

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2013 FROM 7:00PM TO 8:50PM**

Present:- Norman Jorgensen (Chairman), Michael Firmager (Vice-Chairman), David Sleight (substituting for Parry Bath), Chris Bowring, Tim Holton, Ken Miall and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

Also present:-

Susan Coulter, Senior Democratic Services Officer;

Andrew Moulton, Director of Transformation;

Councillor Angus Ross, Executive Member for Environment.

PART I

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 27 February 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment under Minute 14, Update on the Borough Design Guide - line one of the fourth paragraph - replace the word "Building" with "Borough".

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Parry Bath and Kate Haines.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions. However, the Chairman advised that a member of the public, Mr Philip Meadowcroft, had requested to speak on Item 7.00, the Committee's Forward Programme and in particular, Planning Enforcement.

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions. However, the Chairman advised that Councillor Angus Ross, Executive Member for Environment was present to give the Committee an update on the Waste Collection Service. The Chairman advised that while he did not consider this to be an urgent item, as set out in item 8 on the agenda, he felt it was important that Members received the information and he requested that Councillor Ross address the Committee at this point.

Councillor Ross advised that Mark Moon was unable to attend the meeting. Both had attended a meeting regarding the development of a strategy for Re3 the three Councils waste disposal PFI, with members of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, officers of the Council and its partner contractors, for both collection and disposal. A waste disposal strategy for 5 to 10 years was being developed and would be reported to the Joint Waste Board in the autumn; it would include the issue of recyclates and would consider any possible extension of the types of materials recycled. Any extension to the number of materials that are recycled depends on several things being in place:

- Firstly, there must be a viable market for the particular material. Many materials that are collected as recyclate by other authorities are in fact taken to Energy from Waste, which of course the Council was already doing with 25 thousand tonnes of the residual waste stream.

- Secondly, the Material Recycling Facility at Smallmead would probably need to be amended so that it became capable of segregating the chosen material from other co-mingled materials. This can be facilitated through the contract change mechanisms within the PFI but will be priced and will need to be paid for by the 3 Authorities. Their unanimous agreement to this change would be required.

Revenue Budgets would then have to be allocated to cover the additional cost of collection and treatment, if appropriate.

Councillor Ross advised that as had been illustrated, the issue of extending the number of materials collected for recycling and then treating them is not simple and has not yet been addressed, but plans are in place to examine the issue and there is a desire to expand the offering the Borough's residents if it is practical and affordable.

Councillor Ross added that the LGA had launched a review "Wealth from Waste". He had attended the launch which was looking at minimising packaging with an emphasis on the re-use of packaging, such as recycling, and looking at other markets, such as the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment initiative and glass recycling. The Council was looking at extending bring banks as this would be an efficient way of collecting glass. Kerbside collections meant that the glass was mixed with other recyclables. The Council had maintained weekly household waste collections so this was less of an issue, although residents still argued the case for wheeled bins. A separate collection for food waste had been discussed but a better source of household food composters needed to be found. Overall, if the Council had a better ability to use markets profitably then this would be better than sending waste to landfill or energy from waste sites.

Members agreed that more recycling needed to be done locally. An education programme was required. It was horrifying to see how much food people bought and did not eat. Special "Buy One Get One Free" offers encourage people to buy more than they needed and this generated problems of overbuying. The way forward was for more items to be re-used or reconditioned, such as the furniture that went to Sue Ryder. Textile banks were another area that was worth being developed.

The Government was trying to influence supermarkets to change their packaging and reduce the use of plastic carrier bags. Ireland had already banned the use of plastic bags but this needed to be done nationally to have any real impact.

With regard to food waste, anaerobic digesters had been considered but a local facility to process the food would be required. It was not known whether this would generate any value and Councillor Ross undertook to find out what the cost of providing this service would be and report back to the Committee in either October 2013 or January 2014.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Ross for the update information and for attending the meeting.

6. IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE (WHITEHALL BUSINESS PLAN) UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update and presentation on the Council's response to the Government's Channel Strategy Improving the Customer Experience.

