

PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
25 FEBRUARY 1998

Present: Councillor Mills (Chairman), Councillors Adams, Barnard, Bayle, Beadsley, Mrs Clifford, Egan, Flood, Mrs Keene, North, Onions, Mrs Pile, Simonds, Veakins and Ward

Also Present: Councillor McCormack

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Wade.

549. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 January 1998 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

550. **Chairman's Announcements**

Office Moves

The Chairman reported that the Public and Environmental Services Department had now moved to the front of Seymour House and the new facilities included a reception counter for the department.

Trading Standards

The Chairman was pleased to report that the Trading Standards Service was now operating from Seymour House and it would be possible for members of the public to take advantage of its localised presence.

Environmental Health Manager

The Chairman was pleased to welcome to the meeting Mr Stephen Archer, who had taken up the post of Environmental Health Manager from Cotswold District Council.

Partnership for Action on Dog Related Problems

The Chairman was pleased to confirm that since the last meeting of the Committee all the Town and Parish Councils in the Borough had indicated that they would participate in the innovative partnership scheme to enforce the provisions of the Dog (Fouling of Land) Act 1996.

New Memorials at Easthampstead Park Crematorium

The Chairman reminded the Committee that at the last meeting certain members had expressed concern in relation to the cost of the new memorials at Easthampstead Park. He was pleased to advise that in spite of these concerns 17 of these new memorials had been sold.

551. **Minutes of Hackney Carriage Sub Committee - 19 February 1998**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Hackney Carriage Sub Committee held on 19 February 1998 (Appendix A hereto) be received.

552. **Petition: Wildridings Square (Item 1)**

The Committee considered a petition from residents, businesses and visitors to Wildridings Square expressing a variety of concerns in relation to the activities of young people in the Square. The Director of Public and Environmental Services submitted a report which identified the progress that had been made with a number of the issues raised by the petitioners. In particular, the Committee was advised that subject to funding being available lighting in the Square would be improved. Other suggestions made by the residents were being given further consideration or were subject to funding constraints. The Committee also noted that the issue of installing double glazing in the Council owned flats did not directly fall within its remit.

The Committee was also advised that following liaison with British Telecom the Police had secured the relocation of the telephone box in the Square. The Police was also pursuing the establishment of a neighbourhood watch scheme in the area.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the progress made in resolving many of the issues raised and the general improvements in the area be noted and the Director of Public and Environmental Services be requested to respond to the petition organisers accordingly; and
- (ii) the Director of Planning and Transportation be authorised to include the street lighting into the approved improvement scheme for the Square, provided that the existing budget would not be exceeded.

553. **Capital Programme 1998/99 - 2000/01 (Item 2)**

In accordance with the decision of the Strategy and Policy Committee on 11 February 1998 the Committee reviewed its capital spending requirements for the forthcoming year. The Committee was advised that the capital programme for 1998/99 for the Council as a whole would include new schemes up to a value of £5.5 million funded from capital receipts and balances. In reviewing the programme, the Committee noted that £351,000 related to schemes carried over from 1997/98. These schemes included the refurbishment of public conveniences, for which provision of £154,000 was proposed. With regard to new schemes, the Committee agreed to submit ten schemes for consideration of the Strategy and Policy Committee, totalling £400,000.

RESOLVED that the schemes summarised in Annexes B and C of item 2 of the agenda be submitted to the Strategy and Policy Committee for inclusion in the capital programme for 1998/99.

554. **Trading Standards Service: Fees and Charges 1998/99 (Item 3)**

The Director of Public and Environmental Services reported that with effect from 1 April 1998 Bracknell Forest Borough Council would become a weights and measures authority and would thus be required to agree the scale of fees to be charged in relation to weighing and measuring equipment and other services under the remit of the trading standards service. In order to provide uniformity across the country the fees charged by local authorities were based on guidelines produced by the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards and the proposed fees had been prepared in accordance with those guidelines.

