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## **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**11 FEBRUARY 2009**

Present - Councillors Higson (Chairman), Mrs. Brierley (Vice-Chairman), Cottam, Hornby, Iqbal, Lever, Lord, Mrs. Rothwell, R. Silvester, J. Walsh, Wild and D. A. Wilkinson.

Also in Attendance

Ms. S. Johnson Deputy Director of Corporate Resources and Committee Chief Officer Support; Mr. I. D. Mulholland Scrutiny Team Leader; Councillor Sherrington Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer; Councillor Peel Executive Member for Environmental Services; Mr. M. Cox Director of Environmental Services; Mr. S. Young Assistant Director (Policy and Performance); Mr. P. Molyneux Assistant Director (Highways and Engineering) Mr. M. Veigas Assistant Director (Community Services); Mr. K. Roberts Head of Supported Employment and Social Inclusion; and Ms. J. Pollard Policy Accountant.

Councillor Higson in the Chair

### **61 MINUTES**

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd December, 2008 were submitted. Further to minute 60, Environmental Services - Financial Monitoring Report, 2008/09 - Quarter 2, Members discussed the impact on the budget of this year's winter gritting service.

The Committee was advised that the budget for the gritting service would be overspent by approximately £300,000.

Members also referred to the matter of resources for tackling potholes in the Borough. In respect of pothole problems, Members were encouraged to report problems to the Street Care Line but at present there were no budgetary issues.

Further to minute 54, United Utilities update, Members referred to the need for certain manhole cover related issues to be addressed. The Committee was advised that discussions would be held with United Utilities in respect

of this matter.

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

*Attached Reports:*

[Minutes](#)

## **62 DECISION MONITORING ITEM**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which provided details of the progress of decisions taken at previous meetings of this Committee.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

*Attached Reports:*

[Decision Monitoring item](#)

## **63 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which put forward a list of suggested issues which the Committee might wish to receive reports on or investigate further during the Municipal Year, 2008/2009. The report also included information which would aid the Committee in selecting appropriate items for consideration in the future.

Members' views and comments were sought in relation to any further items and issues that they wanted included in the Committee's Work Programme.

Resolved - (i) That the list of issues identified for consideration, as detailed in the report, be approved; and (ii) That the previously deferred presentation on Parks Community Development be factored into the work programme for the April, 2009 meeting.

*Attached Reports:*

[Annual Work Programme](#)

## **64 PROCEEDINGS OF MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

The minutes of the proceedings of the Executive Member for Environmental Services held on 16th December, 2008 and 20th January, 2009 were submitted.

That the minutes of the meeting be noted.

*Attached Reports:*

[Executive and Executive Member Meetings](#)

[Executive and Executive Member Meetings](#)

[Executive and Executive Member Meetings](#)

## **65 PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CLEANER, GREENER, SAFER**

The minutes of the proceedings of the Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer held on 20th January, 2009 were submitted.

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings be noted.

## **66 FREE SCHOOL MEALS - TRIAL UPDATE**

Mr Malcolm Veigas, Assistant Director of Environmental Services gave a presentation which evaluated the free school meals service for reception children. The objectives were:-

- To find out the main reasons for a child not having a school meal;
- To find out the main reasons for a child having a school meal;
- To find out a child's favourite and least favourite meal; and
- To investigate the perceived health benefits of school meals.

The results would be used to:-

- Evaluate the free school meal initiative;
- Investigate menu suggestions; and
- Use information to encourage higher take-up of school meals.

The Committee was apprised :

(a) of the actual consultation arrangements and responses per school; and

(b) the main conclusions of the trial were as follows:-

- Good response rate to survey - 30%;
- High awareness (99%) of free school meal trial;
- High take-up (87%) of free school meals;
- If free school meals had not been available: -55% would have paid to have a school meal -33% would have given their child a packed lunch;
- Main reasons for child not having a school meal: -61% said it was the cost. -42% said they could provide food that they knew their child would eat. -40% said they

would like to know what their child had eaten;

- Main reasons for child having school meal: -72% wanted their child to have a hot meal. -61% said they knew their child would get a healthy lunch;
- 70% agreed that having school meals had meant their child was more willing to try new foods;
- 43% agreed that having school meals had meant their child ate more fruit and vegetables at home;
- 51% agreed that school meals had meant they talked more with their child about food;
- 83% thought the school meal was healthy;
- 36% said the alternative packed lunch they would give them would probably be less healthy;
- There was high awareness (71%) of the healthy schools programme; and
- There was high awareness (86%) that there was government legislation regulating healthy school meals.