Andrew Moulton, Director of Transformation, presented an overview of what the Council had achieved to date and its plans for the future, noting the model of delivery, the

transformation Programme 2010-2013, and the vision for the Council for 2012 which included as one of its priorities “improving the customer experience”. A Joint Working Group of officers and Councillors had been established and a change and improvement programme from 2013 onwards had been agreed.

The Joint Working Group was set up in late 2012. The Key questions it would be addressing were:

- Who are the Council’s customers?
- Are there different levels of engagement, at different times and from different services?
- Does the Council have a customer service culture?
- Does the Council recognise staff who offer a good customer experience?
- Does the Council offer an environment for visitors which is customer friendly?
- Does the Council have a baseline of customer experience so it knows if it is improving?
- What does good customer experience look like?

The feedback from manager workshops in Adult Social Care and Early Intervention was being incorporated into the change and improvement work.

The Committee was advised that Local Government finance settlements were unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future. Budgets can no longer be set simply through applying a % savings target to all services. Political acknowledgement of the need to have a different focus was required. That focus is on both what the Council does (service shape, size, model, cost, value) and how it does it (leadership, management, performance, learning and development, recruitment and retention, talent development, Value for Money and efficiency). The Council is going to need to change its shape in order to meet savings targets for 2014/15 and future years.

Andrew Moulton advised that the programme would focus on building capacity to deliver against the Council’s principles and priorities. It would be underpinned by the Council’s values and must deliver both effectiveness and efficiency. It would enable the Council to focus on what it must do, and do well and make the Council a ‘market leader’ in how it grows and develops its people. The programme would be involving and inclusive in its delivery: It is delivered *by* the Council, *with* the Council, not done *to* the Council. External support and expertise is available when required. The programme requires, and is about, change at every level, and for both officers and Members. It is also about designing the organisation from the outside in, from the customer first. The Council will be shaped according to the needs of its ‘front lines’ where the Council’s customers are served. The programme will be implemented to keep compulsory redundancies to a minimum. The new organisation will rely on high performing and adaptable people and require greater discipline around standardisation.

Andrew Moulton then explained the Change and Improvement Cycle, which included Quick Wins, High Profile Projects, the Technology Future Programme and the People Strategy. The specifics around customer improvement included:

- Lean – “Voice of the Customer”;
- Performance Improvement – customer service “dial” for all staff;
- A Thematic Review of Customer Service and Support;
- Customer Management “Quick Win” being informed by staff survey:
 - Digital by default strategy;
 - Technology;

- A Customer service model;
- The Role of Councillors.

The Committee agreed that it should be involved in the process and Members should look at the metrics, customer feedback and the role of Councillors more closely.

RESOLVED: That the Committee receive information at its next meeting on the following areas:

- 1) Customer feedback,
- 2) Key Performance Indicators; and
- 3) The role of Councillors.

7. CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received its work programme for 2013/14, which included potential items for review referred from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC).

Members discussed the current burial provision in the Borough, which was scheduled to be considered by the Committee in August 2013, and whether it was close to the limit. Members agreed that they needed to know what the options were, if this was the case and what the potential was for new burial sites. They were also concerned that the new SDLs would have a significant impact on burial provision. Finally, Members considered what the options were for other providers or different types of burials; was the market changing in terms of religious burials or environmentally friendly burials etc.

The Chairman requested that Members e-mail the Senior Democratic Services Officer if they had other suggestions for consideration.

The Committee also discussed an item relating to roads maintenance, which had been referred from the OSMC for consideration and Members were advised that in November 2011, they had received a briefing from officers and the relevant Executive Member but no further action was taken at that time. Members suggested that figures be produced by officers each month setting out the number of potholes in the Borough, with a graph showing any increases or decreases.

The Chairman suggested that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee setting out the format for reporting problems.

