

**ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE AND
COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
PANEL
3 JULY 2018
7.00 - 9.03 PM**



Present:

Councillors Angell (Chairman), Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Brossard, Mrs Ingham, Kennedy (Substitute), Mrs Mattick and Mrs McKenzie-Boyle

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Finnie

Executive Members in attendance:

Councillors Mrs Hayes, McCracken and Turrell

Also Present:

Andrew Hunter, Chief Officer: Planning, Transport & Countryside
Damian James, Head of Performance and Resources
Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer: Environment & Public Protection
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Angell be appointed Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the Municipal Year 2018 – 2019.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Porter be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the Municipal Year 2018 – 2019.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 30 April 2018 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

5. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

6. **Public Participation**

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

7. **LED Project Review**

An LED light was set up in advance of the meeting for members to inspect and ask questions of Osmond Faleiro, Street Lighting Engineer.

Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer for Environment & Public Protection, gave an overview of the LED project to date and issues which had arisen including the identification of some units located on private properties which were once Council owned. These issues were being worked through with private owners. He went on to explain how lighting was dimmed according to patterns of use in a particular area, as per Annex 1 on the Agenda. Members queried if this was per light, per street or per area and it was clarified each unit (light) could be dimmed separately but currently all lights were dimmed according to which street they were on unless there was a footway or staircase, etc. The system also allowed for change according to use rather than time of day. For example, if traffic was bad on a particular road lighting could be adjusted to take this into account. Any change to the current system could impact on the original principles and savings target though. There was an outstanding issue of how to resolve Heritage Lights within the borough and it was noted that a temporary solution fix for a Heritage Light in Binfield had been carried out. It was also acknowledged there had been some complaints around the impact on private garage blocks, which had previously benefitted from light pollution, but that this was an issue for private landowners rather than the project. The project end date was the end of the calendar year. Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer for Environment & Public Protection, highlighted two other areas which would need to be addressed in the future - street signage and revisiting areas of concern.

Members asked about the warranty of the lights and maintenance contract. Osmond Faleiro, Street Lighting Engineer, confirmed there was a 25 year warranty with Phillips and a maintenance contract in place that was working well. Members thanked Osmond Faleiro for his swift response to issues they had raised already following representation by their constituents.

Members indicated they had a number of further questions so it was agreed this should be the topic of a Task and Finish Group. All members present indicated they would like to be part of the T&F Group and agreed Cllr Porter would be the Chairman. Scope would include a night visit to assess whether any difference was noticeable when the light was dimmed.

Actions

- **LED Lighting Review Task and Finish Group to be set up and completed by February 2018. All members invited to join.**

8. **Library Technology Rollout**

Diksha Vyas, ICT Business Partner and Fiona Atkinson, Library Services Manager presented an update on the technology rollout at libraries in the Borough. There was a £400k savings target which was on track to be achieved. This was going to be achieved by management of stock; use of volunteers; access using technology and self -assistance. The first phase of the rollout included paying fines; releasing printing and checking in/out books. Binfield Library was the first to go live on 2 July and no problems had been identified. It was the intention to roll out this technology to all nine

libraries by mid-November. The second phase would be technology assisted opening. People would be asked to register for a card which would allow them access to a library before and after opening as well as lunchtimes when unmanned. Security systems were in place to prevent theft/destruction of property. The rollout of self-service facilities would culminate with Bracknell Library, due to complexity of the building, but would be finished by week beginning 15th October.

Members thanked the support the team had given in assisting with recruitment in Harmans Water but raised the issue of recruiting volunteers in other localities, in particularly Whitegrove. It was acknowledged there had been a variety of issues which had contributed to the problem. Fiona Atkinson agreed to send Cllr Ingham specific dates/times when volunteers in Whitegrove were required to try and assist with recruitment.

Actions

Fiona Atkinson to send Cllr Ingham specific dates/time when volunteers were required in Whitegrove Library.

