

PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
23 MARCH 1999

Present: Councillors Mills (Chairman), Adams, Bayle, Beadsley, Blatchford, Mrs Clifford, Mrs Doyle, Egan, Fawcett, Good, Mrs Keene, North, Piasecki, Mrs Pile, Simonds and Wade.

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillors Barnard, Grayson, Veakins and Ward

Also present: Councillor Flood

510. Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following substitute Members under Standing Order 38:

Councillor Mrs Doyle for Councillor Barnard
Councillor Fawcett for Councillor Veakins
Councillor Good for Councillor Grayson
Councillor Mrs Sutcliffe for Councillor Ward

511.. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 January 1999 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

512. Urgent Item of Business

The Chairman gave notice that he had agreed to the addition of an urgent item of business to the agenda for the meeting following a reference to this Committee by the Town Centre Sub Committee, after the Committee's agenda had been finalised. The item concerned the recovery of abandoned supermarket trolleys, following a recent incident at Bracknell Station. An urgent decision was required in order to enable the action to be progressed prior to the Committee's next meeting.

513. Chairman's Announcements

Environment Fair

The Chairman was pleased to announce that a sponsorship arrangement with ICL for the Environment Fair on Sunday 16 May was likely to be finalised shortly.

Spring Flowers

The Chairman was pleased to report the large number of complimentary letters and calls received by the Department relating to the crocus and daffodil displays throughout the Borough.

514. **Hackney Carriage Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Hackney Carriage Sub Committee held on 24 February 1999, as set out in Appendix A hereto, be received.

515.. **Emergency Planning Advisory Panel**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Emergency Planning Advisory Panel held on 26 February 1999, as set out in Appendix B hereto, be received.

516. **Quarterly Operations Report (Item 1)**

The Committee considered the Quarterly Operations Report for Public and Environmental Services, which detailed the current issues and the work undertaken by individual sections within the Department since the last meeting, including performance against the target indicators in the Service Plan for 1998/99. The Committee also considered the Revenue Budgetary Control information up to and including January 1999 and progress with schemes in the Approved Capital Programme.

RESOLVED that the Quarterly Operations Report, detailing work undertaken by Public and Environmental Services since the last meeting of the Committee, be received.

517. **Revenue Budgets 1999/2000 (Item 2)**

In the light of the overall budget approved by the Council on 3 March, the Committee considered its detailed revenue estimates for the 1999/2000 year. For each of the service areas in the Department, expenditure on employees, premises, transport, supplies to services, other payments, fees, charges and income were set out.

RESOLVED that the Public and Environmental Services Committees detailed budget, as outlined in Annex B to the report, be noted.

518. **Capital Programme 1999/2000 – 2001/2002 (Item 3)**

The Committee considered its Capital Programme for 1999/2000 and future years. The Committee noted that it was projected that resources totalling £319,000 would be carried forward from 1998/1999. Of this sum, £166,000 related to restoration works at the London Road Landfill Site. The Committee was advised that the total cost of schemes where expenditure had been committed, and other unavoidable schemes would stand at £134,000 and that a further £44,000 had been identified as the cost of maintaining the property assets of the Committee to an acceptable level of repair. The Committee identified desirable schemes totalling £325,000 in the areas of amenity improvements, home composting initiatives, anti graffiti treatments and recycling and agreed to submit these to the Strategy and Policy Committee for approval.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the projected carry forward of resources from the 1998/1999 programme, as outlined in Annexe A to the report, be noted; and
- (ii) the schemes, summarised in Annexe C of the report, be submitted to the Strategy and Policy Committee for inclusion within the Capital Programme for 1999/2000.

519. Service Plan 1999/2000 (Item 4)

The Committee considered its proposed Service Plan which would form an important part of the Council's financial and policy planning process for the coming year. The proposed plan set out the Committee's objectives and plans and would help to guide and monitor activities. The Plan included policy objectives of a corporate nature such as implementing Best Value and the community safety strategy, supporting the town centre strategy and setting the emerging agenda of the Health Panel.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Public and Environmental Services Committee's Service Plan, as outlined in Annexe A to the report, be approved; and
- (ii) the Policy Objectives within the Service Plan be submitted to the Strategy and Policy Committee for inclusion in the Council's Overall Service Plan for 1999/2000.

520. Community Sports/Greenway Capital Project (Item 5)

The Committee considered proposals for a Community Sports/Greenway Project on land in the vicinity of Sandhurst School. The Committee noted that there was some support for the scheme in the local community and in order to progress the scheme further consultation would take place and a planning application would be submitted in order to ascertain the feasibility of the proposals. The Committee agreed that the Leisure Services Committee should assume the lead role in progressing the scheme.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Community Sports/Greenway Capital Project be supported in principle;
- (ii) the Leisure Services Committee take the lead role in progressing the scheme; and
- (iii) the Director of public and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Chairman of the Public and Environmental Services Committee, be given delegated authority to agree details within the scheme.

521. **Environment Strategy – Update on Progress against Targets (Item 6)**

The Director of Public and Environmental Services reported on the progress that had been made in meeting the targets in the Council's Environment Strategy which had been launched in May 1998 at the Environment Fair. The Committee gave detailed consideration to the report and concluded that good progress had been made against the targets.

RESOLVED that the progress that had been made in meeting the targets detailed in the Council's Environment Strategy be noted.

