



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

B228

Council 28 September 2010

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

***Written report by Cllr Nigel Aitkens
Chairman of the Policy Development Committee***

This report covers the meeting of the Committee held on 1 September 2010.

1. *Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2011/2012*

- 1.1 The Committee considered a report which set out the context of the 2011/2012 budget process and described the approach which would be taken to deliver the substantial savings required.
- 1.2 The way forward was currently based on assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy on likely increased costs, reduced grants from central Government and the level of Dynamic Review – Innovation, Value and Enterprise (DR-IVE) savings to be made. However, it would not be clear how the Government's announced 25% spending cuts would be split across Government departments until the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, and the figures would need to be changed once the situation became clearer.
- 1.3 Consideration of proposed savings and income opportunities will take place at future meetings of the Committee.

2. *Review of Empty Homes and Wasted Space Strategy 2009-2011*

- 2.1 Following the recommendation of adoption of the Empty Homes and Wasted Space Strategy by the Committee in September 2009, an Action Plan was developed, reflecting the aims and objectives of the Strategy, its priority being to bring long term (ie empty longer than 6 months) private sector empty homes back into use.
- 2.2 The Committee considered a review of progress against the Action Plan. An officer working group had been set up to monitor empty properties which were of concern, to ensure a co-ordinated and responsive approach. The officer working group also prioritised action based on issues including the state of the property, impact on the community and safety of the

building, and officers were currently targeting actions against properties that had been empty longer than 12 months, at present a total of 84.

- 2.3 A detailed analysis of the position with these 84 properties was provided to the Committee, together with a progress report on the Action Plan, and Members concluded that good progress was being made with ensuring accurate information was available, and that the officer working group ensured that the right properties were targeted

Park Byelaws

- 3.1 Park Byelaws currently existed for the Abbey Gardens (since 1947), Haverhill Recreation Ground (1959) and West Stow Country Park (1993), but it was acknowledged that the current Park Byelaws were antiquated. It had, therefore, been agreed that new byelaws should be drafted for these sites, and a number of other sites in the Borough, and the Committee had set up a Member/officer working group to review the existing Park Byelaws and assist in the production of new byelaws.
- 3.2 The working group agreed that the model byelaws created by the Department of Communities and Local Government should be used as the template for creating the Borough Council's own byelaws, and those which the group felt should be adopted were set out in Appendix 1 to Report B167.
- 3.3 The byelaws, which the Committee recommended for adoption following the necessary consultation processes, will allow both the Police and Council officers to take appropriate action, should anti-social behaviour issues arise, to ensure the parks remain beautiful and enjoyable places to visit. Following consultation full Council will be asked to approve the adoption of the new byelaws, the revocation of the existing byelaws for the Abbey Gardens, Haverhill Recreation Ground and West Stow Country Park, and the affixing of the Council's seal to the new byelaws.