections and sewerage leaks.

Resolved – (i) That the updated work programme be noted.

(ii) That the Director of Environmental Services be asked to include in the work programme for the February, 2010 meeting, United Utilities Partnership Working Update including issues around street lighting connections and sewerage management.

36. DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Young, Assistant Director of Policy and Performance, gave a presentation which advised the Committee that the Departmental Management Team of Environmental Services (DMT) had determined a new proposition for communication and involvement of staff which recognised that the 15 strategic priorities could not be delivered in isolation.

He explained that the DMT were focusing more towards:-

- inclusion;
- involvement;
- engagement;
- empowerment; and
- training.

He indicated that the Department used a variety of different techniques to engage and develop staff including:-

- the holding of big briefings for staff three times a year;
- quarterly briefings with the Heads of Service;
- divisional sessions and individual Team briefings; and
- the publication of the magazine, Environment Matters, three to four times each year.

In terms of Departmental Big Briefings, the focus had been on:-

- sharing detail on the 15 strategic priorities;
- reputation management and political awareness;
- the financial position;
- the approach to VFM; and
- workshop ideas session.

The Big Briefing session had been very successful and staff comments had included:-

- clarity of information;
- opportunity to network;
- opportunity to interact;
- opportunity to meet and be involved with DMT;
- awareness of the projects and developments across the Department; and
- opportunity to influence sessions.

This new approach had led to increased staff participation and informal staff development and awareness. Also a number of interventions and training sessions had been put in place alongside individual Divisional sessions. These were specifically around:-

- developing the VFM strategy and approach;
- finance management; and
- sickness management.

With regard to the VFM strategy, the Committee was advised of the following:-

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High engagement of staff through away days and Big Briefing sessions including a high commitment to identifying efficiencies and changing behaviours.

- This had led to the following ideas:
 - savings on supplies, IT stationery, printers, telephones and travel;
 - making better use of the fleet;
 - negotiating prices with suppliers; and
 - reducing overtime.
- All the above issues had been included into the VFM programme and had led to a projected reduction on last year of:
 - 52% reduction on stationery;
 - 13% reduction on printers; and
 - 18.8% reduction on overtime.

With regard to financial management, Mr. Young explained to Members:-

- continued to share through Away Days and Big Briefings the ongoing Departmental financial position;
- developed a financial strategy, which was shared at the October, 2009 Scrutiny meeting;
- developed finance training for all staff with budgetary responsibilities;
- 140 staff will attend 1 of the 14 planned sessions (5 sessions have already taken place); and

- one on one finance training was being carried out throughout the Department.

In conclusion, the Committee was advised that within the Department the process around sickness absence had been tightened and sickness absence continued to reduce. Particularly highlighted was:-

Neighbourhood Services

- consulted corporately on approach to tackling long term sickness;
- talked with staff after 10 days rather than 4 weeks;
- completed targeted training with team leaders; and
- provide prompts for Occupational Health Unit referrals.

Building Cleaning

- increased number of medical incapacity issues;
- focused HR support; and
- development for supervisors.

Members in their discussions referred to:-

- the key need to brief individuals with budget or finance responsibility;
- procedures for staff to feed in suggestions and ideas to the management team. It was indicated that this was achieved on away days, big departmental briefings and the Department was keen to ensure two-way communication;

- the policy on sickness absence and the success of the plans in place; and
- value for money ideas, including better use of the vehicle fleet and supplier price negotiations. It was indicated that the issue of supplier price negotiation was now being undertaken on an AGMA wide basis.

Resolved – That the presentation and the Departmental Management Development Plan be noted.

37. NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

Councillor Bashir-Ismail, Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer provided the Committee with an update on proposals around Neighbourhood Policing in Bolton. She reported that the Cleaner, Greener, Safer Policy Development Group had established a task and finish sub-group to examine the areas of:-

- a) a change to ward-based police boundaries; and
- b) the issue of elected Members sitting on the Local Area Partnership bodies.

It was indicated that there would be a Member of Council protocol in place in time for the proposed ward-based changes.

Resolved – That an update on progress be either provided to the meeting of this Committee scheduled for 9th March or 7th April, 2010.

38. QUEEN'S PARK UPDATE

Ms. Sue Rigby, Landscape Regeneration Manager, gave a presentation on the proposals for Queen's Park following the recent successful Heritage Lottery bid.

By way of background information, the report explained that Queens Park was on the edge of Bolton town centre and was the key open space for the town centre. The Park, which covered an area of 26 hectares was opened in 1866 and was Bolton's most important heritage park, though it was now in need of investment in its infrastructure. A bid for circa £4.3m of Heritage Lottery funding to restore the park was submitted and in October, 2009, the bid was approved. The Environmental Services Department was now entering Stage 3: the implementation phase of the project.

In terms of the project management and risk management, the Committee was advised:-

- comprehensive project management structure was in place, including project manager, project board and reporting process;
- Risk Register in place;
- specialist professionals (in-house and external) undertaking design and delivery of the project;
- detailed cost plan and procurement plan approved by the lottery funders. Working closely with corporate procurement and audit officers; and
- cost management being undertaken by experienced specialist QS in partnership with in-house project manager, senior accountancy staff and Heritage Lottery Fund financial monitors.

Partnership and stakeholder involvement was key and included:-

- working closely with the Halliwell Neighbourhood Manager and Bolton at Home on the community engagement;

- aiming to establish a user forum in 2010 which would involve existing stakeholders (e.g. Friends of Queens Park, schools, bowlers, Lads and Girls Club, Chorley New Road Business Watch, Gilnow Youth Group, Halliwell Youth Theme Group, Respect Me Respect You Group) and emerging groups (e.g. Spa Road TRA, Elmwood Grove TRA);
- The University Arts Project working with Gilnow Primary in 2010; and
- undertaking door to door surveying in 2010 with Bolton at Home/Community College – community researchers.

The key elements of the physical improvements were:-

- improve links to the Town Centre and surrounding neighbourhoods;
- refurbishment of Dobson Bridge;
- refurbishment of Park Road Lodge and new visitor facilities;
- redesign of green infrastructure;
- lake dredging;
- path re-surfacing, re-instatement of boundary railings and entrance gates;
- new children's play area; and
- improved seating, bins and signage.

In conclusion, the Committee was advised of the draft project timelines:-

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December, 2009 – March, 2010, detailed project development and Dobson Bridge being refurbished.

- April, 2010 – March, 2011, commencement of works to Park Road Lodge, lake dredging and play area.
- April, 2011 – March, 2012, path works, car park, boundary railings and heritage restoration.

Members in their discussions referred to:-

- security of the park at night and the issue of locking gates;
- angling on the lakes;
- the silting up of the river;
- park lighting;
- community use of the lodge;
- financial contingency plans; and
- issues around planting community fruit trees.

Resolved – (i) That the presentation be welcomed.

(ii) That a site visitation be arranged by the Director of Environmental Services for Members.

39. MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

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- a) Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer held on 23rd November, 2009.

- b) Executive Member for Environmental Services held on 26th October, 10th and 23rd November, 2009.
- c) Environmental Services Policy Development Group held on 6th and 13th October and 10th November, 2009.
- d) Cleaner, Greener, Safer Policy Development Group held on 2nd November, 2009.
- e) Joint Meeting of Environmental Services and Cleaner, Greener, Safer Policy Development Groups held on 10th November, 2009.

Resolved – That the minutes of the various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.00 p.m. and finished at 7.30 p.m.)