

PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
8 JANUARY 1998

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

Also Present: Councillors Mrs Ballin and Blatchford.

Prior to the formal commencement of the meeting Mr David Harper, the Chief Fire Officer of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, gave a presentation to Members of the Committee on the operation of and financial matters relating to the Fire Authority and answered Members' questions.

409. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 September 1997 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

410. **Chairman's Announcements**

Trading Standards Manager

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Robert Sexton, who had recently taken up his appointment as Trading Standards Manager for the Council.

Vacancies in Public & Environmental Services Department

The Chairman was pleased to report that a number of the long term vacancies within the Department were now being filled.

Customer Survey

The Chairman reported that the Department received many complimentary comments about the services provided, even in the area of enforcement and quoted a case where the manager of a business had appreciated the informative and reasonable attitude from the inspecting Environmental Health Officer.

411. **Urgent Action Taken Under Delegated Powers**

The Committee was advised of an urgent action taken under delegated powers by the Director of Public & Environmental Services, in consultation with the Chairman, in relation to amendments to charges for cremation memorials.

412. **Minutes of Hackney Carriage Sub Committee - 12 November 1997**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Hackney Carriage Sub Committee held on 12 November 1997 (Appendix A hereto) be received.

413. **Revenue Budget 1998/99 (Item 1)**

Proposals for the Committee's revenue budget for the financial year 1998/99 had been prepared by the Director of Public and Environmental Services, in accordance with guidance set by the Strategy & Policy Committee on 17 December 1997. After taking account of variations from the disaggregated budget totalling £470,000, the Committee noted that its draft base budget would be £5.034 million. The Strategy and Policy Committee was requested to consider an additional allowance for inflation of £166,000 for services where this was unavoidable and also to consider service developments, totalling £250,000, offset in part by service economies, totalling £163,000. The Committee also approved proposals for increased fees and charges, covering the wide range of services provided by the Public & Environmental Services Department as well as the charges for car parks.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Committee's draft base budget for 1998/99 totalling £5.034 million be agreed;
- (ii) the Strategy & Policy Committee be requested, when considering the Council's budget for 1998/99, to:
 - (a) add an additional allowance for inflation to running expenses budgets of £166,000, as follows:

	£000s	£000s
	Base Budget	Inflation
Refuse Collection Contract	607	34
Recycling Contract collection	152	5
Street Cleansing Contract	477	21
Vehicle Park Management Contract	217	11
Amenity Land Maintenance Contract	887	33
Market Management Contract	80	2
Waste Disposal	1,640	60
Total	4,060	166
Total Addition for Inflation		166

- (b) consider the potential service developments and pressures, set out in Annexe C of Item 1 of the agenda, totalling £260,000 and service economies, set out in Annexe D of Item 1 of the agenda, totalling £163,000 respectively; and
 - (c) increase fees and charges from 1 April 1998, as detailed in Annexe E of Item 1;
- (iii) the proposed changes to the Traffic Regulation Order in respect of Albert Road car park and Downmill Road lorry park be advertised and any objection be reported to the Committee for consideration.

414. **Service Plan 1998/99 (Item 2)**

The Public and Environmental Services Department covers the functions of environmental health, trading standards, environmental services, the cemetery and crematoria service, emergency planning, the grounds maintenance DSO as well as related administrative and financial services. The Director of Public & Environmental Services submitted a report on the service plan for the Department, which highlighted the strategic and priority objectives for the services concerned and represented an important step in translating the budget into achievable action plans. The report also included descriptions of the services provided, with information on service users and customers, and key activity statistics. Service profiles for these service areas detailed the likely effects of demographic, economic and legislative changes.

RESOLVED that the proposed service plan for 1998/99 be adopted as a basis for detailed service planning.

415. **Local Government Re-organisation - Position Statement (Item 3)**

The Director of Public & Environmental Services outlined the progress that had taken place in relation to Local Government Re-organisation. As well as reporting on the progress with the Combined Fire Authority and the Shadow Thames Valley Police Authority the Director outlined developments in trading standards, waste disposal, the Coroner's Service and emergency planning and related staffing and accommodation issues. The report noted that good progress had been made in the disaggregation of services from the County Council which would ensure that Bracknell Forest would be able to carry out its new responsibilities from Vesting Day.

RESOLVED that the report (Item 3 of the agenda) be noted and the further progress that had been made towards Local Government Re-organisation be endorsed.

