

FOR: COUNCIL MEETING
8 JULY 2014
AGENDA ITEM 10
(YELLOW ENCLOSURE)

**REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF, LEISURE, PARKS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT
(OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

PRESENT Councillors Mrs Tranter (Chairman), Mynott (Vice-Chairman), Tittley (Vice-Chairman), Awty, Bacon, Mrs Boyle, Mrs Evans, Mrs Hancocks, Isaacs, Mosson and Pearce.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were received from Councillors Mrs Constable and Yeates

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

At the meeting of the Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on 18th June 2014 the following matters were considered:

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1.1 As it was the first meeting of the municipal year, the Members received the Terms of Reference for the Committee. It was agreed to amend the Terms of Reference to remove mention to services no longer provided by the District Council.

2. END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW 2013/14
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- 2.1 The Committee received a report on progress against the activities and projects set out in the District Council's One Year Action Plan. It was reported that there had been some notable highlights over the past year including the construction of the Skatepark, refurbishment of wetside changing rooms at Friary Grange Leisure Centre and ongoing support to the Lichfield Garrick.
- 2.2 Members asked what could be done regarding litter at the skatepark as Ward Councillors were receiving complaints and it was reported that Park Rangers regularly patrolled the site and litter picked and the majority of users were looking after the area. It was reported that the skatepark had been well received and was well used by people from outside the District as well as local young people. It was noted that District Council liaised continuously with residents during planning and construction and no Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) had been reported. Members were reminded to notify the Parks team if there were any problems so they could be rectified promptly.
- 2.3 Members asked why the ASB target, associated with the Positive Futures programme, had not been met. It was reported that the District Council had asked the Safer Community Partnership for reasons for the ASB increases and were awaiting a response. It was suggested that the Police Inspector be invited to a forthcoming meeting to discuss what more could be done to help reduce ASB in the area.

- 2.4 Members asked when the handover of Hawksyard would be taking place and it was reported that it would be after the bridge is installed.
- 2.5 It was reported that work on investigating installing ground source heat pumps at Burntwood Leisure Centre had started and would be progressed in due course.
- 2.6 Members had concerns with the state of grass roadside verges in the District and it was reported that the District Council cut the grass on behalf of Staffordshire County Council with a contract to do so 8 times a year. It was reported that cutting started late this year as the County Council were late instructing the council. It was noted that nothing else apart from this had changed from previous years. It was also noted that the District Council do not cut grass on behalf of Bromford Housing. Members were concerned at the lack of maintenance by Bromford Housing. It was suggested that Bromford Housing be invited to a future meeting to discuss this. Members noted that verges needed to be kept tidy to aid tourism.
- 2.6 Members noted that there were some issues with the wetside flooring at Friary Grange Leisure Centre which was being managed and dealt with.
- 2.7 Members asked for more information regarding the added value given from grants and Service Level Agreements in the reports in the future.
- 2.8 Members noted that the County Council had deferred their decisions regarding recycling sites in the District and felt usage of the centres needed to be recorded to prove how popular they are to help prove their need.
- 2.9 The report was noted.

3. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS – 2013/14

- 3.1 Members received a report on the complaints and compliments received corporately during the last financial year along with a more detailed analysis of those with specific reference to the remit of the Committee.
- 3.2 It was reported that there was a three stage complaints process with the complainant having the opportunity to make representation to the Local Government Ombudsman if still not satisfied after stage 3.
- 3.3 It was then reported that there had been 19 complaints regarding the leisure and Parks service with 15 being resolved at stage 1 and four at stage 3. It was noted that one complaint concerning the skatepark was escalated to the Ombudsman but it was determined that the Council was not at fault.
- 3.4 Members asked if the result of a complaint called for training, if it was offered to all Officers or just the one involved and it was reported that it would be offered to all if beneficial to do so.
- 3.5 Members felt compliments should be recorded too and it was noted that any compliment received was shared with Officers and the Cabinet Member. The Committee requested that compliments received be added to the report in future. Members also requested that the outcome of complaints be reported too.
- 3.6 The report was noted.