9. Leisure Transformation - Project Closure Report

Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture and Communities provided a summary of the project and it was reported the initial Gateway Review was the most important part of the process as it helped set the direction of travel. There had been engagement with the public and staff throughout the project and monthly board meetings along with weekly internal meetings which had kept the project on track. Lessons learnt included the need in the future to consider shortening the length of reports; hiring a dedicated lawyer; having an officer from the property team on the implementation team and collating lessons learnt as they went along rather than at the end. The HR team were applauded for their work on outsourcing, which was a huge task.

Whilst potential savings of £900k had been realised there was acknowledgement there had been a drop in level of service at Leisure Centres across the Borough and this was being addressed in partnership with the contractors 'Everyone Active'. Specifically, members queried the level of service at one site where there were numerous issues, including showers not working due to asbestos potentially being present. Officers confirmed they were aware of the issues at this site and were working to confirm if asbestos was present and were working with the contractors to resolve the problems. In response to concerns raised about the risk to savings being realised it was clarified that if there continued to be a drop in service there were a list of options which could be used to ensure contractors fulfilled their obligations.

10. Environment, Culture and Communities Update

Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture and Communities provided the Panel with a departmental update. He drew members' attention to the department budget and any variances. Members were asked to note £519k worth of savings would look less in the end of year accounts due to the way Coral Reef contingency funding was recorded. 89% of the funding available for Capital projects was spent this year and the reason for this underspending was due to the level of complexity of some of the projects. It was noted that £14m of the departmental budget was for the delivery of contracts so it was important contracts were well managed.

Members enquired about car parking contracts and parking enforcement and it was agreed that the delayed review of highways and transportation would be useful once

the Adult Social Care and Children, Young People & Learning transformation projects had taken place.

Members also raised the issue of impact of maintenance and cleaning within the new Town Centre and specifically the pavement tiles within the current budget. It was recognised that cleaning had been a problem and staff had liaised with the manufacturers to try to find a solution. However, the problem was ongoing due to the granite surface and placing of eateries in the Town Centre. This could have an impact on the cost of the cleaning contract.

A restructure of the department had been undertaken and the implementation date was September. Members thanked Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture and Communities and Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer for Environment & Public Protection for their invaluable advice and dedicated service as it was noted they would both shortly be leaving the Council. They wished them well in the future.

11. Panel Work Programme 2018-19

The Chairman summarised that Members had agreed the LED Lighting Review would be the focus of a future Task & Finish Group and noted that the HMO Working Group would be completed by the end of October 2018. The list of issues raised by members in the Work Programme would be reviewed when these reviews had been completed and would be available for consideration as topics of Task & Finish Groups, if still relevant, for the next Municipal Year.

12. Houses in Multiple Occupation Working Group Update

Members noted the report and Cllr Brossard updated members about the next stage which included a visit to a HMO and an Estate Agent. Members requested the Task & Finish Group also considered the design element for waste/recycling during planning applications for HMOs, which was agreed.

13. Quarterly Service Report (QSR)

Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture and Communities, informed members about variances on the Department's budget, as outlined in Agenda Item 14. Current pressures on the budget included funding for Highways and a decrease in income from car parking permits. It was suggested a review of the uptake of car parking permits be carried out after the scheme had been in place 12 months. The Council had also received an additional amount of funding from central Government to repair pot holes in March this year and allocation of this funding was being agreed, although it was noted the Council tried to repair whole roads rather than just potholes. Members were also asked to note that the waste collection target of 45% was unlikely to be achieved.

Members queried when the new facility at Easthampstead Cemetery and Crematorium was due to open and Steve Loudoun, Chief Officer for Environment & Public Protection, confirmed it was expected to be in use by the end of September.

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities also outlined potential pressures in the future including the sale of Easthampstead Park Conference Centre; the Local Plan and services at Martins Heron roundabout not being far enough underground.

Members asked if there was an intention move away from QSR reports in the future and Governance & Scrutiny Officers informed members a technical solution was being explored to allow members to view information in a timely manner.

Actions

- **A review of car parking permits 12 months after implementation to be brought to a future meeting.**

14. Executive Key and Non-Key Decisions

Members received and noted the scheduled Key and Non-Key Executive Decisions of a corporate nature.

CHAIRMAN