

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, REGENERATION, HOUSING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12TH OCTOBER 2011

Present – Councillors, Critchley (Chairman), Mrs Fairclough (Vice-Chairman), Francis, Harkin, Mrs Kellett, Lord, McKeon (deputy for Silvester), Mistry (deputy for Burrows), Morgan, Pickup, P Wild, D A Wilkinson and Woodward.

Lay Members

Mrs B Berry	-	BATRA
Mrs J Horan	-	BATRA

Also in Attendance

Councillor Ibrahim	-	Executive Member for Regeneration, Housing and Skills
Councillor Sherrington	-	Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer
Councillor Zaman	-	Executive Member, Environmental Services
Mr K Davies	-	Director of Development and Regeneration
Mr S Young	-	Assistant Director of Highways and Business Development
Mr T Hill	-	Chief Planning Officer
Mr S Godley	-	Development Manager (Planning Strategy)
Ms T Gandhi	-	Home Improvement Officer
Mrs S Wootton	-	Senior Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Lord and Woodward

Councillor Critchley in the Chair

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Environmental Services, Regeneration, Housing and Skills Scrutiny Committee, held on 2nd November 2011, were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Committee be signed as a correct record.

33. DECISION MONITORING REPORT

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report detailing the progress of decisions previously taken by the Scrutiny Committee.

Members were advised that this was an *ad hoc* document and could be updated at any time.

Members were also advised that further information had been provided at appendix 1 following questions that arose from the previous meeting regarding winter gritting, which had now been answered.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

34. WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2011/2012

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report, which outlined the Committee's Annual Work Programme for the 2011/2012 Municipal Year. This document would be updated on an *ad hoc* basis.

Resolved – That the Work Programme be noted.

35. QUARTER 2 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES – FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2011/2012

The Director of Environmental Services and the Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which provided details of the financial performance of the Environmental Services Department as at Quarter 2 of the 2011/12 Financial Year.

The report highlighted the following issues:

- Revenue expenditure was projected to underspend against the budget by £86,000;
- the Department had budgeted to use reserves of £114,000;
- Capital expenditure for the quarter totalled £4,895k against a programme of £21.689m;
- the projected reserve position as at 31st March, 2011 was £1,222,000 – detailed repayment plans were outlined in the report; and
- Efficiency targets were £3,705,000 which included demand led of £200,000 to repay the deficit reserve. The current projection was to achieve 100% of the planned efficiencies.

Specific areas of risk related to the loss of income due to the economic downturn, energy prices for street lighting and winter services.

With regard to the Department's deficit reserves, details of the on-going repayment plans were provided in the report.

Resolved – That the position be noted.

36. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD – QUARTER 2

The Director of Environmental Services submitted a report which informed the Executive Member of the performance of the Environmental Services Department as at Quarter 2 of the 2011/12 Financial Year.

Much discussion took place regarding the following areas:-

- Waste disposal;
- Disposal of Christmas trees;
- Street lighting;
- Ragwort; and
- Recycling.

Resolved – (i) That the position be noted.

(ii) That a map be provided to Members of the Committee regarding street lights.

(iii) That further information be provided regarding ragwort, and what the legal stance was on its removal.

37. AFFORDABLE WARMTH

Ms Tina Gandhi, Affordable Warmth Officer, attended the meeting to give a presentation updating the Committee on the changes regarding affordable warmth.

By way of background information, Members were reminded of the affordable warmth strategy, which aimed to overcome fuel poverty that covered all form of tenure and properties of all ages. The strategy also attempted to improve energy efficiency by increasing people's incomes, reducing energy consumption where appropriate and taking action to help reduce the cost of energy to the consumer. The priorities within the strategy were vulnerable groups, in particular older people with disabilities or limiting long term illnesses and families with young children.

Further information was given in regards to the comparisons with other Greater Manchester authorities in reference to the following:-

- Fuel poverty comparison;
- Winter mortality index;
- Fuel prices;
- Causes of death;
- Ages affected; and
- What had Bolton achieved?

In terms of winter mortality, many factors seemingly contributed to deaths, including poor heating and health inequalities and figures were calculated in relation to summer months. Circulatory and respiratory illness were the main causes of deaths during

winter months, of which those aged between 75 to 85 and upwards were affected.

With regards to achieved, Members were informed that:-

- 51,245 measures in 11 years;
- Annual saving of approximately £9 million on fuel bills for householders in Bolton; and
- Annual Carbon Dioxide Savings of approximately 36m kg, which was the equivalent of 36 old fashioned minis.

During their deliberations, Members discussed the following:-

- The new initiative of Green Loans;
- Affordable Warmth Case Referral System; and
- Any on-going schemes.

