

**ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

**A meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Panel was held on 14 September 2017.**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Higgins (Chair), Councillor Goodchild (Vice Chair); Councillors Biswas and Coupe.

**OFFICERS:** J Dixon, G Field, A Mace and J Parry.

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor Harvey – Executive Member for Environment and Commercial Services.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Branson, Davison, Hubbard, Lewis and McGee.

**\*\* DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no Declarations of Interest made by Members at this point in the meeting.

**\*\* MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 24 July 2017 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

**UPDATE ON REVIEW – EDUCATION ENFORCEMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES (2015)  
INTRODUCTION TO NEW SCRUTINY TOPIC – LITTER AND ENFORCEMENT**

The Chair introduced the Director of Environment and Commercial Services who was in attendance at the meeting to provide the Panel with an update on a previous review – Education, Enforcement and Environmental Issues – and to provide an overview of Environment and Commercial Services in the context of the Panel's new scrutiny investigation.

At its meeting on 24 July 2017, the Panel agreed to include the topic of Litter and Enforcement on its Work Programme for 2017/18.

The Director gave a presentation and circulated a briefing paper to update the Panel on the Action Plan arising from the Panel's recommendations from a previous review of Education, Enforcement and Environmental Issues, undertaken by the Environment Scrutiny Panel in 2015.

The following update information was provided:-

- The enforcement and education teams had now merged.
- Fixed Penalty Notices, or alternatively prosecutions, had been pro-actively issued where education did not result in behavioural change for serious offences.
- New leaflets had been printed to publicise enforcement and raise public awareness.
- Area Care staff had not been trained to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) as it was considered that the level of investigative work and possible court attendance would divert operatives from their normal duties.
- Joint working between Community Protection and Joint Action Groups was carried out regularly and other areas of the Council, namely Street Wardens and Neighbourhood Safety Team, were exploring the possibility of expanding the number of staff authorised to issue FPNs.
- The Environmental Enforcement Team had divided into dedicated zones – north, south, east and west Middlesbrough.

- In relation to reviewing Hartlepool Council's operations and adopting any suitable ideas for Middlesbrough, it was highlighted that meetings had taken place but Hartlepool had advised against carrying out the joint agency approach and no longer did this themselves.
- Joint working with other agencies had not commenced, however, this may develop over time with further work being required.
- Regular meetings and events took place to highlight the work of Street Champions and recruitment was a continual process. Leaflets had been produced and distributed to promote the role and information was available on the Council's website. The role of the Street Champions was to act as Environment Neighbourhood Watch and report any environmental issues and involvement with environmental projects.
- A briefing on the annual programme of targeted enforcement activity had not been produced, however, each officer was responsible for overseeing their dedicated area on a daily basis providing a reactive service from reports received through the Flare system.
- CCTV was installed at the Parkway Centre recycling bring site in December 2015. This had a positive impact and fly tipping reduced significantly. CCTV remained in-situ and was monitored when needed. New mesh fencing was installed making the site visible from both sides.
- Signage highlighting the options available to dispose of household waste was sited at the recycling bring site, however, no signs had been produced to date for fly tipping hotspots but this would be undertaken in the future.
- The Council had utilised Keep Britain Tidy campaigns, including 'Clean for the Queen' to tackle litter issues. WRAP guidance on best practice for waste collection, recycling and behavioural change was also used.
- All schools and academies in Middlesbrough were contacted by the Council with a view to working together on environmental issues, however there had been no take up.
- Pictorial guides on waste disposal were produced and an example of the leaflets, signs and large communal bin stickers were brought along to the meeting. The guides also included instructions in five languages – Romanian, Czech, Polish, Punjabi and Urdu.
- Information had been included on the Council's website regarding local charities available to residents as an alternative to the Council's junk job collection service. The contact centre was also asked to inform residents of the options available when they contacted the Council.

It was highlighted that the Enforcement Team had increased from 2.5 staff to 6.5 staff, due to a merge in the Enforcement and Education Teams. It was anticipated that this would provide a better enforcement presence and an increase in the number of FPNs issued; hopefully leading to a change in behaviour and a reduction in service costs. Training in the use of FPNs had been undertaken to ensure all legal requirements were met. A new zonal approach to enforcement would be introduced with an Enforcement Officer each covering north, south, east and west Middlesbrough and two officers covering the town centre, with flexibility to be utilised in the other areas when needed. In addition, new mobile CCTV equipment had been purchased to help with issues, such as fly-tipping, in hot spot areas.

The Panel was informed that links to schools needed to be strengthened, in addition to the University, particularly at the start and end of term times when students were coming and going.

A discussion ensued and the following issues were raised:-

- In response to a query regarding the multi-language/pictorial leaflets regarding waste collection, it was confirmed that copies of the leaflets were available in Community Hubs but arrangements could be made for poster-sized copies to be issued to Community Hubs.

- It was highlighted that whilst levels of fly tipping had reduced overall since 2014/15, levels had increased from 2014/15 to 2015/16. It was clarified that the figures provided related to the number of incidents and that it was difficult to quantify amounts of fly-tips in tonnages as various crews, not just hot spot crews, attended fly-tip clearances. The Chair considered it would be useful to receive a breakdown of fly-tipping incidents by area.
- It was acknowledged that Councils had fewer resources than ever, therefore, smarter ways of working and providing services were required. The Local Environment and Quality Survey (BVP199) was to be revived which would score streets in Middlesbrough for fly-tipping, litter, detritus, etc. The information could be used to direct resources where they were most needed. The introduction of the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system in the Council's Contact Centre would also assist in providing a more intelligence-led service.
- In terms of Environment Services contributing to the Council's corporate objectives, this would be achieved through the following strands:-
  - Ensuring Business Efficiency and Delivery.
  - Enabling Physical Regeneration. (eg attracting investors to Middlesbrough, improving perceptions of the town)
  - Enabling Social Regeneration. (eg making people feel better about their communities, promote the importance of environmental issues, enforcement alongside education to enhance life chances and enhance environment).
- The Service also planned to focus on the Mayor's agenda to promote better Member and customer engagement by listening to residents and prioritising what mattered to them.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their attendance and the information provided. The Officers left the meeting whilst the Panel held a discussion in relation to which areas it wished to receive further information on.

Following discussion, the Panel agreed that at its next meeting it wished to receive further information in relation to enforcement, fixed penalty notices/prosecution, fly-tipping incidents and how they are reported and responded to, back alley cleaning and junk job collections and current pricing structure.

**AGREED** as follows:-

1. That the information provided be noted.
2. That the appropriate Officers from Environment and Commercial Services be invited to the next meeting of the Panel to provide further information, as listed above, in relation to enforcement activity, fly tipping and junk job collections.

#### **UPDATE ON THE PANEL'S 2017/18 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair provided a verbal update in relation to the Panel's 2017/18 Work Programme. At its meeting on 24 July 2017, the Panel agreed to include the topic of 'Affordable Warmth' on its Work Programme, however, following consultation with all Panel Members it was considered that this issue was adequately covered by a variety of other forums, involving the Council, and that it would be withdrawn from the Work Programme.

**AGREED** that the topic of Affordable Warmth be withdrawn from the Environment Scrutiny Panel's 2017/18 Work Programme.

#### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update to the Panel in relation to the business conducted at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12 September 2017, namely:-

- Scrutiny Panels' Work Programmes.

- Executive Forward Work Programme.
- Scrutiny Panels' Progress Report (verbal update).

**AGREED** that the information provided be noted.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Panel was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 12 October 2017 at 1.30pm.