

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Monday 30 November 2009 at 6.00pm

Panel Members Present

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

Portfolio Holders Present

Councillor T. Ansell – Transport
Councillor M. Flower – Environment
Councillor C. Towe – Finance and Personnel

Officers Present

Vicky Buckley – Head of Corporate Finance
Tracey Evans - Group Accountant - Built Environment
Jamie Morris - Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services)
Andy Ody – Grounds and Street Cleansing Manager
Steve Pretty - Head of Engineering & Transportation
Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)
Stuart Wootton - Finance Manager – Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Angela Walker – Performance and Scrutiny Officer

44/09 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for the duration of the meeting

45/09 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting

45/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

46/09 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Finance Manager stated that the under spend against budget figure included in item 37/09 of the minutes, should read £0.09m rather than £0.99m.

RESOLVED

That the duly amended minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2009 be approved as a true and accurate record

47/09 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2010/11 – ENVIRONMENT

The Chair introduced the item and thanked the Portfolio Holders for their attendance. He explained that the Panel would firstly receive a summary from the Portfolio Holder for Transport, followed by discussion and recommendations and secondly they would receive a summary from the Portfolio Holder for Environment, again followed by discussion and recommendations on this portfolio's proposals.

Transport Portfolio

The Portfolio Holder for Transport gave an overview of the Portfolio priorities, investments and savings, as outlined in the agenda papers.

In response to a Member's question, the Portfolio Holder for Transport stated that Item 182 – *Dropped kerbs identified on safety walks* – referred to the identification of kerbs that should be dropped but currently were not. Members were informed that property owners would not be forced to have a kerb dropped, but would receive a card encouraging them to do so. The Portfolio Holder added that private companies were able to offer drop kerb services, but a licence fee was still payable to the Council in these instances.

As part of the ensuing discussion, the Portfolio Holder for Transport explained that item 162 – *Sign Maintenance Efficiency* – referred to all signs, including road names and would not mean that damaged signs would not be replaced. Instead, the savings would be realised through Tarmac, who had responsibility for sign maintenance as part of their contract. Similarly, item 163 – *Works Efficiency* – related to savings that Tarmac was contractually bound to deliver.

A vote was taken on the following proposed recommendations relating to the Transport Portfolio:

That:

- 1) The Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel support Cabinet's budget proposals for the Transport Portfolio

And;

- 2) The Panel seek assurance from Cabinet that best value is provided for the citizens of Walsall in implementing this budget

With five Members in favour and four abstaining from the vote, the Panel duly passed the recommendations.

Environment Portfolio

The Portfolio Holder for Environment gave an overview of the Portfolio priorities, investments and savings, as outlined in the agenda papers. He asked that the Street Cleansing Working Group complete its final report to the Panel for the 4 January meeting so that any further recommendations made could be fed into the budget process.

In relation to item 74 – *Reduction in opening hours for district toilets (8:00am to 4:00pm) reducing the need for 1 agency employee* – A Member expressed concern over Bloxwich

district toilets being closed on Sundays, as there was a coach pick-up point nearby and, as such, a high demand for the facilities to be available. The Member was also concerned that standards of cleanliness and accessibility were poor. The Grounds and Street Cleansing Manager agreed to investigate the cleanliness and accessibility issue.

A Member referred to Appendix 1 of the report and enquired whether the growth item – *Enhanced cleaning of the ring road, upgrading the cleansing regime along this key corridor* – would include cleaning of Junction 10 island. The Grounds and Street Cleansing Manager responded that current arrangements for the ring road would be enhanced, but Junction 10 island fell under the remit of the Highway's Agency. The Grounds and Street Cleansing Manager agreed to discuss the cleanliness issue of the island with the Highway's Agency.

The Chair commended Cabinet's proposals and the work of Finance officers. He proposed that the Panel should support Cabinet's budget proposals and that the interim recommendations of the Street Cleansing Working Group should be included with the Panel's recommendations to Cabinet. A vote was taken and the proposed recommendations duly passed with five Members in favour and four abstaining.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel thanked the Panel for their support and understanding of the difficult financial climate. He stated that key to the budget proposals was that frontline services levels would be maintained.

RESOLVED

That:

Transport Portfolio

- 1) The Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel support Cabinet's budget proposals for the Transport Portfolio;**
- 2) The Panel seek assurance from Cabinet that best value is provided for the citizens of Walsall in implementing this budget;**

Environment Portfolio

- 3) The Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel support Cabinet's budget proposals for the Environment Portfolio;**
- 4) The Portfolio Holder for Environment should take forward the issue of the quality and cleanliness of the Bloxwich public toilets to ensure that they are safe and accessible to all;**
- 5) The Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend that Cabinet should consider extending the opening hours of Bloxwich public toilets to cover Sunday mornings**
- 6) The Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel fully support the interim recommendations of the Street Cleansing Working Group and ask that these be considered by Cabinet in response to their budget proposals. The Panel**

will report any subsequent budget recommendations following receipt of the group's final report on 4th January 2010:

- a. There should be more litter bins across the borough
- b. The type of litter bins used should be investigated, and a pilot of different litter bins in problem areas could reveal a need to change the bins used. A trial of using open bins is suggested
- c. Cleansing operations such as "barrow men" should be utilised in high intensity, problem areas
- d. Current litter hit squad arrangements of 2 teams of 2 employees should be increased to 3 teams of 2 so that the 3 key areas of the borough can be covered effectively
- e. Funding for the current 3 Environmental Crime Officers should be extended past 31 March 2010 to ensure the valuable work they do in tackling fly tipping, litter etc can continue
- f. Night time cleaning of the Black Country Route must be maintained

And;

- 7) Councillor Harris, as Chair of the Panel, will attend the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 11 December 2009 to feedback the Panel's recommendations

Councillor M Yasin and Councillor C Towe left the meeting at 6.50pm.

48/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

Members agreed the work programme as presented.

49/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 4 January 2010

The meeting terminated at 6.55pm