The Committee also discussed an item relating to Planning Enforcement, which had been referred from the OSMC for consideration. The Committee was advised that the item had been considered at its meeting in February 2013, following a request from the OSMC for the then Panel to receive a briefing on planning enforcement, with a view to deciding if any further action was necessary. No further action was decided upon at that time. The Chairman invited Mr Philip Meadowcroft to address the Committee for this item.

Mr Meadowcroft explained that he was a Wargrave resident and was present to observe the passage of an important item discussed at some length at the OSMC meeting on 28 May 2013. Mr Meadowcroft explained that the Minutes of that meeting were not available yet but some Members from that meeting were present tonight. A suggestion had been put to the OSMC by a fellow Wargrave resident, Mr Tom Berman. Mr Berman had said:

“I believe our Ward Councillors do support me in saying that there is a great deal of local dissatisfaction with the performance of the Council’s Planning Enforcement Department”

Mr Berman requested an update on the Minute in the penultimate paragraph of Item 13 in this Committee’s February 2013 meeting Minutes which stated:

“Councillor Baker advised that the enforcement policy was due for review and when this had been done it would be considered by the Planning Policy Steering Group (PPSG) and be adopted via an individual Executive Member Decision (IMD)”.

Specifically, Mr Berman asked the OSMC on 28 May:

1. What has happened to this review?
2. That the new review needs to be more wide-ranging and self-critical than the report authored by Heather Thwaites and presented to the Committee in February this year;
3. That the review should look outwards and take evidence from relevant parts of the community;
4. That the new review should come back to the Management Committee and instead of being merely noted, as occurred last February, should instead receive serious consideration as to the necessary improvements in Planning and Enforcement.

Nine Members of the OSMC resolved on 28 May that a review of the Council’s Planning and Enforcement functions should be rated as a high priority and therefore Mr Berman and Mr Meadowcroft expected the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to treat it as such.

Mr Meadowcroft thanked the Chairman and the Committee for allowing him to participate in what he hoped had been a constructive and decisive discussion.

The Chairman advised that it appeared to be the implementation of the policy which seemed to be the problem. Its implementation was at the discretion of those carrying out the enforcement work. He suggested that the Committee could review the policy as it may need tightening up.

Members agreed that if the Council’s policy was strong and robust, then there should be no fear of the Council losing appeals, which was an expensive process. Communication was key to the quality and consistency of the advice given by officers, who had local knowledge and knew the history of the applications.

Members requested that a copy of the PPSG Minutes from 27 February 2013 be circulated to the Committee for information.

The Committee agreed that a review should be undertaken and that all of the Members of the Committee be invited to sit on a Task and Finish Group to carry out the work.

It was agreed that draft terms of reference be brought to the August meeting of the Committee with a view to the review commencing in October. The Chairman advised that Mr Meadowcroft and Mr Berman would be invited to attend meetings of the Task and Finish Group as witnesses to provide evidence and information to Members.

The Committee was advised that it may be possible for draft terms of reference to be brought to the August meeting and due to the lack of officer capacity in Democratic

Services, this could not be guaranteed. Democratic Services Officers were currently supporting several Scrutiny Reviews, with several more in the pipeline.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) as part of the annual update report on burial provision, the following issues be included for information and be presented to the Committee at its meeting on 29 August 2013:
 - a) What the options are with regard to different types of burials;
 - b) What the potential is for new burial sites within the Borough
 - c) What impact will the new SDLs have on burial provision within the Borough; and
 - d) What the options are for other providers in terms of religious burials or environmentally friendly burials etc.
- 2) a report setting out the format for reporting problems with roads maintenance in the Borough be presented to a future meeting of the Committee;
- 3) a review of the Planning Enforcement Service be undertaken and that all of the Members of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to sit on a Task and Finish Group to carry out the work;
- 4) draft terms of reference for the Planning Enforcement Task and Finish Group be brought to the August meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, if possible, with a view to the review commencing in October.
- 5) Mr Meadowcroft and Mr Berman be invited to attend meetings of the Planning Enforcement Task and Finish Group as witnesses to provide evidence and information to Members; and
- 6) The Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2013/14 be updated and noted accordingly.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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