RESOLVED that the scale of fees and charges as detailed in Annexe A of the report (Item 3 of the agenda) be approved for those services provided by the Trading Standards Service.

555. **London Road Landfill Site - Contract Works (Item 4)**

The Committee was advised that with effect from 1 April 1998 the responsibility for managing the London Road Landfill Site on behalf of the six unitary authorities in Berkshire was due to pass to this Council. There were currently three main contractors employed on site restoration and gas control work. In order to take advantage of their detailed knowledge the Committee considered it appropriate to retain these contractors on the same basic terms as applied to their employment by Berkshire County Council for a period not exceeding three months.

The Committee was also advised that in view of the complexity and the detailed legislation relating to the gas control works that it was appropriate to appoint a consultant to prepare a detailed report describing the scale of the problems on the site and identifying future options to assist in its control.

RESOLVED (subject to the agreement of all six unitary authorities comprising the County of Berkshire) that

- (i) the existing contractors employed on the London Road site in the restoration and landfill gas management work be retained by the Council (on behalf of the six unitary authorities) on the terms described in the report (Item 4 of the agenda);
- (ii) Babbie Geotechnical be employed to provide a situation and assessment report on the site; and
- (iii) a review of the above arrangements be made after a period of three months.

556. **Private Sewer Clearance and Cesspool Emptying Service (Item 5)**

The Committee considered the contract arrangements for the management of cesspools and private sewer clearance, which were managed by the Housing Property Services Repairs Section. The Committee agreed the proposals to seek tenders from approved contractors to run from 1 April 1998 for a period of one year with the option to extend for a maximum of three years.

RESOLVED that the Director of Social Services and Housing be authorised to re-tender the existing contractors for private sewers and cesspools and, in consultation with the Chairman, accept the most suitable tender.

557. **Easthampstead Park Cemetery Guidelines (Item 6)**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Public and Environmental Services proposing an amendment to the existing cemetery guidelines which would allow for the construction of concrete landings (to be funded from the revenue budget at an estimated cost of £10,000) within the cemetery and for erection of headstones for future burials.

RESOLVED that

- (i) approval be given to update the Cemetery Guidelines at Easthampstead Park to allow for the erection of a headstone for future burials only and to the layout indicated in Annexe B to the report (item 6 of the agenda); and
- (ii) approval be given to provide a reinforced concrete frame landing laid at ground level and providing 382 grave spaces at a cost of £10,000.

558. **White Paper - The Food Standards Agency - A Force for Change (Item 7)**

A report by the Director of Public and Environmental Services outlined the proposed response to the White Paper proposing the establishment of a Food Standards Agency. Food safety had been identified as one of the Government's key priorities and the proposals in the White Paper for a Food Standards Agency would aim to ensure high standards throughout the food chain from the point of production to the point of consumption. The Committee considered the proposed Agency's guiding principles and their aims as well as the roles of the Agency and authorised the Director to respond as below.

RESOLVED that the Director of Public and Environmental Services respond to the White Paper advising the Joint Food Safety and Standard Group that this Council:

- supports the proposal to establish a Food Standards Agency at arm's length from Government and independent sectoral interest and with a clear focus on protecting the public and a statutory remit across the whole food chain;
- endorses the Agency's proposed guiding principles and roles;
- particularly welcomes the recognition given to the role of and the contribution made to food safety by local authorities and the proposal that local enforcement will remain as a local responsibility;
- urges caution in respect of the proposals relative to the home authority role; whilst the principle is supported it must not result in greater priority being given to large business at the expense of the smaller ones where often there is the greater risk and fewer resources to self help;
- considers that the current arrangements where funds for food safety are not ring-fenced, provide for adequate power to deal with local authorities who fail to satisfy their legal obligations; these powers might need reviewing if new mandatory performance standards were introduced; however, it would be inequitable to do so

unless ring fenced funding is provided based on a formula that ensures that targets can be met; and

- suggests that the educational role of local authorities in relation to food safety for business needs to be given greater emphasis.

