

ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 5th February, 2015

Present:-

Councillor Slack (Chair)

Councillors Dyke
Flood

Councillors Hawksworth+

Innes

Donna Cairns, Committee and Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Peter Corke, Sustainability Officer ++
Anita Cunningham, Policy and Scrutiny Officer

+ Attended for items 58 – 62.

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58 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations were received.

59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bradford, Callan, Gibson and Lang.

60 EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT - ALLOTMENTS STRATEGY

The Sustainability Officer presented a report on the progress made on the implementation of the Allotment Strategy 2012-2016.

There were five objectives which were monitored via an Action Plan:

- To cultivate the improved management of the Council's allotment sites
- To promote allotments as a benefit for the whole community
- To highlight the role that allotments play in developing a more sustainable environment, encouraging biodiversity and conservation

- To develop a health agenda for allotments, focusing on benefits, in terms of improving health in the borough
- To review existing provision of allotments in Chesterfield and to seek to identify area of potential future allotment provision

The Sustainability Officer reported that the majority of the actions had now been implemented and the vast majority of the sites were being managed very well.

Inspections of the allotment sites had taken place in 2014 and there were follow-up visits planned for sites where asbestos had been identified. Members queried whether there was to be a regular schedule of inspections of the asbestos. The Sustainability Officer advised that these visits were follow-ups to the initial inspections to gather accurate information on where asbestos was located and its condition, as required under EU legislation. He advised that asbestos was safe if it was intact and could be left in place or taken, double bagged, to a waste and recycling centre.

A removal service was not offered, however if particular concerns were raised on a site and they had no ability to remove the asbestos themselves, the Council would assist where possible.

The Sustainability Officer also reported that the promotion of the allotments as a benefit to the whole community was being achieved through complimentary initiatives across the Council but a specific action plan for allotments had been delayed during the development of the revised Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

Members queried whether there were any plans to improve the accessibility of the allotments for people with disabilities. The Sustainability Officer advised that access to all of the sites was deemed adequate during the inspections carried out in 2014. There was no budget to invest in infrastructure improvements at this time, however advice and support was available to the allotment associations for making their own improvements.

It was discussed that the allotment associations were able to access grants and charitable investments and partnered with other community organisations or services, such as the probation service, to advance community involvement.

Members were pleased to note the achievements made in improving biodiversity on allotment sites. The Sustainability Officer advised that Chesterfield Borough Council was recognised nationally for initiatives improving biodiversity and environmental sustainability. He reported that the Council was to host a national bees and pollinators conference, 'Pollinating the Peaks', in April 2015 which was already fully booked.

Members agreed that reducing grass cutting on verges surrounding allotments could improve biodiversity, reduce emissions and reduce costs.

Members asked about the policy for keeping chickens on allotments and whether charities or social enterprises could keep chickens as a way to generate income. The Sustainability Officer advised that the general policy was that up to five poultry could be kept on an allotment and the site was not to be used for commercial purposes. Charitable or social enterprise schemes may be allowed to keep more poultry and to generate income. It was discussed that charitable or social enterprise schemes could promote community involvement and social interaction.

The Committee also discussed whether there was potential for surplus produce from allotments to be shared with other community organisations. The Sustainability Officer advised that there does not tend to be much surplus produce as this would usually be shared amongst the community already.

The Committee thanked the Sustainability Officer for presenting the report and answering the Committee's questions.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the progress made on the implementation of the strategy be supported.
- (2) That a further progress report be received in 12 months.

61

SCRUTINY PROJECT GROUP REPORT ON DOG FOULING

The Scrutiny Project Group Report and Recommendations on dog fouling were presented by Councillor Innes, the Project Group leader.

The review of the Council's work on dog fouling was proposed after concerns were raised by members of the public through the Community Assemblies.

The Project Group had reviewed the current service provision and its effectiveness along with how the service communicates with local residents. The Group met with the Environmental Health Manager, the Senior Environmental Health Officer, the Dog Control Officer, the Communications and Marketing Manager, the Executive Member and the Assistant Executive Member for Environment and the Assistant Executive Member for Housing.

The Project Group also sought feedback from all Community Assembly members on their views on the issue of dog fouling in their area and the service provided by the Council.

From the review of the service and the responses from Community Assembly members, the Project Group concluded that a good service was offered and the Streetscene officers achieved a lot with limited resource. It was felt that the service could be more effective and have greater impact if the staff resource was increased.

It was recognised in the feedback from members of the public and the experience of the members that the incidents of dog fouling were decreasing however a minority group of persistent offenders still caused problems.

The Project Group looked into the possibility of the Housing Service's Neighbourhood Wardens taking a greater part in dealing with dog fouling. It was established that Neighbourhood Wardens do have the power to issue fixed penalty notices, but have only done so on rare occasions. It was felt that the local knowledge of Neighbourhood Wardens, who are out in the community on a day-to-day basis, could be utilised in dealing with dog fouling, if extra training and support were provided.

