

PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
12 OCTOBER 1999

Present: Councillors Mills (Chairman), Adams, Barnard, Bayle, Beadsley, Blatchford, Mrs Clifford, Egan, Mrs Keene, North, Piasecki, Mrs Pile, Simonds, Mrs Sutcliffe and Wade

Also present: Councillor Flood

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillors Veakins and Ward

256. Substitute Members

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

Councillor Mrs Sutcliffe for Councillor Ward

257. Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 5 May and 22 June 1999 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

258. Chairman's Announcements

Fire Cadet Scheme

The Chairman welcomed Mr Peter Banks from the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to the meeting. The Chairman was pleased to announce that the first 'passing out' under the Fire Cadet Scheme would take place on 13 November. The Scheme had been set up at Crowthorne Fire Station and since 8 August cadets had been receiving regular training.

Enforcement Action: Food Hygiene Legislation

The Chairman referred to recent food safety prosecutions which had resulted in substantial fines being levied against the owners of two food premises. The size of the fines indicated the seriousness with which the magistrates had viewed the offences.

Departmental Trailer – Out and About in Bracknell Forest

The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the Departmental Trailer "Out and About in Bracknell Forest" which had been launched at the Environment Fair in May. The trailer had visited a number of sites throughout the Borough promoting good environmental practices such as composting and greener gardening campaigns. He encouraged other departments to make use of the trailer as Social Services and Housing had done.

Mayor's Charity 1999/2000 – Underpass Challenge

The Chairman announced that in support of the Mayor's Charity, an "underpass challenge" would be taking place on 24 October. Teams of up to five members would be competing to visit as many of the Borough's 79 underpasses as possible within a given time.

259. **Grounds Maintenance Tender Assessment Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Grounds Maintenance Tender Assessment Sub Committee held on 30 June 1999, as set out in Appendix A hereto, be received.

260. **Hackney Carriage Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Hackney Carriage Sub Committee held on 8 September 1999, as set out in Appendix B hereto, be received.

261. **Emergency Planning Advisory Panel**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Emergency Planning Advisory Panel held on 10 September 1999, as set out in Appendix C hereto, be received and the recommendation in Minute 17 be adopted.

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

The Director of Public and Environmental Services presented the Quarterly Operations Report to the Committee, which detailed the current key operational issues affecting the Department since the last meeting of the Committee on 22 June 1999. The report highlighted the new grounds maintenance contract, which had been won by the in house team; the extension of the kerbside recycling scheme involving the distribution of 40,000 green boxes; and confirmed that responses had been sent to a number of consultation papers issued by the Government. The report also included revenue and capital budget monitoring for the period April to June.

RESOLVED that the Quarterly Operations Report of the Director of Public and Environmental Services detailing the activities of Public and Environmental Services for the period 1 April to 30 June 1999 be received.

263. **Petition – Red Rose Ditch, Binfield (Item 2)**

The Committee considered a report on a petition, signed by residents of Red Rose, Binfield, relating to a smell and an alleged health hazard emanating from a ditch in Red Rose. The Committee was advised that a number of actions had taken place since the receipt of the petition in July such as dye testing to identify any source of the alleged pollution; and the taking of samples, which proved that the quality of the water was satisfactory. It was noted that Thames Water had indicated that it would be sealing the manhole covers to prevent any odours being released. The advice of the Environment Agency had been sought on the future management of the ditch and its immediate environment. The intention would be to establish animal and plant life, which would improve the overall quality of the water and reduce algae growth.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the action taken to date has been noted; and
- (ii) the management arrangements for verge and ditch maintenance be reviewed and implemented in accordance with advice from the Environment Agency.

264. Commitment Budget and Medium Term Objectives 2000/01-2002/03 (Item 3)

The Director of Public & Environmental Services explained how consideration of the Committee's commitment budget and medium term objectives formed the first stage in the development of the 2000/01 revenue budget. The Committee identified possible service developments in the areas of refuse collection, street cleansing, amenity maintenance and waste disposal, largely arising from demographic growth. The Strategy and Policy Committee would be asked to consider these additional commitments totalling £85,000. The Committee also identified a sum of £47,000 relating to general departmental running expenses for addition to the commitment budget.