With regard to the next stage, the Committee was advised that the following would be undertaken:-

- Phone calls with school secretaries to ask about 'environment' factors which might influence school meal take-up e.g. whether packed lunch and school meals children sat together and whether teacher sat with children etc;
- Wider survey (value for money survey) with a sample of parents of primary school children (except reception) and secondary school pupils to investigate what would encourage take-up of school meals; and
- Discussion with reception class teachers to explore any behavioural impacts of the free-school meal trial.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

## **67 VULNERABLE PERSONS TRANSPORT**

Mr. Kevan Roberts, Head of Supported Employment and Social Inclusion gave a presentation on the Vulnerable Persons Transport Core Service Provision in Bolton.

By way of background information, he explained that the service transported vulnerable people from all ages and backgrounds, including:-

- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Children to school/college;
- Children to Schools Swimming;
- Children to Summer School;
- Adults with physical/learning disabilities to day centres;
- Older adults to day centres;
- EMI (Elderly Mentally Infirm); and
- Delivered community meals.

The Service used a mix of fleet vehicles and private contractors to deliver the service.

The Committee was advised of key statistics of the service:-

- 201 employees (70 Driver/Attendants - 24 full-time, rest part-time; 122 part time Passenger Assistants);
- In house fleet of 45 buses (20 for SEN transport and 25 for adults) plus a car and a 67 seater bus;
- 62 private contractors engaged on 118 school/college transport routes;
- Transported around 550 children and 280 adults daily;
- A total of 337,440 passenger journeys per year; and
- Projected a £4.3 million expenditure by 2008/9 year end (£2.9 on children's and £1.4m adults).

Mr. Roberts went on to explain further background information in respect of the position as at January, 2007:-

- The need to bring all Council social transport operations together, including a review of systems and procedures;
- Develop a Borough wide integrated service embracing other public and voluntary operators;
- Explore joint agency opportunities at conurbation level;
- Bring all Council social transport operations together, including a review of systems and procedures:

- a) Newly integrated VPT Unit (from April 2006);
- b) Split site operation - Mayor St & Monton Street;
- c) Ageing vehicle fleet; d) Tied into existing taxi contracts let in 2006; e) Pay and conditions anomalies;
- f) New route scheduling software purchased (Trapeze); g) Budget overspend.

- Develop a Borough wide integrated service embracing other public and voluntary operators:

- a) GMPTA/E; b) Ring & Ride; c) Bolton Community Transport; d) PCT; e) Age Concern; f) Asian Elders; and

- Explore joint agency opportunities at conurbation level.

In terms of the position now, the Committee was advised that with regard to the need to bring all Council social transport operations together, a review of systems and procedures, progress had been made which included:-

- a) Leased 22 new fleet vehicles to replace ageing fleet;
- b) Used the new route scheduling software to remodel routes;
- c) Re-let taxi contracts in summer 2008 on price per mile;
- d) Addressed pay and conditions issues through the corporate pay and grading process;
- e) Improved employee engagement and communication; and
- f) Set up regular meetings with commissioners to monitor service provision and finances.

In terms of the need to develop a Borough wide integrated service embracing other public and voluntary operators,

progress had been made, viz:-

- a) Agreed Service Level Agreements (SLA's) with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) for an out of hours transport provision to Bolton Royal Community Care Centre and Breathlessness Clinic at Beaumont Hospital;
- b) Agreed transport SLA with Age Concern;
- c) Developed links with the PCT to move forward discussions around non-emergency transport provision.

With regard to the need to explore joint agency opportunities at conurbation level, Mr. Roberts outlined progress.

In conclusion, Mr. Roberts referred to the various drivers for change and the proposed responses to those. He also outlined the budget position for the service and the need to address overspend issues.

Members in their deliberations discussed the following issues:-

- Service technology benefiting vehicle drivers; -
- Communications with staff; - Income generation; and -
- Zero based budget review of the Service.

Resolved - That the presentation be noted.

## **68 TRANSFER OF THE OUT OF HOURS DOG CONTROL SERVICE - UPDATE**

The Director of Environmental Services submitted a report which provided a general update on the Transfer of the Out of Hours Dog Control Service, which became the responsibility of the Council with effect from 6th April, 2008.

By way of background information, the report reminded Members that during office hours, Local Authorities provided a dog control service in accordance with duties prescribed by Section 149 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. In Bolton this service was provided, in house, by the Environmental Education and Enforcement Team. Stray dogs collected by the service were kennelled for up to 7 days at the Destitute Animal Shelter or Leigh Animal Sanctuary.