The Project Group also looked at how the issue of dog fouling and the work of the Streetscene service was communicated to the public. The examples of posters and social media campaigns from Bassetlaw District Council were referenced as good ideas. The Project Group had felt shocking posters showing the risks caused by dog fouling were likely to be more upsetting than effective. The more light-hearted posters were proposed as they were eye-catching and memorable. It was also

proposed that the Council should refer to the maximum fine amount of £1000 rather than just the fixed penalty of £80 to provide a greater deterrent. An example of one of the signs already used by the Council showing the £1000 amount was provided by the Senior Environmental Health Officer. As the amounts of the fines could change, it was proposed that the maximum fine amount be included on all temporary signs and notices.

The use of social media was also recommended as a way to publicise the good work of the service and raise awareness of the issue.

The Project Group also recommended that the mobile phones used by the enforcement officers be upgraded to be more reliable and offer access to the internet so social media could be used whilst out in the community.

The Committee agreed that prevention had a large part to play in dealing with dog fouling as enforcement officers could not patrol at all hours. Effective marketing and communication campaigns targeting the minority group of offenders in problem areas were supported. It was also suggested that social media could be used for members of the public and enforcement officers to share photographs of dogs which have fouled public areas to make an example of them publically.

The new Senior Environmental Health Officer, who had not been involved in the Project Group's initial meetings, provided a written brief to the Committee on the work she was doing with other officers in the Derbyshire region including:

- Meeting to discuss responsible dog ownership and share best practice in light of the new Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- Meeting with dog handlers from the Derbyshire Police to discuss responsible dog ownership.
- Working more collaboratively with the Chesterfield Borough Council Estates and Neighbourhoods Team.
- Considering putting in place a Derbyshire-wide educational campaign/promotional event to promote responsible dog ownership to include, dog fouling, compulsory micro chipping (due to be introduced in legislation in 2016) etc..

The Committee supported these initiatives in addition to the recommendations made by the Project Group. It was felt that the signs

currently used by the Council could be used in conjunction with the new ideas proposed, as a variety of signs were more likely to stand out. The Committee agreed to attach the Senior Environmental Health Officer's briefing to the Project Group report as additional information to be submitted to Cabinet.

The Committee expressed their thanks to the members of the Project Group for their work and to the Committee and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, the Environmental Health Manager, the Senior Environmental Health Officer, the Dog Control Officer, the Communications and Marketing Manager, the Executive Member and the Assistant Executive Member for Environment and the Assistant Executive Member for Housing for assisting the Project Group in their review.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the following recommendations be presented to Cabinet for consideration:
 - i. That it is noted that the Environmental Services, Street Scene Team provides an excellent service to residents of the borough. However, the project group recommends that a review of staff resources for the enforcement team be carried out as the project group recognises that while the existing staff do a good job, going over and above what is expected of them, that their impact is limited by there only being a FTE of 1.5 Enforcement Officer posts dedicated to dealing with dog fouling.
 - ii. That the potential of the Neighbourhood Wardens is fully realised and that they receive extra training in carrying out enforcement action, so to feel more confident and able to issue penalty notices. The project group makes this recommendation as there are 5 FTE Neighbourhood Warden posts and 3 FTE Enforcement Officer posts (with FTE 1.5 dealing with dog fouling), and see the Neighbourhood Wardens as a potentially underutilised resource as they are out and about in, and have a good understanding of local communities in the borough. //Also that the potential for more collaborative working between the Neighbourhoods team, and Environmental Services Street Scene team, as a result of the provisions under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, is looked at.

- iii. That new and functioning mobile phones are purchased for the Environmental Services, Street Scene Team as the current phones are old and often do not work. New phones would benefit effective communication, increase service responsiveness as well as contributing to the health and safety of staff working in non office based roles. Up to date phones would also enable staff to communicate via social media and allow the Environmental Services, Street Scene Team to work within the “digital first approach” contained in the Council’s External Communications Strategy.
- iv. That a review of the provision of dog bins in the borough takes place. This should look at the location, usage and number of bins so that it can be determined if dog bin provision is an effective use of resources or if the resources could be spent more effectively providing standard bins which can be used to dispose of dog waste as well as general litter.
- v. To recommend that on all temporary signs and notices that are produced to discourage dog fouling that the maximum fine of “up to £1000” be used in the wording as is done by Bassetlaw District Council. Also to recommend that Bassetlaw District Council be contacted to see if the effective and innovative imagery on their signs can be borrowed and to enable the sharing of best practice.
- vi. That a coordinated and structured approach to communication and engagement with residents of the borough to include school engagement, community engagement, key message delivery and advertising, is adopted.