559. **Sustainable Local Communities for the 21st Century - Preparing an Effective Local Agenda 21 Strategy (Item 8)**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Public and Environmental Services which reviewed the recent Government publication "Sustainable Local Communities for the 21st Century" in which local authorities had been invited to prepare a Local Agenda 21 Strategy by December 2000. The Committee noted that the Council had a well established local environmental strategy and many of its existing policies and practices were already falling in line with Local Agenda 21 objectives.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the development of the Council's local environmental strategy in accordance with the Government's guidance in relation to Local Agenda 21 be noted; and
- (ii) a further report be submitted to a subsequent meeting, identifying a draft set of environmental indicators that could be used to identify local trends and priorities and to monitor progress.

560. **Tree and Woodland Strategy (Item 9)**

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Public and Environmental Services, which set out proposals for the preparation of a tree strategy for the Borough. The Committee noted the extensive tree resource within the Borough and in particular the large proportion of trees in the urban area growing on land owned by the Borough or with covenants on them controlled by the Council. The strategy would address such issues as the removal and replacement of trees which had outgrown the space available and would include the aims of assessing the extent of the tree resource in the Borough; and encourage and make provision for the sustainable management of trees.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and a draft tree strategy be prepared for consideration at a future meeting, taking account of the proposed objectives, as identified in the report (Item 9 of the agenda).

561. **East Berkshire Coroner's District - Joint Arrangement (Item 10)**

The Committee was advised by the Director of Public and Environmental Services that following local government reorganisation the East Berkshire Coroner's District would comprise the Boroughs of Bracknell Forest and Slough, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Committee authorised a joint arrangement between these three boroughs for meeting the costs of the service, which would be apportioned between the three boroughs pro rata by population.

RESOLVED that the Council enter into an agreement for defraying the cost of the Coroner's Service for East Berkshire as proposed in the report (Item 10 of the agenda).

562. **Authorisation of Officers (Item 11)**

The Committee considered a report seeking the authorisation of the newly appointed Environmental Health Manager.

RESOLVED that Mr Stephen Archer (Environmental Health Manager) be authorised to act for the purposes of the statutes specified in Annexe A of item 11 of the agenda and any regulations made thereunder during his employment with the Council.

563. **Information Items**

The Committee received the following reports submitted for information only:

- The Modern Trading Standards Service (Item 12)
- Emergency Planning (Item 13)
- Air Quality (Item 14)
- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority - Progress Report (Item 15)
- Shadow Thames Valley Police Authority - Progress Report (Item 16)

564. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 members of the public and press be excluded for the consideration of the items 17 and 18 which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (7) Financial affairs of a third party

565. **The Provision of the Household Refuse Collection Service (Item 17)**

The Council had entered into an agreement with the current contractor for the provision of a household refuse collection service from 1 August 1994. The Director of Public and

Environmental Services advised that in view of the statutory re-tendering timetable, it was necessary to consider the options available for the Council. Because key financial and performance indicators showed that the current contractor was performing well it was prudent to extend the existing contract for the service on the existing terms and conditions for a period of two years until 31 July 2001.

RESOLVED that the extension of the existing contract with Cleanaway Ltd for the provision of a household refuse collection service on existing terms and conditions for a period of two years until 31 July 2001 be approved.

566. **Provision of the Street Cleansing Service (Item 18)**

The Council had entered into an agreement with the present contractor for the provision of a street cleansing service from 1 January 1995. The Director of Public and Environmental Services advised that in view of the statutory re-tendering timetable, it was necessary to consider the options available for the Council. Because key financial and performance indicators showed that the current contractor was performing well it was prudent to extend the existing contract for the service on the existing terms and conditions for a period of two years until 31 December 2000.

RESOLVED that the extension of the existing contract with SITA Ltd for the provision of street cleansing service on existing terms and conditions for a period of two years until 31 December 2000 be approved.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 8.45pm.

CHAIRMAN