

Minutes of the Meeting of the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held on 12 June 2017

PRESENT -

Councillor John Beckett (Chairman); Councillor Peter O'Donovan (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Richard Baker, Steve Bridger, Lucie Dallen, Rob Geleit, Jane Race, Mike Teasdale and Tella Wormington

Absent: Councillor Keith Partridge

Officers present: Ian Dyer (Head of Operational Services), Joy Stevens (Head of Customer Services and Business Support), Simon Young (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Daniel Atubo (Grounds Maintenance Supervisor), Richard Chevalier (Parking Manager), Oliver Nelson (Environmental Health Team Leader), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Fiona Cotter (Democratic Services Manager)

1 QUESTION TIME

No questions were asked or had been submitted by members of the public.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by councillors regarding items on the Agenda.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on 31 January 2017 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman subject to the amendment of a typographical error in Minute 27 (the year to read 2016 and not 2017) and the clarification of grammar in the first recommendation in Minute 35.

4 CORPORATE PLAN: YEAR-END PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016 TO 2017 AND PROVISIONAL TARGETS FOR 2017/18

The Committee received and considered a report which provided a year-end update against its Key Priority Performance Targets for 2016 to 2017, (as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan), and provisional targets for 2017 to 2018.

The report confirmed that out of a total of its 8 targets for 2016/17, all eight had been achieved.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (1) Considered the performance reported in Annexe 1 and did not identify any areas of concern
- (2) Agreed targets for 2017/18 as detailed in Annexe 2 of the report and outlined in paragraph 4.1

5 CHARGING FOR FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME REVISITS

The Committee received and considered a report which proposed the introduction of charging for food hygiene rating scheme (FHRS) re-inspections.

In response to a query prior to the meeting as whether it would be possible to have a breakdown of the number of food businesses in each category, statistical information from the Food Standards Agency regarding the distribution of FHRS ratings in Epsom and Ewell as at 12 June 2017 had been circulated to members of the committee. It was noted that there was no statutory obligation on a business to display its food hygiene rating.

The report highlighted that it would be important to ensure that the Council could demonstrate that the level of charge did no more than cover the cost of the service provided (including overheads). Given the small number of likely applications, Officers considered that it would be appropriate to delegate to them the authority to set the scale of fees.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (1) Agreed to introduce a charge for requested food hygiene rating scheme re-inspections on a cost recovery basis
- (2) Authorised the Head of Housing and Community to set the fee at such level, or on such scale, as he thinks fit.

6 FOOD SAFETY / HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLANS

A report was presented to the Committee containing monitoring information on action taken in 2016/17 and which proposed new targets for 2017/18.

The report reminded members that the Food Standards Agency and Health and Safety Executive monitored the effectiveness of the Authority's action in relation to its duties in respect of food hygiene and health and safety and that best practice was to establish transparent plans for the deployment of resources in these areas.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (1) Adopted the service plan for food safety subject to the correction of a minor typographical error in paragraph 6.1 to read "broadly compliant"
- (2) Adopted the intervention plan for health and safety

- (3) Agreed to receive revised food and health and safety plans for 2018-19 at the meeting of the Environment Committee in June 2018.

7 HIGHWAYS HORTICULTURE

The Committee received and considered a report which set out three service options for highways horticulture in 2018/19 following the decision by Surrey County Council to review its current arrangements.

This authority currently topped up the number of urban verge cuts undertaken by the County from seven to twelve. In March this year, the County Council had advised this authority that, where it managed the service directly, it would be reducing the service level to four urban verge cuts, two rural verge cuts and one weed spraying treatment. The question before the Committee was whether it wished to find additional resources to maintain the current level of service or consider some other level of provision.

The three options before the Committee were to:

- (1) continue with the current level of service provision and request that provision be made in the budget for 2018/19 to fund the shortfall;
- (2) accept the reduction in the level of service from the County and revise operations to reduce the number of urban verge cuts to eight with no change in other elements of the service; or
- (3) to allow the current agency agreement to end with effect from 31 March 2018 and hand back the highways horticulture responsibilities to Surrey County Council.

The report set out the pros and cons of each option. In particular, the report highlighted the financial implications of these. Option 1 would result in an additional estimated cost to the Council of £35,776. There was no provision in the 2017/18 budget for these additional costs and therefore funding would need to be identified for this additional expenditure if members were minded to go with this option. Option 2 would result in a small estimated saving to the Council of £8,932 and Option 3 would result in an estimated saving of £40,776 before any penalty costs arising from handing back vehicles and plant.

The Committee considered three service options for highways horticulture in 2018/19 and, upon a vote on each option, a majority was in favour of Option 1 as the most appropriate service option for the Council, noting the financial implications of agreeing this approach i.e. that it would require provision to be made in the 2018/19 budget to fund the £35,776 shortfall.

8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee resolved to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as

amended) and that pursuant to paragraph 10 of Part 2 of the said Schedule 12A the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

9 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL AGENCY ON-STREET PARKING AGREEMENT

The Committee received and considered a report which set out the current situation regarding the existing on-street enforcement agency agreement with Surrey County Council. This agreement expired on 31 March 2018. The County Council was seeking an indication from this Borough Council by 1 July 2017 as to whether it wished to participate in joint working arrangements regarding both on-street and off-street parking beyond the expiry of this agreement. However, it was clarified that the County Council could only enforce a solution in relation to on-street parking.

The report highlighted that there appeared to be significant uncertainties in regards to the proposals, for example, how on-street and off-street enforcement surpluses (or deficits) would be treated, and careful consideration would be required before the Council entered into any binding agreements. Equally, the Council needed to seek to ensure that it tried to avoid having imposed on it arrangements which were detrimental to this authority.

It was clearly to Surrey County Council's benefit to deal with on-street parking with Boroughs and Districts clustered together rather than dealing with each individually. It also provided the potential for cost savings in some areas although thought would need to be given to that totality of the impact of change.

Given that a decision was required by the County Council by 1 July, it was recommended, on balance, that the Council ought to participate in joint working arrangement discussions with the County Council and other Borough Councils regarding both on-street and off-street parking arrangements but should reserve the right as to whether or not to join the arrangement once full details of the proposals were available. This possibly included being named in any tender documents issued by Surrey County Council.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (1) Agreed in principle that the Borough Council participate in joint working arrangement discussions to find a solution to the provision of on-street enforcement after 31 March 2018, including being named in any tender documents issued by Surrey County Council or otherwise, but reserving the right to make a decision as to whether or not to join the arrangement when details of the new proposals were available;
- (2) Agreed in principle to the Borough Council participating in joint working arrangement discussions regarding off-street enforcement after 31 March 2018, including being named in any tender documents issued by Surrey County Council or otherwise, but reserving the right to make a decision as to whether or not to join the arrangement when details of the new proposal were available;

- (3) Authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Environment Committee, to progress discussions and negotiations on this issue.

The meeting began at Time Not Specified and ended at Time Not Specified

COUNCILLOR JOHN BECKETT (CHAIRMAN)