The Committee also considered and agreed its medium objectives. These objectives represented a critical element in ensuring that the Council's financial plans were responsive to policy issues and priorities and contributed to the themes which had been identified by the Strategy and Policy Committee.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Strategy and Policy Committee be requested to add to the commitment budget the items shown in tables 2 and 3 of the report; and
- (ii) the medium term objectives, as set out in Annex A to the report, be agreed.

265. Update on Capital Programme 1999/2000 (Item 4)

The Director of Public and Environmental Services reported on progress in relation to the Committee's Capital Programme for 1999/2000. This showed that £626,000 had been committed or allocated to date, leaving £249,000 to be committed or allocated. The Committee considered a scheme whereby the Borough Council would contribute to the cost of public toilets at the Morgan Recreation Centre, Crowthorne. Once constructed the on-going servicing and maintenance costs would fall to Crowthorne Parish Council. The Committee also gave its support to a scheme which would promote the planting of trees in order to enhance the amenity of the environment generally and to mark the Millennium.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the progress to date as regards the schemes for which funds had been committed be noted and the intention to promote the scheme to encourage the planting of trees by way of celebrating the Millennium be welcomed; and

- (ii) the Director of Public and Environmental Services be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman, to pay a grant up to a maximum of £40,000 to Crowthorne Parish Council towards the provision of public toilets accessible from the Morgan Recreation Ground, under terms of an agreement to be prepared by the Borough Solicitor.

266. Away With Waste – A Draft Waste Strategy for England and Wales (Item 5)

The Committee was advised that "Away With Waste" was a draft national waste strategy, issued by the Government, focusing on municipal waste. The strategy recognised that substantial increases in recycling, composting and the recovery of energy from waste were required in order that the recycling and recovery targets for the years 2005, 2010 and 2015 could be met. The strategy emphasised the central role for incineration in the waste hierarchy on the basis that modern incinerators did not pose a threat to human health and the environment. The strategy also recognised the need to promote the recycling markets and for the allocation of resources to local authorities.

The Committee supported the response of the Director to the strategy which highlighted that the Council was pleased that the Government was now acknowledging that local authorities were likely to need new resources to fund increases in recycling and recovery of waste materials and as a unitary authority the Council supported the move towards a more integrated view of waste management.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and the response in respect of "Away With Waste", the draft waste strategy for England and Wales that had been sent to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, be endorsed.

267. Future Waste Management Strategy – Progress Report (Item 6)

Following its decision in June, the Committee was advised of the progress with the application under the Government's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in partnership with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham District Council. The Committee noted that an Outline Business Case was under preparation and would form the basis of an application under the PFI. The Outline Business Case would provide an executive summary, details of strategic context of the chosen project and an evaluation of the various options together with an assessment of the preferred option in greater detail. Specialist consultants had been employed by the three Councils to assist the application.

RESOLVED that the progress that was being made in the preparation of an Outline Business Case as part of the development of a waste management strategy in partnership with Reading Borough Council and Wokingham District Council be noted and approved.

268. **Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991 (Item 7)**

The Committee was advised that it was required under the Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991 to consider once a year a programme of enforcement under the legislation. The Committee noted the information on the routine inspection programme over the previous twelve months, during which there had been no complaints requiring further action. It was agreed that this risk based assessment inspection programme would continue and test purchases by children would only be used in the most exceptional circumstances. Other initiatives such as the promotion of a proof of age card and the use of publicity materials were endorsed. In respect of the latter it was accepted that this was an issue which could be pursued by the Heath Panel.

RESOLVED that the following programme of enforcement of the provisions of The Children and Young Persons (Protection From Tobacco) Act 1991 for the next twelve months be approved:

- a) by routine enforcement based upon a risk-based inspection programme of premises; and
- b) by taking other measures intended to reduce the incidence of illegal sales including
 - i) after consultation with the Chairman, test purchases using children where complaints have been received and officers believe that illegal sales are taking place;
 - ii) promoting and encouraging the introduction of a 'proof of age' card, within Bracknell Forest;
 - iii) bringing of prosecutions in respect of offences relating to sales of tobacco to children; and
 - iv) maximising the use of the media by the publication of warnings, successful prosecutions, and educational material where appropriate.

