

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**Thursday 30 August, 2012 at 6.00 pm in a Conference Room at the Council House**

**Panel Members Present:** Councillor V. Woodruff (Chair)  
Councillor C. Creaney (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor I. Azam  
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul  
Councillor K. Hussain  
Councillor Illmann-Walker  
Councillor L. Rattigan  
Phillip Holmes

**Portfolio Holders present:** Councillor A. Harris – Leisure and Culture

**Officers in Attendance:** Jamie Morris – Executive Director (Neighbourhoods)  
Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)  
Steve Pretty – Head of Engineering and Transportation  
Glynn Oliver – Traffic and Transportation Service  
Manager  
Dave Roberts – Service Manager, Street Pride  
Graham Hood – Head of Green Spaces  
Steph Simcox – Finance Manager  
Neil Picken – Senior Democratic Services Officer

### **15/12 Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **16/12 Substitutions**

None.

### **17/12 Minutes**

#### **Resolved**

That the minutes held on 23 July 2012, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:-

- i) The list of Panel Members Present be amended to include Councillor Cassidy;
- ii) Minute 7/12 be amended to include - Councillor B. Cassidy substituted for Councillor Creaney.

## **18/12 Petition relating to convenience store at Blockall, Darlaston submitted to Council on 9 July 2012**

Members were advised that a petition had been submitted to Council at its meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2012 containing approximately 700 signatures. The petition requested the implementation of parking outside a convenience store at 22/23 Blockall, Darlaston. The Council's petition scheme requires that where a petition carrying at least 500 signatures is received by the Council, the relevant Senior Officer shall give evidence at a public meeting at one of the Council's Scrutiny and Performance Panels.

The Chair invited Councillor James, whom had presented the petition to Council, to address the Panel. Councillor James stated that a common sense approach was required to what, in essence, a common sense problem. Land opposite the shop concerned could, in his view, be converted to provide parking spaces. He stated that the owners of the shop would be willing to contribute substantially to the cost of works, if required.

Officers advised Members that a similar previous petition had been submitted to Council in 2009. Advice provided at that time was that it would not be viable to provide parking outside the convenience store. This was due to the fact that it would have created an unacceptable road safety hazard and unnecessary traffic congestion. Circumstances had not changed since that advice had been provided and providing formal parking outside the store was not a safe option.

There then followed a period of questioning by Members during which it was requested that Officers research the cost of undertaking the conversion of a grass verge opposite the store to parking given that the owner of the store would be prepared to contribute handsomely to the overall cost. Members requested that this matter be considered further at the next Panel meeting scheduled to take place on 11 October 2012 meeting.

### **Resolved**

That Officers establish the cost of converting the verge and report back to the meeting scheduled to take place on 11 October, 2012.

## **19/12 Winter Service Operational Plan 2012/13**

A report was submitted setting out the duty of the Council under the Highways Act 1980 and supplementary legislation to prevent the formation of ice on roads as far as reasonably practicable. The Council must maintain the operation of the highway network and other public services to the local community and travelling public under winter weather conditions.

Officers informed Members that the recommendations of the Winter Services Working Group, which carried out an investigation during 2011, had all been implemented and incorporated in the Winter Maintenance Service Plan 2011/12.

Officers advised that the grit supply was fully stocked with 4,000 tonnes in store and minor revisions had been made to the winter service plan. This included the

addition of Stafford Road, Darlaston to the gritting route. Officers were also keeping a watching brief on Sandwell Council who had introduced Snow Wardens. These were volunteers from Communities to assist with snow clearance. If deemed effective consideration would be given to implementing this initiative in Walsall.

There then followed a period of questioning by Members. It was asked whether clarity could be provided as to who was responsible to grit the Queslett Road. It was understood that Walsall gritted one side and Birmingham the other. Officers reported that they were in consultation with Birmingham Council regarding the maintenance of this road and we are exploring what is known as a Section 8 agreement; when this agreement is in place one authority would take responsibility to do both sides of the road. It was anticipated that this would be resolved for the 2013/14 season.

During ensuing discussion, Members requested that Officers contact places of worship to establish whether or not they would wish to have grit bins at their premises. Officers advised that all schools and medical centres were contacted to offer grit bins for a reasonable cost however take up of this offer was relatively low. Full details of options available to schools and places of worship would be made available on the Councils website and so anyone enquiring should be encouraged to visit the website or contact officers directly.

### **Resolved**

That the report be noted.

## **20/12 Littering Working Group Final Report**

Members considered the final report of the Littering Working Group commenting that it had been a well executed review resulting in a number of useful recommendations.

Members advised that the presentation from the Canal and River Trust had presented opportunities for joint working. It was suggested that a representative be invited to a future meeting to provide a presentation to the Panel.

### **Resolved**

1. That the Littering Working Groups final report be approved for submission to Cabinet at the next available meeting;
2. That an update be provided to the Panel scheduled to be held on 3 January, 2012.
3. That the Clerk be instructed to contact the Canal and River Trust to invite a representative to the meeting scheduled to be held on 11 October, 2012.

## **21/12 Draft Green Spaces Strategy**

Members considered the Draft Green Spaces Strategy which would replace and update the earlier strategy developed in 2006.

It was noted that the draft strategy had taken on board the work undertaken by the Green spaces Working Group reflecting many of the 37 recommendations within the strategy document.

The Chair invited representatives of the Arboretum User Group to put their views forward to the Panel. Representatives and Members acknowledged that the strategy was integral to the development of green spaces within the borough however discussion focussed upon the decision to transfer management of green spaces to street pride. Members and representatives of the arboretum user group expressed concern that the decision to do so would be detrimental to the service.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) responded to concerns stating that the entire service was being revisited using working smarter principles to identify areas for improvement and align services to customers needs. Work was due to commence and all parties would be invited to take part, including friends of parks. Given the impending review a decision had been taken to amend the management structure however it was stressed that this would not affect work 'on the ground'. It would however encourage improved collaboration between the two areas and improve services.

### **Resolved**

1. That the strategy be supported;
2. That an item be added to the work programme to consider service provision of green spaces in 6 months time.

## **22/12 Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Position 2012/13**

Members considered the predicated revenue and capital position for 2012/13, based on the performance for quarter 1 (1 April to 30 June 2012,) for services within the remit of the Community Services and Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

### **Resolved**

That the 2012/13 forecasted year end financial position for services under its remit as the Community Services and Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted.

## **23/12 School Catering Working Group – Terms of Reference**

Members considered the terms of reference for the School Catering Working Group.

## **Resolved**

1. That the terms of reference for the School Catering Working Group be approved;
2. That Councillor Illmann-Walker be appointed as Lead member of the Working Group.

## **24/12 Work Programme 2012/13 and Forward Plan**

### **Resolved**

1. That the following items be considered at the meeting due to take place on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2012:-
  - Presentation by the Canal and River Trust;
  - Grass Verge at 22/23 Blockall, Darlaston
  - Area Partnership Working group
  - Update from the Catering Working Group
2. That the sport and leisure (reference 37/12) as detailed within the forward plan review be considered at a future meeting.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at

*The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.*

Signed:

Date: