

FOR: COUNCIL MEETING

24th FEBRUARY 2014

AGENDA ITEM 9

(YELLOW ENCLOSURE)

**REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES, LEISURE, COMMUNICATIONS
AND TOURISM (OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

PRESENT Councillors Mrs Tranter (Chairman), Isaacs (Vice-Chairman) Pullen (Vice-Chairman) Bacon, Mrs Constable, Mrs Hancocks, Hogan, Mosson, Willis-Croft, Walker MBE and Yeates.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were received from Councillor Derrick.

(In accordance with Council Procedure No. 17 Councillor A.F.Smith also attended the meeting.)

At the meeting of the Operational Services, Leisure, Communications and Tourism (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on 9th January 2014 the following matters were considered:

1. THE CONTROL OF DOGS IN PARKS
--

- 1.1 The Committee received a report on the issues associated with introducing Orders to control dogs within the Council's parks and open spaces. It was reported that some Members had received complaints and so the Regulatory and Licensing Committee had requested that the matter be considered by this Committee. It was also reported that there were a number of options available and it was planned to commence a public consultation on a preferred choice.
- 1.2 It was reported that most complaints received were regarding dog fouling and Members noted that there were already adequate enforcement powers to fine and prosecute people who fail to clean up dog faeces. It was also reported that the Police have powers to deal with a dog that attacks a person under the Dangerous Dogs Act.
- 1.3 It was reported that there were already By-laws for Lichfield parks but not for ones in Burntwood. To create an Order would cost approximately £5k. Members felt that there should be equality between the areas.
- 1.4 When asked, it was reported that there had been nine fixed penalties and two prosecutions for dog fouling and that it seemed to only be a small group of dog walkers who refused to clean up faeces that were causing the problems now. Members asked if Staffordshire County Council were responsible for clearing fouling on footpaths as more complaints could be received when the new terms start at schools. It was agreed to investigate this further.
- 1.5 Members felt dog only areas in parks where they were allowed off leads could be useful along with children's play areas being fenced off and it was agreed to investigate this further. Members also felt that education and informing dog owners of their responsibilities was key.
- 1.6 Overall Members felt that most problems experienced with dogs were already covered by other legislation but agreed that a consultation to seek the views of other organisations and the public would be helpful.

- 1.7 Members requested that that the recommendation be amended and the consultation be focused on identifying where Control Orders 'may be needed' not 'most needed'.
- 1.8 Members resolved that
- (1) That the report be noted;
 - (2) That the proposals to establish and implement a consultation programme that would help identify where Control Orders may be needed; and
 - (3) That the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks report back to the Committee at the conclusion of the consultation exercise with the findings and proposals.

2. MID YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT – ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN

- 2.1 Members received a report on the progress against the activities and projects set out in the District Council's One Year Action Plan for 13/14. It was reported that the Fit for the Future programme had been developed since the One Year Action Plan for 13/14 was approved and annual savings from 2014/15 of c£500,000 had been implemented.
- 2.2 Members asked why Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Fazeley and Bourne Vale was shown as one area in the report as it gave the impression ASB was higher in Bourne Vale than it actually was. It was reported that the data was shown as it was given to the District Council by external organisations and it was agreed that a full breakdown of ASB in areas be sent to Members.
- 2.3 Some Members felt the report did not have enough detail in it and it was agreed that if Members required further information, it would be sent to them.
- 2.4 The report was noted.

3. DIRECTORATE TOP 10 AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING – 14/15

- 3.1 Members received a report on the top 10 issues which would be facing the Leisure and Parks Directorate in 2014/15 as well as the activity and performance indicators for the Directorate which would be reported to the Committee in June 2014 (outturn for 13/14) and January (mid year performance for 14/15).
- 3.2 It was reported that the top ten issues were what was planned for the forthcoming year but was not an exclusive list nor in order of priority.
- 3.3 Members asked when the subsidies for the Garrick Theatre would end and it was reported that the 2017/18 subsidy would be agreed by February 2015 and it was intended and anticipated that the subsidy to the Garrick would reduce over time.
- 3.4 Members then asked for an update as to introducing a charging policy for public toilets and it was reported that a business case was being prepared and would be shared with the Committee for their consideration in due course.
- 3.5 Members felt that there needed to be more detail in the report as well as information on the capacity of the directorate to what it is now to be able to judge if there is enough resources to carry out the activities planned. It was reported that the Service Plans included much of the detail required and the Chairman expressed the need for Members to attend Service Plan meetings.
- 3.6 The report was noted.