522. **Food Standards Agency Bill (Item 7)**

The Committee was advised in a report by the Director of Public and Environmental Services that the Joint Food Safety and Standards Group set up by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the Department of Health, had recently published the draft Food Standards Agency Bill. The bill incorporated proposals for a flat rate levy scheme for registered food premises. Whilst supporting the establishment of a Food Standards Agency the Committee was concerned that local small businesses would be affected by the imposition of a levy of £90 and believed that the agency, in common with other government agencies, should be funded by central government. If a levy were to be introduced it would need to be equitable and incorporate a sliding scale of fees to reflect the size of the food business in question.

RESOLVED that the Director of Public and Environmental Services respond to the consultation documents, advising the Joint Food Safety and Standards Group that the Council:

- supports the establishment of the Food Standards Agency as proposed;
- is concerned about the impact upon small local businesses of the proposed levy.
- believes that the Agency should be funded by Central Government as are other Government Agencies.
- considers that if a levy is to be introduced that it needs to be equitable and therefore at a level set according to a sliding scale of fees that reflect the scale of the food business and details of which should be the subject of further consultation with District Councils.

523. **Environmental Improvement – Trial Scheme (Item 8)**

The Committee considered proposals for trial parking schemes which would aim to protect grass areas, while allowing their use for car parking. The intention was to address the pressure on street car parking on certain estates in the Borough. The Committee noted that any such schemes would rely on support from local residents and local ward Members would be consulted.

RESOLVED that the Director of Public and Environmental Services be authorised to develop trials in respect of two areas of land within the ownership of the Committee that would incorporate measures to protect grass and, where there was adequate support for the proposals, including any conditions that might be applied to its use.

524. **European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign (Item 9)**

The Director of Public and Environmental Services reported that the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign had been launched in Aalborg, Denmark, in 1994, following a conference on sustainable cities and towns in Europe. The Aalborg Charter stressed the importance of moving forward together towards sustainability, learning from successful local examples and encouraging each other to establish local action plans. The Committee agreed to support the Charter.

RESOLVED that the signing of the Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability – the Aalborg Charter – be supported.

525. **Grants to Voluntary Organisations 1999/2000 (Item 10)**

The Committee considered the proposal for grant funding for the 1999/2000 year following an application from the South East Berkshire Emergency Volunteers. The Committee considered the corporate grant making criteria determined by the Strategy and Policy Committee in 1998 and concluded that a grant award of £5,000 would be appropriate.

RECOMMENDED that a revenue grant to the South East Berkshire Emergency Volunteers in 1999/2000 be approved in the sum of £5,000.

526. **Collection of Abandoned Supermarket Shopping Trolleys (Urgent Item)**

The Committee was advised of the circumstances of a recent incident at Bracknell Station where a train had collided with a supermarket shopping trolley and considered the legal background to the present trolley collection arrangements. The Committee noted that in certain cases supermarkets showed little or no interest in recovering their trolleys. Whilst agreeing that the present measures and procedures, which were largely constrained by the law, should be continued, the Committee concluded that a change in the law, that would enable supermarkets to be recharged, should be pursued and the support of the local Member of Parliament should be sought in this respect.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Council continue to encourage local stores to accept their responsibility for the problems caused by trolleys and take measures to reduce the number taken from their premises and not returned;
- (ii) the Council continue to collect all trolleys found on Council land by the quickest means available; and
- (iii) the Council seeks the support of the local Member of Parliament for a change in the law that would enable the Council to recharge the Council's costs to those stores who do not collect their trolleys.

527. **Information Items**

The Committee noted the following items submitted for information only:

Environmental Protection Act (Item 11)
Thames Valley Police Authority (Item 12)
Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (Item 13)
Report of the Environmental Impact Group (Item 14)

528. **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 from the meeting for the consideration of items 15 and 16, which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following categories of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (7) Financial Affairs of Third Party (Items 15 and 16)
- (9) Terms of Proposed Contract (Items 15 and 16)

529. **London Road Landfill Site: Agreement for Gas Power Generation**

In a report containing exempt information the Committee considered proposals for an agreement to be entered into with Natural Power Ltd to utilise the landfill gas produced at the London Road Landfill Site for the generation of electricity, with Natural Power providing the equipment to draw the gas from the site. This represented an important development in the long term restoration of the site. The Committee noted that just as liabilities from the site were shared with the other five Unitary Authorities in Berkshire, so any income produced would be shared likewise.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Director of Public and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Borough Solicitor, and subject to the consent of the other Berkshire Unitary Authorities, be authorised to conclude an agreement with Natural Power in accordance with the terms outlined in Section 4 of the Report; and
- (ii) the Borough Solicitor in consultation with the Director of Public and Environmental Services, be authorised to negotiate and conclude an agreement with the other Berkshire Unitary Authorities to allow the Council to enter into the proposed agreement referred to in (i) above.

530. **Extension to Existing Waste Disposal Contract (Item 16)**

The Committee was advised that the contract for waste disposal had been inherited from Berkshire County Council with an expiry date of 31 March 2000. In view of the Committee's strategy in negotiating with neighbouring authorities and the waste industry to secure a long term integrated waste strategy and the possible commissioning of a waste disposal plant, that Committee considered it prudent to have a secure contract in place while these developments take place.. Thus, in not seeking competitive tenders for such a contract the Committee agreed an exception to Standing Orders relating to contracts, which under Standing Order 63(2)(1) would be reported to the Strategy and Policy Committee for information.

RESOLVED that the extension of the existing contract with Thames Waste for the disposal of waste on existing terms and conditions for a period of three years until March 2003 be approved.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 9.50pm.

CHAIRMAN