

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Tuesday, 19 April 2011 AT 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members Present

Councillor L. Beeley (Chair)
Councillor D. Anson
Councillor R. Carpenter
Councillor J. Cook
Councillor M. Munir

Officers Present

Keith Stone - Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services
Graham Hood - Head of Green Spaces

Portfolio Holders present

Councillor Ansell - Transport

64/11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Tweddle, Westley and Yasin.

65/11 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

66/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

None.

7/11 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2011, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

68/11 SERVICE URBAN FORESTRY UNIT

The panel received a report informing them of the operation and importance of the Green Space Services Urban Forestry Unit.

Officers advised members of the extensive role of the tree management function and also the considerable improvements made. One of the improvements was the development of a legally defensible systematic tree management programme which had been recognised as one of the leading programmes in the country.

Members noted that the green space service was responsible for the management and development of over 1,262 sectors of public open space. This includes former parks, recreation grounds, countryside sites, nature reserves and allotment sites. In all, the service held management responsibility for over 286 individual sites. Since 2007 a principal agricultural officer and a tree crew had been appointed from various green space service employees to undertake the work highlighted within the initial park tree survey and to introduce a first aid risk management procedure for tree staff.

With reference to the responsibilities of the Green Space Service Urban Forestry Unit, members noted that this included surveying and managing of all trees in areas including parks, play areas, open spaces, countryside, highways/verges, schools (not academies or foundation) and housing retained land. Members queried the responsibility to survey and manage trees in schools and were advised that only those schools that bought in services had the service provided to them. With regard to housing retained land, it was reported that this was land that had previously been allocated for housing but had not been developed.

The tree management function of the green space service was further considered and members requested that the Route Pruning and Highway Repair Protocol be circulated to the panel.

With regards to the Sustainable Tree management programme, it was reported that, during 2010, the council had surveyed approximately half of its geographical area and recorded all those trees on the management system. It was initially anticipated that the process would be completed by the end of the 2010/11 municipal year although officers reported that they were approximately 1 month behind. With regards to the pruning cycle it was reported that the council should achieve a 6 year pruning cycle for all of its trees. This was positive news given that it previously operated a re-active management system. It was anticipated that once completed for the first time the 6 year pruning cycle would reduce the number of complaints and incidents from trees and provide with the council with a legally defensible tree management system. Members further considered other aspects of the report which related to:

- Integrated service delivery
- Tree warden initiative
- Service excellence
- Tree maintenance

Members questioned the level of insurance claims. In response, officers reported that the council was now better able to defend itself when members of the public brought claims which they believed were the result of damage by trees. As the council now assess trees they are better positioned to defend more effectively. Savings of £60,000 had already been achieved through successful defences. It was anticipated that this figure would increase over time.

With regards to sap from trees that fall upon vehicles it was reported that there was protocol in place which guided resources where they were needed most. It was stated that the Officers and the Council had to focus attention first on health and safety then actionable nuisance, such as branches touching guttering etc. it was stated that trees would not be removed just because it was emanating sap onto vehicles. It was reinforced that once the maintenance programme had been completed and had bedded down the number of complaints should fall

Resolved

- 1) That the route Pruning and Highway Repair Protocol be circulated to members of the working group ;
- 2) That a list of Schools that contract the Council to survey and manage trees be circulated to members of the panel.
- 3) That the report be noted

69/11 UPDATE ON TOWN CENTRE PARKING WORKING GROUP

The panel received a report summarising the progress made by the Town Centre Parking Working Group and setting out planned future work. Members noted that due to time constraints, the final report of the working group would be submitted to the first meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel in the new municipal year.

After considering the report it was;

RESOLVED

- 1) That the progress made by the Town Centre Parking Working Group be noted ;
- 2) That the draft final report be considered by the Environment Scrutiny panel at their first meeting in the 2011/12 municipal year be noted.

70/11 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme and Forward Plan be noted.

73/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be agreed by Annual Council on 25th May 2011

The meeting closed at 6.45 p.m.

Chair:.....

Date:.....