4. FIT FOR THE FUTURE SERVICE REVIEW – PARKS, GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND COUNTRYSIDE

- 4.1 The Committee received a report on the progress made to date in reviewing the Council's parks, Grounds Maintenance and Countryside services as part of Phase 2 of the Fit for the Future Programme (F4F).
- 4.2 It was reported that because Parks and Ground Maintenance were now under the same Directorate, there was some inevitable overlap and that the service review would help identify these and for the service become more effective.
- 4.3 It was then reported that in order to compare the current performance, the Council had signed up to the benchmarking forum of the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE). It was also reported that advice had been sought from APSE as to how things could be done differently to deliver service improvements and cost effectiveness.
- 4.4 Members asked how better use of IT could help the services become more efficient and it was reported that currently rangers hand wrote reports on site then duplicated the work by typing them up at a later date and it was being investigated if mobile technology could save time.
- 4.5 Members felt that there needed to be more detail in the report as well as information on the capacity of the directorate to what it is now to be able to judge if there is enough resources to carry out the activities planned. It was reported that the Service Plans included much of the detail required and the Chairman expressed the need for Members to attend Service Plan meetings.
- 4.6 Members felt uncomfortable with the use of benchmarking as it doesn't take into account the objectives of the District Council but it was reported that APSE was a widely recognised organisation. Members asked if there was a cost to using APSE and it was reported that the cost was £4800.
- 4.7 It was resolved that
- (1) That the report be noted; and
 - (2) That the emerging Project Initiation Document be endorsed.

5. MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES FOR THE COUNCIL'S TREE STOCK

- 5.1 The Committee received a report seeking endorsement of the tree management procedures adopted and employed by the Council's Parks team. It was reported that there were approximately 30,000 trees within the Council's parks and open spaces and that suggestions and requests for work to be undertaken were increasingly being received.
- 5.2 It was reported that a district wide survey was undertaken in 2007 of all tree stock and guidance and procedures to identify and prioritise works were introduced. It was reported that in recent months, requests for work to be undertaken had risen and when they had been declined as not deemed a high priority, the request had escalated to a complaint. It was reported that on occasions, the Council allowed works to trees by residents at their own cost and subject to agreement by the Council's Arboricultural Officers. It was noted that residents already had the right to prune back branches if they overhung their property. It was reported that trees that were subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or in a Conservation Area had a higher level of protection and consent for any work was required.

- 5.3 Members were advised that the Council had no power to carry out works on Bromford Housing sites.
- 5.4 Members asked if there had been any insurance claims against the Council and it was reported that there had been some threatened but none had been paid. It was also reported that the procedures had been audited and deemed fine for payment. Members noted that there were only three current complaints.
- 5.5 Members asked how many high and medium risk trees there were and it was reported that a new survey was required to collate this data and, although a high cost to the Council, had already been budgeted for.
- 5.6 Members felt that the current guidance and procedures to manage works to the tree stock was satisfactory and working well.
- 5.6 It was agreed that the Service's tree management procedures be noted and endorsed.

6. SERVICE REVIEW MEETINGS - FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The Committee fed back the outcomes of the Service Plan meetings held in December 2013. It was reported that since the meeting, the Cabinet Member had obtained contact details for Members to complain to Bromford regarding street cleaning work and litter picking on their sites.
- 6.2 Members also noted that the new Cabinet Member would look at the arrangements for grounds maintenance in Burntwood's closed churchyards, especially as the service was now with the Parks department.
- 6.3 It was reported that regarding the Leisure and Parks Directorate, Members emphasised the importance of engaging with disability groups and schools and promoting healthy lifestyles and exercise. It was also reported that Members considered that cardiac rehab scheme as very important but recognised that it was reliant on the Health Service providing a trained nurse and this was the reason the scheme was only available at Friary Grange.
- 6.4 The information received was noted.

7. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

- 7.1 Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme and Council's Forward Plan and it was agreed to have an item for the January meeting on dog control in parks on the work programme
- 7.2 It was agreed to have an item on the Leisure Services Review and updates on the Skatepark and Parks Grounds Maintenance and Countryside Service Review added to the Work Programme.

Mrs H. Tranter
Chairman
Operational Services, Leisure, Parks and Play (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee