



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

B478

Council 1 March 2011

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

*Written report by Cllr David Lockwood
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

This report covers the meeting of the Committee held on 5 January 2011.

1. Provision of Fixed Play Facilities in the Borough

- 1.1 A report was considered by the Committee which looked at the way in which the Council funded fixed play areas in both sites it owned, and those provided on land owned by some parish councils. The Council currently maintained 49 Borough-owned play areas, and also inspected and provided advice to parish councils on a further 38 parish-owned play areas.
- 1.2 There was no statutory requirement on either the Borough or parish councils to provide play facilities, and the distribution of these across the Borough was largely a historical situation.
- 1.3 A wide ranging discussion took place on a number of issues, and the Committee decided that the best way forward was through a Member/officer task and finish group, and Councillors Beckwith, Marks, Mrs Rushbrook and Thorndyke were appointed to work with officers to investigate the issue and make recommendations to the Committee.

2. Tree and Woodland Strategy Update

- 2.1 The Council adopted a Tree and Woodland Strategy in December 2009. At its meeting on 8 September 2010, the Committee asked for the procedures for planning and budgeting landscaping works to be reported to Members. A report was considered at the Committee's January 2011 meeting, which provided an update on the implementation of the Strategy, and clarity on how tree work was prioritised by the Borough's Tree Officers.

- 2.2 The inspection and maintenance programme was outlined, under which all Council maintained trees were inspected, and maintained as necessary, at least once every four years. Work was generally only undertaken outside this cycle in order to deal with issues brought to the Council's attention which required prompt remedial work.
- 2.3 This year's budget spend on tree work was around 50% proactive management and 50% reactive. In the long term it was hoped to achieve a level of 70% planned management, as the benefits of pro-active management should result in the volume of enquiries diminishing. Members were pleased to see the reduction in enquiries to the service, which had been achieved through the new proactive management and programmed maintenance regime.

3. Affordable Housing Update

- 3.1 Following previous updates, the Committee had requested a further update on affordable housing issues in the Borough. This update also provided an overview of the housing implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).
- 3.2 There were 14 areas in the CSR that were likely to impact on affordable housing in the Borough, and these were discussed by Members, together with the likely impact on St Edmundsbury.
- 3.3 An update on affordable housing delivery in the Borough was also discussed and Members were advised that in the latest bid round St Edmundsbury achieved £617,000 funding for the delivery of 20 new homes in the Borough. Numbers of homes completed in the Borough, and affordable housing completions, were discussed, along with issues and trends affecting the demand for affordable housing in the Borough.
- 3.4 Affordable housing updates would continue to be brought to the Committee annually, with the next update to be brought when the implications of CSR were more advanced, and focusing on St Edmundsbury's Local Investment Plan, which Members noted had contributed to the 100% success rate in achieving funding for all schemes submitted in the latest bid round.