

## **ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Tuesday 19 January 2010 at 6.00pm

### **Panel Members Present**

Councillor A. Harris (Chair)  
Councillor D. Anson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor R. Carpenter  
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul  
Councillor K. Phillips  
Councillor I. Shires  
Councillor B. Tweddle  
Councillor M. Yasin

### **Portfolio Holders Present**

Councillor T. Ansell – Transport

### **Officers Present**

Tracey Evans – Lead Accountant  
Steve Hough – Group Accountant  
Jamie Morris - Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services)  
Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)  
Angela Walker – Performance and Scrutiny Officer

### **59/09 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor C. Bott, Councillor D. Shires and Councillor M. Flower for the duration of the meeting

### **60/09 SUBSTITUTIONS**

The following substitution to the panel was submitted for the duration of the meeting:-

Delete: Councillor D. Shires  
Substitute: Councillor I. Shires

### **61/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting

### **62/09 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2010 be approved as a true and accurate record

### **63/09 REVISED DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET AND DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2010/11 FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIOS**

The Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services) summarised the budget process to date. The Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services) referred Members to their recommendations from the 30 November meeting and gave assurances in response to

these that the quality and cleanliness of Bloxwich public toilets would be maintained and that he was confident that it would be feasible to secure Sunday opening of these facilities within existing resources although Discussions with relevant services were ongoing.

The Portfolio Holder for Transport responded to Members questions on Hatherton Multi-Storey Car park. He explained that it was the Council's responsibility to maintain the car park, which was leased from Network Rail. Through carrying out some initial investigatory work in the short term it would be possible to identify what further, long term work was required. The Portfolio Holder assured Members that the car park in its current state was not dangerous and it was still being used by the public. Members agreed that the car park was an asset to the authority and were advised that it generated a great deal of income.

Members discussed the recent severe weather and the overall consensus was that the gritting carried out had been effective. In response to a Member's question, the Portfolio Holder stated that he was satisfied that the weather reports provided by the Met Office were accurate to within a few hours.

A Member cited specific concerns around some bus routes not being gritted, resulting in services being cancelled, stating in particular that major bus routes and those to hospitals should be top priority for gritting. The Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services) explained that each year, the service reviews its response to severe weather with a view to incorporate lessons learnt into future planning. The Portfolio Holder added that it was impossible to cover all bus routes and areas for gritting had to be prioritised within a finite budget. He agreed that it would be useful to receive the views of Members in consulting on priority gritting for future years.

Members were pleased to hear that Walsall was in a relatively good position in terms of its salt stocks when compared to other authorities and the innovative approach taken in piloting a new solution of 50% grit and 50% salt. The Chair asked that the Portfolio Holder convey the Panel's appreciation of the actions taken by the highways team in handling the severe weather.

Members discussed the lack of gritting at schools. The Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services) stated that schools did not form part of the winter operation plan but the council did write to schools before the start of the season to ask if they needed help with ordering grit. The plan would be evaluated each year but in order to cover schools inclusion, extra funding would be required.

The Chair enquired what was being done to minimise the theft of grit from bins on the roadside. The Portfolio Holder responded that 3 entire bins had been stolen along with several instances of bags of grit being removed from the bins. When there was sufficient evidence to do so, the perpetrator would be prosecuted.

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services) stated that the existing, measured approach to testing unsafe memorials would not

change and the work was part of an ongoing programme.

The Chair requested a vote be taken on the Panel's endorsement of the budget proposals. Four Members voted in favour and four abstained, the resolution was therefore passed:

**That the Panel note and endorse the draft revenue budget and draft capital programme 2010/11 report**

*Councillor I Shires requested that his abstinence from voting on this resolution be recorded*

**RESOLVED**

**That:**

- 1. the Panel note and endorse the draft revenue budget and draft capital programme 2010/11 report**
- and**
- 2. the Panel commend the work of the Highways team in ensuring disruption to transport was minimised, in difficult conditions, during the severe weather**

**64/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 AND FORWARD PLAN**

Members considered the forward plan and identified two issues for future consideration by the Panel. The Panel were keen to be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Carbon Management Plan and were also interested in being involved in Project W2R which was concerned with the authority providing its waste for burning by Staffordshire. Members heard that the energy recovered from this process would be used to produce electricity for which the authority would receive income. Members asked that they receive a report on Project W2R at their next meeting.

Following the earlier discussion on severe weather, Members sought clarification on the Health and Safety Executives formal stance on the liability for prosecution caused through accidents as a result of pathways being cleared of snow. Members requested that this be reported back to the Panel.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services) suggested that a report on the review of the refuse collection service could be brought to the next meeting. Members agreed that this should be considered by the Panel.

**RESOLVED**

**That:**

1. the Panel be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Carbon Management Plan;
2. the Panel receive a report on Project W2R at its 9<sup>th</sup> March meeting;
3. Members receive a briefing note outside of the meeting on the Health and Safety Executive's formal stance on the liability for prosecution caused through accidents as a result of pathways being cleared of snow;

and;

4. that the Panel receive a report on the review of the refuse collection service at its 9<sup>th</sup> March meeting

#### **65/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 9 March 2010

*The meeting terminated at 6.55pm*

DRAFT