416. **Out of Hours - Environmental Health Response (Item 4)**

Under the existing arrangements the out of hours service provided by Environmental Health Officers was operated largely on a "goodwill" basis and there was no guarantee that an officer could be contacted and be able to respond. As a result of this and other disadvantages the Committee considered that it would be appropriate to introduce on a trial basis a formal out of hours service from 1 April 1998. This would provide two officers working at times of main demand, for eighteen weeks a year, between the times of 10.00pm and 2.00am on Friday night and Saturday morning and 10.00pm and 2.00am on Saturday night and Sunday morning. Officers would also continue to be on call at other times throughout the year.

RESOLVED that, having regard to public demand and the legal obligations, an out of hours scheme, as set out in the report at Item 4 of the agenda, be introduced on a one year pilot basis with effect from 1 April 1998.

417. **Partnership for Action on Dog Related Problems (Item 5)**

The Committee was advised of proposals for a partnership arrangement with the Town and Parish Councils in the Borough, involving joint funding, to provide a Dog Warden with the necessary vehicle and equipment as well as appropriate signage. An important element of the proposals was the adoption of the 'traffic light' scheme on relevant land. Under the scheme a red signal would indicate that no dogs were allowed; an amber signal would indicate that dogs were allowed but owners must clear up after them; and a green signal would indicate that there was no obligation on owners to clear up any dog mess. The Committee agreed to seek the adoption of the provisions of the Act in respect of all land to which it could be applied, including Town and Parish Council land.

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopt the provisions of the Dog (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 in respect of all land in the open air and to which the public would be entitled to or permitted to have access (with or without payment);

RESOLVED that subject to funding being available:

- (i) the traffic light scheme, as set out in the report, be applied in respect of all land under the control of the Committee;
- (ii) a Dog Warden be appointed on a fixed term (renewable) contract of two years;
- (iii) the Director of Public & Environmental Services be authorised
 - (a) to advertise the Council's intention to adopt the provisions of the Dog (Fouling of Land) Act 1996; and
 - (b) to consider, in consultation with the Chairman, any representations prior to the making of an Order under provisions of the Act; and
- (iv) the powers to issue fixed penalty notices be applied in appropriate circumstances.

418. **Environment Strategy 1998-2000 (Item 6)**

As part of the process of the Local Agenda 21 local authorities had been requested to produce a local action plan for sustainable development. The Council's initial action plan was adopted in 1996. The Committee was advised that the Environmental Impact Group, comprising the Chairman and officers from each Department, had worked on the development of a new draft Environment Strategy. The Committee thanked members of the Environmental Impact Group for their work. The proposed Strategy was intended to build on and develop the council's initial action plan. The Committee noted that the strategy was an evolving document that sought to foster creativity leading to the implementation of positive action on a wide range of environmental issues, having regard to good management practice and available budgets.

RESOLVED that the Committee, in confirming its commitment to Local Agenda 21, endorses the draft Environment Strategy as the basis for consultation with other service committees of the Council.

419. **Refurbishment of Public Conveniences (Item 7)**

The Committee was advised that the public conveniences in Napier Road, Crowthorne and at Birch Hill shopping centre were in need of modernisation and that a sum of £100,000 had been included in the capital programme for their refurbishment. The Committee concluded that the existing toilet provision would be improved by the installation of semi automatic toilets within the existing structures to provide a modern, hygienic and easily maintained facility at each site. The Committee noted that the additional £17,640 required for the projects would be provided from the existing maintenance revenue budget.

RESOLVED that approval be given to accept the tender for £112,640 for the installation of semi automatic toilets at Napier Road, Crowthorne, and Birch Hill shopping centre and for other ancillary work to be carried out using the Council's approved contractors.

420. **Environmental Improvement Scheme - Open Amenity Areas (Item 8)**

The Committee considered a report which outlined proposals for four Environmental Improvement Schemes in four open amenity areas, which essentially involved landscape improvements. The Committee was advised that there remained in the capital programme a sum of £4,100 which could be used to fund these projects.

RESOLVED that the following Environmental Improvement Schemes be approved, and following further consultation with residents, the Grounds Maintenance Direct Labour Organisation be employed to carry out the works at the following locations:

43 Deepfield Road, Bullbrook
Bracknell - Wokingham College
Pondmoor Road, Easthampstead
48 - 50 Ennerdale, Wildridings

421. **Priestwood Shopping Area Enhancements (Item 9)**

The Council's capital programme, approved by the Policy & Resources Committee in February 1997, included a budget of £15,000 for improvements to Priestwood Shopping Area as part of a rolling programme of local shopping centre upgrades. The Committee was advised that the improvements would include new timber planters, seats and litterbins as well as the relocation of existing bicycle stands.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the improvements for Priestwood shops be approved;
- (ii) the Director of Planning & Transportation be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman, to determine any outstanding elements of design; and
- (iii) the Council's term contractor carry out the works.

