



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

D69

Cabinet **25 July 2012**

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 11 July 2012

This meeting of the Committee also considered the final report of the Task and Finish Group looking into the variable quality of paving in Bury St Edmunds Town Centre, and a separate report (Report D70 refers) appears on this Cabinet agenda.

- 1. Work Programme Update and Presentation from Forest Heath District Council – Educational Attainment**
- 1.1 The Committee now has a rolling work programme, whereby suggestions for scrutiny reviews are brought to each meeting, and if accepted, are timetabled to report to a future meeting. The work programme also leaves space for Call-ins and Councillor Calls for Action.
- 1.2 Members reviewed the current position of the work programme, and noted the items which were expected at the next meeting of the Committee on 5 September 2012.
- 1.3 Two suggestions for scrutiny were also considered at this meeting. Firstly, during 2011/2012, Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) had undertaken a review of educational attainment in the District, and it had been suggested that St Edmundsbury's Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to carry out a similar review for the Borough. To this end, a presentation was given at the meeting by the Chairman of FHDC's Task and Finish Group, and other Members who had been involved in the review. Background information had also been provided to Members.
- 1.4 Following a question and answer session and a debate on the issue, the Committee requested that the full report of the FHDC Task and Finish Group be circulated to all Members of the Committee, together with the list of education papers and summary notes which Members had been provided with as background reading at their first meeting. A decision will be made at the September meeting of the Committee as to whether the expected outcomes and value of the review would be balanced by the resources required to run it.
- 1.5 The second suggestion for scrutiny had been submitted by Councillor Thorndyke, who wished to look into the condition of the Olding Road Skatepark and the future provision for skateboarding in Bury St Edmunds. Councillor Thorndyke presented some slides showing pictures taken at the skatepark, which showed the condition of the equipment.

- 1.6 Officers advised that they were aware of the condition of the equipment, and safety inspections were made on a weekly basis to ensure the equipment was safe to use. Any equipment which was deemed not to be able to be safely repaired was removed.
- 1.7 There was a highly motivated Skatepark User Group which regularly engaged with the Council, and the young people who used the skatepark were clear that they would prefer the Council to carry on with running repairs through summer 2012 if possible, rather than remove the facility. This approach to frequent safety inspections and repairs was therefore continuing, but would be reviewed as a result of the concern of Councillors.
- 1.8 The equipment was, however, nearing the end of its life, and plans were in place, via fundraising being carried out by the User Group and £150,000 of matched funding within the Leisure Asset Management Plan, to remove the current skatepark in autumn 2012 with a view to a new concrete park being provided from 2013 onwards.
- 1.9 A lengthy debate on the issue was held, with some Members making the point that by the time a Task and Finish Group was up and running, the skatepark would have been closed. Following a tight vote, the Committee resolved not to set up a Task and Finish Group to look into the issue, as it felt it was being adequately managed by officers. However, a report would be provided to the Committee in the autumn on future plans, and all Members would be updated in the Members' Bulletin on plans for Summer 2012.

2. Cabinet Forward Plan:– July to October 2012

- 2.1 The Committee considered the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period July to October 2012, and following a question were advised of the areas which would be covered in the *'Two Year Review of The Apex'* report on this Cabinet agenda (Report D85 refers), but did not request any further information or involvement in any of the expected decisions on this occasion.

3. Interim Report of the Task and Finish Group:– Review of car parking charges throughout the Borough

- 3.1 The Chairman presented an update to the Committee on the work of the above Task and Finish Group, which had met three times since the Committee set up the Group in April 2012. A scoping meeting had taken place in May 2012, which had set the Terms of Reference for the Review, followed by the first information gathering meeting in June 2012. This had been followed by a second information gathering meeting on 2 July 2012, at which the Group had commenced reviewing the evidence gathered to date.
- 3.2 The next meeting of the Task and Finish Group was due to take place on 13 July 2012, at which Members would start formulating recommendations. The Group aimed to bring draft recommendations to the September meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, final recommendations to the meeting on 24 October 2012, and if agreed, it aimed to bring the recommendations of the Committee through Cabinet on 21 November 2012.

4. Interim Report of the Task and Finish Group:– The Co-ordination of Licensing, Planning and Enforcement functions relating to Street Vending (the “A Boards” review)

- 4.1 Since this review was set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Task and Finish Group had looked at this issue in detail, and had tried to strike a balance between the concerns of residents that the proliferation of A Boards was detracting from the amenity of the area, with the needs of business to advertise their goods in this difficult economic climate.
- 4.2 In investigating this issue, the Group had gathered a lot of information, including the experience of other authorities, and considered a number of options on a way forward on this issue, which were set out in Section 4 of Report D52. The options in brief were: the status quo; do nothing and leave regulation to the highway authority; ban all A Boards; introduce a revised permitting scheme; and introduce voluntary guidelines. Full details of each of these options were set out in the report considered by the Committee.
- 4.3 Having taken all its research and evidence into account, including the legal and financial implications of each option, the Task and Finish Group had concluded that its aim of balancing the needs of residents with the needs of businesses could only be achieved by the introduction of a revised permitting scheme that was equitable to all businesses. This was Option 4.4 in Report D52.
- 4.4 The Task and Finish Group had recommended that consultation take place on the preferred option, and whilst this was agreed by the Committee, Members wished to make it clear that it was implicit in the recommendation that the consultation would explain the rationale behind the preferred option, including brief details of the options which were considered and rejected (and why), in order that consultees could comment on all options.

5. Interim Report of the Task and Finish Group: Article 4 Directions/Conservation Areas

- 5.1 This Task and Finish Group had worked with officers to undertake a review of those places where the boundaries of the conservation areas were in need of updating. The Committee had referred the conservation area boundary proposals to the Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party (BAWP), which had undertaken consultation on proposed amendments to the two Bury St Edmunds conservation areas.
- 5.2 The Committee received a report which updated on the responses received to the consultation undertaken by BAWP, including the final boundaries of the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre and Victoria Street Conservation Areas which Members were informed had been recommended by BAWP for formal adoption (Report D83 on this Cabinet agenda refers).
- 5.3 The Committee also noted the continuing work of the Task and Finish Group in reviewing the Article 4 Directions in Bury St Edmunds. The purpose of this area of work was to consider how the Article 4 Directions in the two Bury St Edmunds conservation areas could be more effectively managed, including the coverage of the Directions and also the impact of microgeneration on the conservation areas and whether this should be brought within the scope of Article 4 Directions.

6. Quarter 1 Directed Surveillance Authorised Applications

- 6.1 The Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources) Order 2010 requires that Members should scrutinise the authority's use of its surveillance powers on a quarterly basis. In June 2010 it was agreed that this requirement should be fulfilled by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.2 The Monitoring Officer advised that in Quarter 1 no such surveillance had been authorised.

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