Prior to 6th April 2008, out of office hours, Greater Manchester Police provided a reception and temporary kennelling service for stray dogs brought to Police Stations. This facility was a duty prescribed by Section 150 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The report went on to explain that the Clean Neighbourhoods Act commenced in April 2005 and transferred the out of hours duties placed upon the Police to Local Authorities so that Local Authorities became the sole agency responsible for stray dogs and would need to

extend their current service provision accordingly. The Nationwide implementation was delayed until April, 2008 due to the need to agree transfer of funds from the Police and for Local Authorities to establish out of hours services.

The funding negotiations and service provision were resolved through the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) Public Protection Partnership.

The report went on to explain that the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) looked to meet the new requirements through provision of an out of hours stray dog collection and kennelling service, which exceeded the minimum standards outlined within Department of Environment, Fisheries and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) guidance. The minimum standards did not prescribe a collection element to the service. The out of hours collection service was primarily a service for dealing with dogs that had been confined in some way and whose owners were unknown or couldn't be reached at the time of notification. It was not designated or intended as a patrol service to catch roaming stray dogs nor deal with dogs injured in road traffic accidents, dangerous dogs or dogs belonging to persons taken into care, custody or hospital.

The AGMA out of hours collection service provider was Animal Wardens Ltd and the kennelling service was provided by Leigh Animal Sanctuary.

In conclusion, the report went into specific detail in relation to the AGMA contract with Animal Wardens Ltd, dog microchipping and other statistical information since April, 2008.

Members in their discussions referred to:-

- enforcement issues; - numbers of dogs put to sleep; and - the dangerous dog provision still provided by the Police.

Resolved - (i) That the update be welcomed.

(ii) That the Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer be asked to continue to discuss the progress of the new arrangements at meetings of the Cleaner, Greener, Safer Policy Development Group.

*Attached Reports:*

[Transfer of the Out of Hours Dog Control Service - update](#)

## **69 DDA INITIATIVE**

The Director of Environmental Services submitted a report

which informed the Committee of the original plans and proposals for Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) investment and the program to date in relation to the highways network.

By way of background information, the report explained that this Council led initiative was now in the fourth year of delivering physical works to support the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). A Project Board comprising Adult Services, Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE) and Highways and Engineering, planned investment in pedestrian crossing facilities, improvements to footways along priority routes and around specific locations or premises, and supported physical works delivered by the Public Rights of Way Team in developing health walks and improving accessibility.

In February, 2006 a report was approved by the Executive Member for Environmental Services, which detailed the Council's strategy for addressing the issue of DDA compliance on the highway and identified three specific work areas to be targeted and proposals to utilise the capital funding:-

(i) Specific Locations - included works to improve access to premises, facilities or locations including town and district centres, many of which were identified by public request or through organisations;

(ii) Priority Routes - this was a corridor approach to highway improvements, specifically pedestrian crossing upgrades and improving pedestrian facilities. The first route proposed was the A666 (Egerton to Kearsley) trial route.

(iii) Access Guide and Travel Training - this was intended to be a partnership approach to the provision of information about safe travel and accessible routes. The proposals made reference to identifying a method or appropriate technology to enable effective use to be made of the highway network, and assist travelling and link to an Access Guide.

Under the Specific Locations work area, many improvements had been made to improve access to and around premises and facilities. Work had been identified mainly through Adult Services, user groups, via public request, Bolton's Fairness Team, BADGE (Bolton Active Disability Group for Everyone) and from the GMPTE Access and Mobility Officer. Detailed expenditure was listed later in the report.

With regard to the future, Members were advised that for the 2009/10 programme, initial discussions with the Project Board indicated a need to invest in Town Centre



accessibility to complement the Town Centre Transport Strategy, especially in pedestrian routes from the planned new multi-storey car parks which would have provision for shopmobility and disability parking, and through routes across the town centre. Research was currently being undertaken to provide guidance for the use of materials in the town centre public realm for people with physical and visual disabilities, with the intention of producing appropriate policy notes. It was anticipated that this work would provide a useful steer in planning future town centre DDA improvements and would provide an up to date Policy Note for the Service Area to accompany the current DDA Code of Practice.

Further priority route work would be identified during 2009/10 using similar principles as the trial A666 route, subject to funds being available. Details of this programme would form part of a future report.

The current Code of Practice document would be updated and revised to form the future DDA Strategy.

In their deliberations, Members discussed details of the facilities for disabled passengers at crossings.

Resolved - That the report be welcomed.

(The meeting started at 6.00 p.m. at finished at 7.08 p.m.)

*Attached Reports:*

[DDA Initiative](#)