

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 8(d)

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

19 AUGUST 2014

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| <p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - PROGRESS REPORT</p> |
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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) with an update on the work of the Environment Scrutiny Panel.

BACKGROUND

2. Since the last report to OSB, the Environment Scrutiny Panel has met on one occasion on 11 August 2014.
3. At that meeting the Assistant Director for Environment, Property and Commercial Services and Streetscene Services Manager were in attendance to provide the Panel with a setting the scene presentation on the topic of the 'Maintenance of Open Spaces'.
4. Information was provided to the Panel on a number of issues including:-
 - Background information on the Council's current service standards
 - Changes to the Council's service standards as a result of budget cuts in recent years
 - The impact of the budget cuts on the cleanliness and overall appearance of the town.
5. The Panel was advised that the net budget for Area Care/Waste in 2014/2015 is £5.110m and that since 2012 the budget has been reduced by £1.433m. This represents a budget cut of 22%, however, as Waste Collection could not be reduced substantially a higher proportion of the cuts have fallen on Area Care.

6. The effect of the budget cuts has been a reduction of 42 FTE's including 36 Front Line Operatives, the apprenticeship programme has been suspended and annual service frequencies have been affected.
7. It was noted that over the last two years there has been a visible decline in overall standards of grounds maintenance, which is recognisable by the appearance of grassed areas both before and after cutting, and the reduction in floral displays around the town.
8. Comparator information was also presented and it was noted that Stockton Borough Council has maintained a commitment to maintain standards and to continue to cut their grassed areas 16 times per year. Hartlepool has in fact increased the frequency of grass cutting but at the expense of floral displays.
9. Following receipt of the information above the panel expressed the view that there were a number of areas they wished to investigate further as part of this review and a paper detailing the scope of the review would be presented at the next meeting.
10. In addition to the above the Assistant Director for Environment, Property and Commercial Services also provided the panel with an overview of the work undertaken to date to determine the most advantageous delivery model for streetscene services in Middlesbrough, which has been identified as a 'big ticket item' in the Council's Change Programme.

RECOMMENDATION

11. That the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the content of the report and the updated position.

COUNCILLOR PETER PURVIS

**CHAIR OF THE ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY PANEL**

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