In conclusion, Members were appraised with the challenges that the Department faced in the forthcoming months and years. There was a Greater Manchester target of 75% of all remaining homes with under insulated lofts or un-insulated cavities to be treated by 2013, with an estimated cost of £13 million over three years, with no subsidy. It was made clear that all major six utilities were hiking up their prices, therefore making more people fuel poor, as well as the end of social tariffs coming into force, albeit with the introduction of the warm house discount. It was also noted that the Toasty Campaign had now been launched across the borough.

Resolved – That the update be noted.

38. DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION – FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REPORT 2011/2012 – QUARTER TWO

A joint report of the Directors of Development and Regeneration and Corporate Resources was submitted which provided information relating to the financial and performance position for Development and Regeneration for the 2011/2012 financial year as at the end of Quarter Two.

The Scrutiny Committee was advised that the revenue expenditure for both Development and Regeneration and Housing Services was projected to underspend against the budget by £183,000 which included a contribution of reserves of £28,000. In terms of the capital programme, this amounted to £14,436,000 and the actual capital spend at the end of quarter two totalled £4,645,000.

The report also indicated that the Department's projected surplus reserve position as at 31st March, 2012 was £2.89 million and the budgeted efficiency savings for the department were £1,093,000 with the current projection being to fully achieve the options.

Resolved – That the position be noted.

39. LOCALISM BILL AND PLANNING

Mr Simon Godley, Development Manager, attended the meeting to provide the Scrutiny Committee with an update regarding the changes in the National Planning Context following the introduction of the Localism Act and the draft National Planning Policy Framework.

Members were updated on the Localism Act, which had recently received Royal Assent, in reference to the key planning features, contained within the Act, including the abolition of regional strategies and the introduction of neighbourhood planning.

With reference to the Draft National Planning Policy Framework, the following key points, amongst others were mentioned:-

- Planning remained plan-led;
- More emphasis on the market;
- Less emphasis on regeneration and brownfield land;
- Town centre would be the first approach for retailing and leisure, however, not offices;
- Discouraged protection of employment land;
- Continued protection for Green Belts, but with some minor changes; and
- Negotiations on affordable housing.

Resolved – (i) That the presentation be noted.

(ii) That a copy of the presentation be circulated to Members.

40. QUARTER 1 MONITORING REPORT – BOLTON AT HOME

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report to inform the Scrutiny Committee of the progress being made by Bolton at Home on the delivery of the Offer Document promises made by the Council.

By way of background information, Members were reminded that at the end of March 2011, the Council transferred its housing stock to Bolton at Home. The transfer would see around £124m being invested in homes and estates over the next five years. This included:-

- External refurbishment to help protect homes, for example, work to roofs, brickwork, rainwater goods and external doors;
- Installation of modern energy efficient heating and insulation systems which could help tenants benefit from lower fuel bills;
- Electrical rewires (including extra sockets), where needed;
- Further door replacement schemes to offer added security;
- Where needed and appropriate, security measures such as CCTV, door entry systems and security lighting would be provided as well as essential equipment for the antisocial behaviour team;
- Improvements to estates and areas, including new fencing, and improved pathways to properties; and
- Service improvements for example right first time repairs service.

The improvements listed above, along with many others, were set out in the formal consultation document or Offer Document, last year. The Offer Document outlined all of the promises made by the Council to tenants which Bolton at Home were now required to deliver as part of the Transfer Agreement.

It was agreed at the Executive Member meeting on the 28th June 2011 that the Council would formally monitor Bolton at Home on the delivery of the offer document promises on a six monthly basis.

Members were informed that the total available budget for 2011/2012, was £23,894. The value of work carried out at the end of quarter one, was £4,156 against an anticipated spend of £4,980. Also, at 1st April 2011, there were 873 homes, classed as non-decent. At the end of quarter 1, there were 1439 homes classed as non-decent and it was anticipated that by the end of the financial year, all of these would have been made decent within the resources available.

Resolved – (i) That the position be noted.

(ii) That Bolton at Home be invited to a future meeting to update Members on the progress of the, Offer Document, promises.

(iii) That a map, detailing the non-decent houses in the Borough be made available to Members.

41. MEMBER'S BUSINESS

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

a)	Executive Member for Regeneration, Housing and Skills held on 25 th October 2011 and 22 nd November 2011;
b)	Executive Member for Environmental Services held on 21 st November 2011;
c)	Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer, held on 26 th October 2011 and 23 rd November 2011; and
d)	Regeneration, Housing and Skills Policy Development Group held on 20 th October 2011.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings be noted.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and ended at 7.35pm).