422. **Cannie Man Shopping Area Enhancement, Hanworth (Item 10)**

The Committee was advised that there was a sum of £20,000 in the capital programme for 1997/98 for improvements to the shopping area adjacent to the Cannie Man Public House. The improvements would include re-paving of the shop forecourt; reconstruction of the steps near the rear of the shop as well as new litterbins and cycle stands.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the scheme of maintenance and improvements at the Cannie Man shopping area be approved, with the final details of the scheme to be determined by the Director of Planning & Transportation in consultation with the Chairman; and
- (ii) the Council's term contractor carry out the work.

423. **Yorktown Road - Broadway House Shopping Area Enhancement (Item 11)**

The Committee was advised that the capital programme, approved by the Policy & Resources Committee in February 1997, had made provision of £65,000 for environmental improvements at the Yorktown Road - Broadway House shopping area as part of a rolling programme of local shopping centre upgrades. The works would include formalisation of the existing parking lay-by, including one space for person with disabilities; and the construction of a new parking area providing five additional spaces. The scheme also included the provision of a seat on the forecourt as well as cycle stands.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the proposed improvement works for Yorktown Road - Broadway House shopping area be approved, with the Director of Planning & Transportation authorised to determine any outstanding elements of design in consultation with the Chairman;
- (ii) the Council's Term Contractor carry out the works.

424. **Waste Disposal - Legal Agreements (Item 12)**

The Committee was advised that as a result of Local Government Re-organisation each new unitary authority in Berkshire would become a waste disposal authority and would therefore be required to implement plans for the disposal of waste in its area. As a result there would be during the term of existing waste disposal contracts a network of dependence between the unitary authorities with regard to waste disposal sites and outlets. The Committee agreed that it would be necessary to regulate the relationships between the unitary authorities by means of a legal agreement.

RESOLVED that the Director of Public & Environmental Services, together with the Borough Solicitor, be authorised to conclude negotiations and, in consultation with the Chairman, enter into a legal agreement with the other unitary authorities for the disaggregation of waste disposal services.

425. **Enforcement Policy - Public and Environmental Services Department (Item 13)**

The Committee considered and adopted a new policy that would be applied in relation to all enforcement activity undertaken by the Department.

RESOLVED that the enforcement policy, as set out in Annexe A to Item 13 of the agenda, be adopted in respect of all enforcement related activity that is the responsibility of the Committee.

426. **Performance Indicators (Item 14)**

The Committee considered the six month performance indicators for the period ending 30 September 1997 and customer surveys for the cemetery and crematorium service.

RESOLVED that the performance indicators and customer surveys for the period ending 30 September 1997 be noted.

427. **Authorisation of Officers (Item 15)**

The Committee considered a report seeking specific delegated authority for three new Officers in the Environmental Health Section.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Mrs Sue Howlett (Food/Safety Enforcement Officer) be authorised to act for the purposes of the statute specified in Annexe A (1) of Item 15 of the agenda and any regulations made thereunder during her employment with the Council; and
- (ii) Mr Andrew Burbridge and Mrs Tracey Willmott (Environmental Health Officers) be authorised to act for the purposes of the statute specified in Annexe A (2) of Item 15 of the agenda and any regulations made thereunder during their employment with the Council.

428. **Information Items**

The Committee received the following reports submitted for information only:

- Revised Budget 1997/98 (Item 16)
- Agendas for Change (Item 17)
- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority (Item 18)
- Shadow Thames Valley Policy Authority (Item 19)
- Action Taken under Delegated Powers - Food Safety Prosecution (Item 20)

429. **Exclusion of Public & 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 following Item which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

(12) Information and advice relating to possible legal proceedings

430. **Illegal Dumping of Waste (Item 21)**

The Committee considered a report on the illegal dumping of waste in Ryehurst Lane, Binfield. An amendment to the recommendation in the report was made at the meeting.

RESOLVED that authority be given to instigate legal proceedings under Section 2 of the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 against the two individuals identified in the amended recommendation for unauthorised dumping of material on land at Ryehurst Lane in September 1997.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 10.05pm.

CHAIRMAN