269. **Best Value Review - Trading Standards Service (Item 8)**

It was reported to the Committee that as part of the development of a Best Value review methodology, the Trading Standards function was the first service area of the Council that had been subject to a fundamental review. The review found that the Trading Standards service was efficiently managed and generally provided a good standard of service in that it had performed better than other unitary authorities in Berkshire against the national performance indicators. The review identified several recommendations such as the need for a further review of the service's priorities relative to strategic responsibilities and in relation to consumer advice. The review also recommended that a comprehensive service business plan be developed to reflect both departmental and corporate objectives.

RESOLVED that following the best value review of the Trading Standards service the Director of Public and Environmental Services be requested to prepare a comprehensive business plan for trading standards for consideration and approval by the Committee.

270. **"Modern Markets: Confident Consumers" - A Government White Paper (Item 9)**

The Committee considered the proposed response to the Government White Paper entitled "Modern Markets: Confident Consumers". The White Paper would aim to tackle existing loopholes in the law, and thereby reduce the opportunities for rogue traders to deceive the consumer. The White Paper also acknowledged a number of potential problems with smaller authorities such as inconsistent enforcement and opportunities for staff development. Consequently improved training opportunities and closer co-operation between local authorities and other agencies were proposed. The Committee approved the response which highlighted the resource implications for local authorities in meeting the proposals and in particular funding to address the national shortfall of 500 trading standards officers.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) the response to the Government White Paper "Modern Markets: Confident Consumers", as set out in Annexe A to the report, be approved.

271. **Easthampstead Park Cemetery and Crematorium – Weekend Services (Item 10)**

The Committee approved proposals which would enable, in exceptional circumstances, weekend funeral services to take place at Easthampstead Park Cemetery and Crematorium. The Committee noted that additional charges would be levied in order to cover the costs of this enhanced service.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the introduction of a new service to allow for weekend cremations and burials be approved; and
- (ii) the charges to be levied at this service to be an additional 50% of the appropriate fees on a Saturday and 100% on Sunday in order to cover the additional costs.

272. **Partnership for Promoting Responsible Dog Ownership (Item 11)**

The Committee reviewed the partnership arrangement between the Borough and the Town and Parish Councils for promoting responsible dog ownership which had commenced in April 1998. The joint funding initiative included the appointment of a dog warden and the adoption and promotion of the Traffic Light Scheme. The Committee noted that complaints of dog fouling and stray dogs constituted a large part of the types of service requests for the warden. The Committee agreed that the partnership scheme should continue, with a particular emphasis on enforcement.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the success of the partnership to date and work done by all partners to promote joint agency working in order to promote responsible dog ownership be noted; and

- (ii) the continuation of the initiative be supported and the Director of Public and Environmental Services be authorised to extend the current arrangements in order to continue to develop the service in partnership with Leisure Services and the Town and Parish Councils.

273. Community Safety Strategy – Progress (Item 12)

It was reported to the Committee that the Community Safety Strategy had identified seven priority themes and Public and Environmental Services was the lead agency in pursuing a number of objectives under the theme of perception of safety/fear of crime. The Committee considered and noted a report setting out progress in this area.

RESOLVED that the report detailing the progress being made in delivering the objectives in relation to the perceptions of safety/fear of crime, a priority of the community safety strategy, be received.

274. Information items

The Committee noted the following items submitted for information only:

- Urgent Action Taken Under Delegated Powers (Item 13)
- Landscaping Services – Update (Item 14)
- Child Car Seat Testing Day (Item 15)
- Climate Change Consultation – Summary of the Response (Item 16)
- Thames Valley Police Authority (Item 17)
- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (Item 18)
- Report of the Environmental Impact Group (Item 19)

275. Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 member of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 20, which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of schedule 12A of that Act.

- (9) Information relating to the terms proposed for the acquisition of land (Item 20)

276. Acquisition of Land – Binfield (Item 20)

Following consideration of a report containing exempt information the Committee agreed to a proposal to facilitate the purchase a small parcel of land in Binfield, which would protect the local environment and increase amenity open space. The Committee also requested the Strategy and Policy Committee to approve a virement of the Committee's capital allocation to the Leisure Services Committee, which would manage the land once purchased.

RESOLVED that

- (i) a capital allocation as set out in the report to enable the purchase of land in Binfield as outlined in Annexe A of the report be approved; and
- (ii) the Strategy and Policy Committee be requested to approve the virement of capital funds referred to in the report from the Public and Environmental Services Committee to the Leisure Services Committee capital programme 1999/2000.

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

CHAIRMAN