

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 22 July 2015** at **4.00pm** at the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Diane Hind
Vice Chairman Jeremy Farthing

Simon Brown
Terry Buckle
John Burns
Patrick Chung
Susan Glossop
Paul Hopfensperger

Tim Marks
Richard Rout
Angela Rushen
Andrew Speed
Clive Springett
Jim Thorndyke

By Invitation:

Tony Brown
Ian Houlder, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance

28. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Wayne Hailstone and Frank Warby.

29. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutions declared.

30. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

31. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment on page one, minute number 21, which should read "Councillor Tony Brown for Councillor *John* Burns".

32. **Review of Car Parking**

(For transparency Councillor Paul Hopfensperger declared that he had a business in Bury St Edmunds Town Centre, but did not consider this a pecuniary interest in the item under discussion).

(Councillor Richard Rout arrived at 4.05pm, during the consideration of this item)

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/15/010, which sought the establishment of a Review Group and adopt the Terms of Reference to conduct a review of car parks in the Borough.

A full review of car parking was timely given that the Borough Council, in partnership with Our Bury St Edmunds had commissioned a study to review:

- 1) Current car parking occupancy across the Borough;
- 2) Short-term capacity issues and long-term parking solutions/interventions;
- 3) The impact of Pay on Exit/Automated Number Plate Recognition systems on capacity and operation of car parks; and
- 4) The financial implications for the car parking service arising from the implementation of either a Pay on Exit or Automated Number Plate Recognition operation.

It was proposed that a Review Group be established comprising of five Members from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including a representative from the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to oversee the review of car parks. The Lead Officer for the review would be the Car Parks Manager, supported by officer representation from Finance, Economic Development and Growth and Operations.

The proposed Terms of Reference for the Review Group were:

- 1) To evaluate the current performance including usage; the location and condition of the car parks; the quality of service delivery; the issue of fines; car park incentive schemes and customer feedback.
- 2) To consider current levels of occupancy; future capacity projections and any interventions as required.
- 3) To assess the conclusions of the study on both the merit and business case for the implementation of Pay on Exit/Automated Number Plate Recognition operation systems.
- 4) To review car park tariffs for the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, backed by consultation.
- 5) To identify changes and amendments needed to the Traffic Road Order.

The Review Group would then present its findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2015 and any recommendations as agreed by the Committee would then be considered by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee as part of the budget setting process.

The Committee considered the report and suggested that the Review Group should be able to make additions, as necessary to the proposed Terms of Reference at their first meeting, to which officers agreed.

RESOLVED

- 1) That the Terms of Reference for a review of car parking be adopted.
- 2) That Councillors John Burns, Susan Glossop, Paul Hopfensperger, Angela Rushen and Jim Thorndyke be nominated to sit on the Car Park Review Group.

33. Dog Fouling in West Suffolk

(Councillor Andrew Speed arrived at 4.10pm, during the consideration and voting of this item)

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/15/011, which provided an overview of dog fouling within West Suffolk. The report included information on the general issue of dog fouling (national and West Suffolk perspective); why it was difficult to fine offenders; current Council initiatives in West Suffolk (proactive and reactive work); changes in legislation, such as the requirement for dogs to be micro-chipped by April 2016; and options and actions available to the Council to combat dog fouling.

It was reported that in the context of other environmental crimes, dog fouling was not a significant issue in West Suffolk in terms of the number of occurrences and the majority of West Suffolk dog walkers and owners demonstrated responsible actions on a daily basis. However, dog fouling was an anti-social issue that was particularly offensive to those impacted by it.

There were a number of tools available to and used by the Council to change what was in essence a behavioural issue. This included an extensive network of bins and signs supported by both educational and enforcement activity. However, dog fouling was a localised issue and tended to be dealt with through targeted actions and working with the local community. In order to support this moving forward, the following additional actions would be taken:

- 1) Investigate introducing "Paws on Patrol" in West Suffolk;
- 2) Produce reporting guidance for staff;
- 3) Investigate a banner campaign for football pitches with Suffolk Football Association;
- 4) Launch a "Clean It Up" campaign in October 2015;
- 5) Introduce a Public Spaces Protection Orders for dog fouling offences across West Suffolk; and
- 6) Consider a Fixed Penalty Notice reward scheme across West Suffolk for reported dog fouling offences.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked a number of questions to which officers provided comprehensive responses. In particular the Committee discussed the low number of dog fouling incidents reported and felt the Council should be more proactive in engaging the community in reporting incidents. It was suggested that a publicity campaign should be carried out to try and identify dog fouling hot spot areas within West Suffolk. It was further suggested that there needed to be a simple reporting method on the website to enable the community to report incidents with the ability to upload the location of the dog fouling incident.

The Committee discussed the proposed banner campaign for football pitches with the Suffolk Football Association and suggested that this should also be extended to include rugby pitches.

Members discussed the dog poop bags, which used to include the Councils logo, and suggested that the bags could be sponsored with the organisations and the Councils logo, which could also be dispensed alongside dog bins. Officers agreed to investigate both suggestions.