Greater coordination in the planning and use of existing resources has the potential to have a bigger impact than the current uncoordinated approach and will also be a more effective use of existing resources and provide better outcomes in these financially difficult times, i.e. increased public awareness that Chesterfield Borough Council deals effectively with dog fouling and a reduction of dog fouling in targeted areas.

Better coordination and consequent outcomes could be met by:

- Running campaigns by area so to make a splash rather than scattering messages in an unfocused and disparate way across

the borough. This approach will also be more appealing to the media than disparate scattered activity.

- Establishing a campaign group to meet two to three times a year, comprising of members, Environmental Services, Street Scene Team officers and the Communications and Marketing Manager. The group would monitor the impact of communication, community engagement and advertising and would discuss and formulate future plans and priorities for communicating and engaging with residents.

- (2) That the briefing note from the Senior Environmental Health Officer be appended to the report to be submitted to Cabinet.

62 **SCRUTINY PROJECT GROUPS, PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Committee considered progress with its Scrutiny Project Groups.

Taxi Subsidy

The lead member for the group, Councillor Hawksworth, advised that a scope had not yet been prepared and it was agreed that the project group be discontinued.

Leisure, Sport and Culture Activities

The lead member for the group, Councillor Flood, gave an update on the group's progress. A scoping document was being prepared for the sub-group on the Sports and Activities Strategy. This Strategy was scheduled to be submitted to Council for approval in December 2015.

The main group had continued to review the new sport and leisure facilities project at Queen's Park. Councillor Flood advised that the work was progressing on schedule. The project group was planning to meet with the contractor to consider the costs of the works, including the cost to the Council of the contractor bearing the risks as the project management.

The group was also to meet with the new principal of Chesterfield College to review their commitment to the partnership.

The group would be looking at how to measure the outcomes targeted as part of the investment in new sports facilities.

A written report on the group's work would be provided at the Committee's meeting in April 2015.

RESOLVED –

That the Taxi Subsidy Project Group be discontinued.

63 FORWARD PLAN AND NOTICES OR URGENT DECISIONS

The Forward Plan was considered. There were no Notices of Urgent Decisions published since the last meeting.

The Fees and Charges for Sport and Leisure (Indoor Facilities) item was queried as to how this related to the reviews carried out by the Leisure, Sport and Cultural Activities Project Group. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer advised that this was a separate report for the annual setting of the fees and charges.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

64 SCRUTINY MONITORING

The Committee considered an update on the implementation of approved Scrutiny recommendations.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the update be noted.
- (2) That a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Project Group on Leisure, Sport and Culture Activities be added to the agenda for the next Committee meeting.

65 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer advised that the corporate review of Overview and Scrutiny was progressing well. The first stage was

completed and the findings would be reported to the Project Board on 25 February 2015 before the next stage would be started.

RESOLVED –

That the update be noted.

66 WORK PROGRAMME FOR ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee considered a list of items raised to date for its Work Programme.

The Committee and Scrutiny Coordinator reported that the Housing Services Manager – Customer Division was expecting a report on the outcomes of the consultation on the housing allocations policy to be submitted to Cabinet not before May 2015.

The Housing Services Manager – Customer Division had also advised that the Careline Consortium proposals were still progressing and negotiations were still on-going with Derbyshire County Council and two other district councils.

It was discussed that if a report on the Housing Allocations Policy was to be taken back to Cabinet before the next scheduled meeting of this Committee, a special meeting could be convened or the next scheduled meeting could be rescheduled to an earlier date.

RESOLVED –

- (1) To confirm that items on the Work Programme be approved subject to agreed changes.
- (2) That the Housing Allocations Policy item be added to the agenda for the next Committee meeting.
- (3) That the Housing Accommodation and Support Budget and Older Peoples Services be added to the agenda for the next Committee meeting.
- (4) That a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Project Group on Leisure, Sport

and Culture Activities be added to the agenda for the next Committee meeting.

- (5) That the next interim report of the Scrutiny Project Group on Leisure, Sport and Culture Activities be added to the agenda of the next Committee meeting.
- (6) That the Careline Consortium item be considered in June 2015.
- (7) That the Allotments Strategy be rescheduled for a progress report in 12 months.
- (8) That the Playing Pitch Strategy, Sports Facilities Strategy and the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy items be rescheduled for progress reports on their implementation in 12 months.
- (9) That the Street Scene Improvement Plan be removed from the Work Programme.
- (10) That the Scrutiny Project Group work on dog fouling be concluded and added to the monitoring schedule for progress reports in 12 months.
- (11) That the Scrutiny Project Group on Taxi Subsidy be removed from the Work Programme.

67 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18 December 2014 were presented.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.