

CLEANER, GREENER, SAFER POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUPMEETING, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2010

Present – Councillors Bashir-Ismail (Chairman), Chadwick (Vice-Chairman), Ashcroft (as deputy for Councillor Critchley), Mrs Fairclough, Kay (as deputy for Councillor Pickup) and Morgan.

Also in Attendance

Mr M. Cox	-	Director of Environmental Services
Ms S. Schofield	-	Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services
Ms D. Ball	-	Assistant Director, Waste and Fleet Management
Mr J. Sharrock	-	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Ms V. Mather	-	Head of Service, Performance and Improvement
Ms J. Maddock	-	Deputy Human Resources Manager
Mrs. S. Bailey	-	Principal Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Bashir-Ismail in the Chair

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Critchley, Peel and Pickup

21. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Group held on 20th August, 2010 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

22. NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES – SAVINGS AND EFFICIENCY REVIEW PROPOSALS

The Director of Environmental Services submitted a report which:

- (a) outlined the findings of a review of Neighbourhood Services which had taken place to account for a reduction in revenue and capital funding from 2011/12 onwards; and
- (b) put forward a range of proposals for consultation.

The report reminded members that the Environmental Services Department as a whole was facing significant budget savings over the next three years and that the Neighbourhood Services Division was required to find its share of the savings in the sum of £1.729M as follows:

Year 1 - £605k

Year 2 - £495k

Year 3 - £629k

In addition, further losses in external funding were anticipated over the next two years together with reduced capital.

In this regard, the report went on to outline a suggested response to the reduced monies in terms of:

- revised structures;
- planning for reduced income from trading activities;
- exit strategy for external and capital funding;
- income opportunities;
- reducing costs;
- ongoing risks.

The report went on to describe the proposed revised structures and changes to posts together with the areas, services and events that would be affected.

An outline timetable for consultation and implementation of the proposals was provided in the report. Diagrammatical structures illustrating changes to services and staff were also appended to the report.

Following consideration of the report, members made the following observations:

- the possibility of introducing a small charge for events;
- whether the "Friends Of" groups could assist in organising some of the events; and
- whether any surplus grassed areas within residential areas could be offered to any interested parties to purchase or maintain.

Officers felt that these options could be examined but stressed that there would be limited resources to pursue them.

It was agreed that:

- (i) officers be requested to examine the options referred to by members at the meeting; and

- (ii) the Executive Member for Cleaner, Greener, Safer be recommended to approve the report for consultation purposes with stakeholders, staff and trades unions.

23. INCREASING RECYCLING IN LOW PARTICIPATION AREAS

The Assistant Director, Waste and Fleet Management, gave a presentation on initiatives being proposed by the Environmental Services Department to increase recycling rates in low participation areas using £60k of AGB funding.

Members were advised that the main areas of low participation included Farnworth, Rumworth and Crompton and the initial campaign would target 900 households in those locations. If additional funding could be secured, the campaign would be expanded to cover Great Lever, Halliwell and Breightmet.

The presentation went on to detail what the campaign would involve, namely:

- providing information and advice on waste management and recycling;
- new collection calendar for residents;
- containers provided to residents that needed them; and
- partnership working where possible.

Other work would involve roadshows, local newsletters, website, work with schools and internal staff bulletins.

A key feature of the campaign would involve education about contamination and the financial consequences if the Council did not reduce it. A contamination sticker would be introduced to assist members of the public in recognising what items could be placed in which bins and to advise them that their waste had been contaminated and why.

Monitoring of participation before and after the campaign would take place together with tonnages of residual waste and recyclate collected, the numbers and type of containers delivered and contamination before and after.

Following the presentation, members felt that it would be beneficial for stickers to be placed on bins reminding members of the public of which items could be placed in the various bins. This would assist with encouraging recycling and reducing contamination.

It was agreed that Ms Ball be thanked for her informative presentation.

24. ALLOTMENTS SERVICE REVIEW - UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services, gave a presentation which updated members on the progress of the review of the Allotments Service which had been agreed by the Executive Member in February, 2010.

Members were reminded that the review had aimed to:

- increase availability of plots and reduce waiting lists;
- reduce the number of new tenancies starting in summer;
- reduce tenancy failures amongst new tenants and keep older tenants involved for longer; and
- significantly reduce the service subsidy by 2014.

The service had aimed to make the improvements by introducing an administration charge from October, 2010 and charges for toilets and water in future years.

Due to financial pressures, it had been proposed to bring forward implementation of the additional charges to October, 2010. However, a legal challenge to the proposals had meant that this may no longer be possible. Full details of the challenge and subsequent legal advice were outlined for members.

In addition, members were advised that the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) had given a view on the Council's Allotments Service, the outcome of which was summarised and which indicated that:

- much of the money spent on allotments by the Council did not appear to represent efficient, economic or effective use of resources;
- there was an overly complex system of charging;
- a lack of encouragement of sites to become self managed with a lack of cooperation between the Council and site secretaries; and
- no new sites were created or any extensions made to existing ones.

In this regard, members were advised that, on the basis of the legal advice received, and the suggestions of the NSALG, it was now proposed that:

- the introduction of the new service charges for administration, water and toilet facilities be deferred pending further discussion with the NSALG, allotment sites and tenants;
- any loss of budgeted income be offset by reducing non-essential expenditure on allotments during 2010/11 to ensure that the Allotments Service operated within the identified budget;
- no change should be made at this time to the categories of allotment fees and charges and that the 2001/10 fees be increased for 2010/11 by the 3% inflation figure; and
- a review of the fees and charges structure be included in the discussions referred to above.

It was agreed that the Executive Member be recommended to approve the revised proposals in relation to the Allotments Service review, as detailed above.

(The meeting started at 1.00pm and finished at 2.30pm)