The Committee discussed the lack of enforcement and acknowledged the difficulties in providing beyond all reasonable doubt that an offence had occurred. However, members felt that the public needed to see the Council was taking serious action against dog fouling by issuing fines. Officers advised the Committee that the Council was looking into improving Fixed Penalty Notices and would continue to be active in enforcement by having more targeted controls to witness dog fouling taking place.

Finally, the Committee considered DNA testing, which was being piloted by Barking and Dagenham Borough Council. Members suggested inviting Streetklean Bio Limited to a future meeting of the Committee to give a presentation on their PooPrints DNA program.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED

That:

- 1) The Head of Operations be asked to investigate further the following initiatives to combat dog fouling in West Suffolk:
 - i) Investigate introducing "Paws on Patrol" in West Suffolk;
 - ii) Produce reporting guidance for staff;
 - iii) Investigate a banner campaign for football pitches with Suffolk Football Association;
 - iv) Launch a "Clean It Up" campaign in October 2015;
 - v) Introduce a Public Spaces Protection Orders for dog fouling offences across West Suffolk;
 - vi) Consider a Fixed Penalty Notice reward scheme across West Suffolk for reported dog fouling offences; and
 - vii) Introduce a publicity campaign by carrying out a survey to identify dog fouling hot spot areas in West Suffolk.

- 2) That Streetkleen Bio Limited be invited to give a presentation on their PooPrints DNA program at a future Joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting with Forest Heath District Council.

34. **On-Street Parking - Skyliner Way, Bury St Edmunds - Update**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/15/012, which updated Members on progress made on a number of options explored to see whether improvements could be made to alleviate the parking issues in Skyliner Way, Bury St Edmunds, following consideration of this item on 22 April 2015. At that meeting the Committee acknowledged that it would be expensive to create a layby, but felt that this was the most viable option and that any parking restrictions should not be implemented until all options for a layby had been exhausted.

The Western Area Highways Manager (Suffolk County Council) (SCC) updated the Committee on the findings from the feasibility study into the current depth of various utility services, which would impact on costs in creating a layby.

It was reported that the Highway Authority did not regard the provision of parking as part of its function, but would endeavour to manage such parking as could be permitted on the highway. As a result, it did not provide any direct funding for provision of parking places. However the Borough Council had been invited to submit bids to the On-Street Parking Account held by the Highway Authority. Bids had to be submitted by 31 July 2015. Whilst the emphasis was for bids for the provision of off-street car parks, there was no reason why the Borough Council should not submit a bid to implement verge parking in Skyliner Way.

The Committee considered the report and asked a number of questions to which officers duly responded.

In particular discussions were held on the location of the proposed layby which was near to John Banks. The Western Area Highways Manager stated that the area had been identified as the most appropriate as the verge was at its widest point, and any works would not impact on the current footpath along Skyliner Way.

The Committee **noted** the contents of the report, and with the vote being unanimous,

RECOMMENDED

That the Head of Operations, on behalf of the Borough Council be asked to submit a bid of £25,000 to the On-Street Parking Account held by the Highways Authority by 31 July 2015, to implement verge parking in Skyliner Way, Bury St Edmunds.

35. **Directed Surveillance Authorised Applications (Quarter 1) (Verbal)**

(Councillor Clive Springett left the meeting at 5.20pm during the consideration of this item)

The Committee received a verbal report from the Council's Monitoring Officer, which outlined the Authorisations of Directed Surveillance under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA); including the process in place on the use of RIPA. It was reported that:

- RIPA permits public authorities to carry out directed surveillance;
- Directed surveillance was the systematic observation of a person that was carried out covertly;
- It had to be in connection with a specific purpose or investigation; and
- It had to be likely to result in obtaining private information about a person.

Local authorities needed to obtain authorisation for directed surveillance from a magistrate, and could only seek to use directed surveillance to prevent or detect criminal offences that were punishable by maximum term of at least six months imprisonment or related to underage sale of alcohol or tobacco.

The purpose of directed surveillance was to obtain information that could lead to a court case.

The Committee considered the verbal update and asked questions to which the Monitoring Officer duly responded.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the verbal update provided by the Monitoring Officer and that in Quarter 1 of 2015-2016, no such surveillance had been authorised.

36. **Work Programme Update**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/SE/15/013, which provided an update on the current status of the Committee's Work Programme and the Task and Finish Groups appointed by the Committee (Appendix 1).

Attached at Appendix 2 was the Work Programme Suggestion Form to remind Members to complete the Form when submitting future items for potential scrutiny. This enabled suggestions received to be initially considered by the Committee at each meeting and if accepted included within its forward work programme.

The Chairman advised the Committee of two amendments to the forward Work Programme:

- 1) On 9 September 2015, the item relating to the Review of the Christmas Fayre had been rescheduled to be presented to the Committee on 11 November 2015.

- 2) On 11 November 2015, the Portfolio Holder for Operations (Councillor Peter Stevens) would be in attendance to give a short presentation/account of his portfolio.

The Committee considered the report and amendments. There being no decision required, **noted** the items currently expected to be presented to the Committee during 2015-2016.

The Meeting concluded at 5.30pm

Signed by:

Chairman
