

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 20th July 2015

Present: Councillor A Robertson (Chair)
Councillors James Eaton (substituting for Sandiford), Janet Eaton, Haworth, McMahon, Oakes (substituting for Bleakley) Procter (substituting for Kenyon) and Steen

In Attendance: Joe Kennedy, Head of Operations
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Katie Gee, Corporate Officer
Councillor Lamb, Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and Development Control
Councillor Marriott, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer

3 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bleakley, Hughes, Kenyon, Lythgoe and Sandiford.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd and 29th June 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow the members of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

A member of the public indicated that he had still not received a response to a question raised at the last meeting in relation to a progress update on year end accounts of the Leisure Trust. This would be raised with the Head of Finance and Property Services.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair informed the Committee that the Scrutiny Officer had circulated information received from the Clinical Commissioning Group following questions raised at the last meeting in relation to the Minor Injuries Unit.

A number of suggestions were made in relation to possible use of the ground floor space at the MIU including, CAB/ CVS and meeting areas. These would be passed on to the CCG.

In relation to the 0300 numbers for Revenue and Benefits and the emergency out-of-hours service, these would now be charged at local rate.

7. AREA BASE WORKING – UPDATE

The Head of Operations provided a progress update on the Area Based Working which was introduced in late 2014.

A number of improvements had been put in place due to the changes implemented which include:

- Improved communication, due to all collection vehicles working in the same area on the same day, providing a more consistent service.
- 2 Loaders from each vehicle were able to be redeployed on cleansing activities during periods when vehicles were travelling to and from tipping facilities.
- Through improved areas of operation and efficiencies, collection catch up arrangements can be applied quickly to continually balance collection rounds within an individual area.
- There has been recognised saving on fuel usage, including for October/November 2014, 6,000litres less fuel was used in comparison to the previous year. This figure when applied to a full year forecast amounts to 36,000litres less fuel usage, due in part, to new rounds and new vehicles which are more economical.
- Consistency of collection will assist the council in trying to achieve challenging national recycling and landfill targets.
- 2% increase in recycling rates

Members also received the communication plan and statistics showed that the public were clearly well informed about the changes and the Operations team did not receive a vast amount of enquiries.

A member commented that the figures were very encouraging and that the 30 hours litter picking had certainly improved the Borough.

Members asked that congratulation be sent on behalf of the Committee to the Operations Team on how well these changes were managed.

A number of questions were raised as follows, which the Head of Operations responded as follows:

- Where does recycling materials end up? The Council has a contract with Norpol (Pendle) who provide a facility at Rakehead.
- More enforcement activity needed as we are not getting to the bottom of who is responsible. The Head of Operations explained that there is one Enforcement Officer and letters are sent out to problematic people. If they cannot identify a specific property then letters are sent out to everyone on the street.
- Would the Council consider taking further action ie fixed penalty. fines/caution? The Head of Operations indicated that there is soon to be a new structure in Operations and once that is in place it was envisaged that Officers would take enforcement a step further.
- How do the Council liaise with the Civic Pride who themselves have their own litter pickers? Two Council Officers work with voluntary groups and encourage and support these people.
- By 2020 there will be a population increase, will the Council cope? The Head of Operation said the Council would be fine. The changes in the refuse fleet provides for an additional 2 ton capacity.
- How would a family of 8 cope with having only one bin? Larger families are offered an additional bin.

The Head of Operations explained that further education was needed as the Council had low participation in the education programme. Further work with LCC would be undertaken on how to take this forward.

A concern was raised about cigarette ends outside of public houses and it was agreed to send out a short letter to public houses to make them more aware of the need to sweep pavements more frequently.

The Head of Operations asked Members to contact him if they were aware of an area that needed addressing and this would be included in the daily rotas, where possible.

The Chair thanked the Head of Operations for his presentation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the progress update report.
2. That the Head of Operations send congratulation to his team on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the smooth transition to Area Based Working.

8. SOCIAL MEDIA/NETWORKING POLICY FOR MEMBERS

The Corporate Officer presented the Social Media and Networking Policy for Member, which provided clear guidance as to what the Council expects is

communicated both for the protection of individuals and for the protection of the Council's reputation.

Previously, the Council had one Policy which covered both staff and Members, but it was apparent that individual policies were needed.

Social Media now plays a greater role in the Council's work with more and more people using it in their daily lives. Therefore, it is important to give clear guidance as to what the Council expects is communicated both for the protection of individuals and for protection of the Council's reputation.

The Policy covers why the Council uses Social Media, some guidance and pitfalls to using social media personally when associated with the Council as a Members, legal implications, risks and information around speaking for the Council.

The Policy is not intended to restrict Members use of Social Media, or to make Members use Social Media, it is intended to provide guidance and information on how best to use it and protect the Council's reputation.

The Council has over 4,000 followers on social media and a member commented that the HAPPI group was a prime example of how well social media works well.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the Social Media Policy for Members and recommend to Cabinet the approval of the Policy.
2. That Overview and Scrutiny recommend to Cabinet that all future minor amendments to the policy to be delegated to the Corporate Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

9. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LAND TRANSACTION PROCESS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Head of Finance and Property Services presented the Cabinet's response to the recommendations of the Land Transaction Task and Finish Group.

Following a question from a member of the public in relation to the process when selling Council owned land at the Full Council meeting in December 2013, the Leader of the Council asked that a scrutiny review of the Council's Land/Property Transaction Process be undertaken.

This was a 'light touch' review to agree a procedure that the Council should use and the following recommendations were made by the Task and Finish Group.

1. That the new Land transaction procedure be agreed
2. That the draft letters be agreed
3. That the appeal process be agreed.

4. That following discussion on the process an amendment be made to include in para 6

When a piece of Council land is for sale then a notice be erected informing the public that if they are interested in buying the land they should contact the Council. Then, if more than one party is interested with that area of land/property, the proposed sale may be advertised and sealed bids/tenders invited from all interested parties

5. That the Governance Working Group considers reviewing and amending the following section of the Constitution:
 - a) Contract Procedure Rules to include Disposal of Land by the Council

In considering the above recommendations the Cabinet proposed the following amendments which the Head of Finance and Property Service provided an explanation.

1. De Minimise - The Task & Finish Group suggested £100 rent pa, however it is thought that this figure was too low and should be £200 pa. This is based on existing minimum rental levels and the administration.
2. The original deposit may be returned should the original applicant not be the ultimate successful bidder.
3. No appeals process in order to avoid time wasting and administration. However, the portfolio holder will form part of the decision process. Customers also have a right to complain via the complaints process.
4. Changes to some of the order for public and Member notifications
 - a. Para 8: "The notice of disposal will also go on the Council's web-site and on The Business Centre Notice Board for the requisite period." To follow on from para 9
 - b. Para 8: "Once a disposal has been provisionally agreed a note is also to be placed in the "Members Bulletin" report." To follow para'6.

The Chair of the Task and Finish Group indicated her disappointment that the Council did not feel it appropriate to erect a sign informing the public that the piece of land was for sale and if interested in buying the land they should contact the Council. This would be an open and transparent way to allow any interested party to be given the opportunity of buying the land.

The Head of Finance and Property Services confirmed that this would be included in the process.

RESOLVED:

That Overview and Scrutiny note Cabinet's response to the recommendations of the Land Transaction Process Task and Finish Group.

10. FORWARD PLAN

Members were asked to consider whether they wished to see any of the Policies on the Forward Plan, prior to them going to Cabinet.

The Chair asked to have sight of the Conservation Strategy and the Scrutiny Support Officer would contact Officers to arrange.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.35pm

Signed
(Chair)

Dated