4. UPDATE ON THE CHANGES TO THE ORGANIC WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE DUE IN OCTOBER 2014

- 4.1 The Committee received a report updating Members on progress to make necessary changes to the service by the deadline of October 2014. It was reported that a communications plan was in place to ensure residents understood the changes and knew which bin to start using for food waste. It was noted that leaflets would be delivered to every household along with bin stickers put on every brown and black bin as well as vehicle graphics on the trucks. Examples of these were given to the Committee. It was also noted that there would be press releases, a feature in 'In Touch' magazine as well as a website. Members noted that the communications plan would commence at the end of June to ensure the October deadline is fully met.
- 4.2 Members asked if information on what organic waste could be composted that would not encourage rats could also be communicated, as some residents didn't know, and it was agreed that this could be added to the website.
- 4.3 Members asked if Officers would be checking bins and it was reported that there would be some Officers checking and helping residents make the changes but it would be for the short term only to ensure there was no cross contamination.
- 4.4 Members suggested that if any leaflets were left over after delivery to households, they be given to Parish and Town Councils and at events like the Burntwood Wakes.
- 4.5 Councillor Awty notified the Committee that as Chairman of the Parish Forum, he would bring this information to their attention.
- 4.6 The Committee were pleased with progress made and the planned communications with residents.
- 4.7 The report was noted.

5. THE CONTROL OF DOGS IN PARKS

- 5.1 The Committee received a report on the responses to the recent consultation to assess the extent of problems with out of control dogs in parks in the District and level of support for introducing Dog Control Orders or other restrictions.
- 5.2 It was reported that there had been 350 submissions to the on-line 'Voice It' survey with at least 77% being dog owners. It was reported that 69% did not support the idea of Dog Control Orders but 75% did feel that dogs should be barred from children's play areas.
- 5.3 It was also reported that the local Policing Team had been consulted and they indicated that there were no current concerns regarding the number of incidents. The Police also indicated that if a trend were to occur, they would notice it and with a recent change in legislation they now had the ability to prosecute owners who allowed their dogs to be dangerously out of control. It was noted that along with the Police, a number of other organisations had also been approached and responded to the consultation including Burntwood Town Council and Friends of Lichfield Historic Parks.
- 5.4 A number of proposals had been identified following the findings of the consultation including the restriction of access for dogs to the Council's junior play sites, authorising Parks staff to challenge the owners of out of control dogs and if not done

so, ask for the dog to be removed from the park, and to improve information available in parks and on the website.

- 5.5 Overall, Members felt there was now enough legislation to allow the Police to deal with any problems without Dog Control Orders or By-laws but agreed that dogs should be kept away from play areas. Members also felt that the penalties for offences should be publicised. It was considered that dog fouling was still an issue as well and signs for this needed to be replaced and updated.
- 5.6 The Committee resolved the following:
- a) the contents of the report be noted;
 - b) the results of the consultation programme be noted;
 - c) the proposal to restrict access for dogs to the council's junior play sites by way of signs and fences be endorsed;
 - d) the proposal to remind park rangers and attendants that they have the authority to challenge the owners of out-of-control dogs, to request that dogs are brought under control, and if this is not done, to ask the dog to be removed from the park to be endorsed;
 - e) the proposal to improve information available in parks and on the website about keeping dogs under control and how to report dog related issues be endorsed;
 - f) there appears to be insufficient evidence of such an extensive problem of out-of-control dogs that would justify pursuing Dog Control Orders; and
 - g) the existing and new powers available to the Police to investigate and prosecute owners whose dogs are permitted to be out-of-control be noted.

6. MANAGING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AT BURNTWOOD LEISURE CENTRE

- 6.1 The Committee received a report on the recent levels of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) experienced at Burntwood Leisure Centre and the operational procedures in place to reduce the number and the effects on customers, staff and facilities.
- 6.2 It was reported that there had been, for many years, periods of ASB at the centre especially in the winter months. It was also reported that to respond to this, measures had been taken including the installation of CCTV and turnstiles and at times the employment of door supervisors. It was then reported that the Safer Community Partnership and the Police were concentrating on reducing the problems and 12 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts had been issued as a starting point. Members asked if there was support given to those with Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and it was noted that Officers would report back with information.
- 6.3 It was noted that the Positive Futures programme, which was now funded through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, was based at the leisure centre and designed to encourage young people most at risk of becoming involved in ASB or other criminal behaviour to take part in sporting and physical activity and to divert them from risk-taking behaviour.
- 6.4 Members asked what the age range of the people involved in the ASB was and it was reported that it was between the ages of 13 to 18. When asked, it was reported that it was up to the Safer Community Partnership to work with local schools to help address issues and the District Council would raise the suggestion with them.

- 6.5 Members commented that at times, the access gate inside the centre and the gates to the synthetic pitches were open and it was reported that the gate was open at times where there was a lot of traffic entering or exiting the reception area like swimming classes.
- 6.6 Members asked if the data of the incidents logged was correct as there were some inconsistency with other data and it was reported that the amount of official calls to the Police was correct although Officers had informally talked to PCSO's in the area more regularly in the past.
- 6.7 Members felt that the reduction in facilities in Burntwood was a large contributing factor and the loss of youth centres could compound this.
- 6.8 Members agreed to invite the local Police Inspector to talk about what else could be done to help.
- 6.9 The report was noted.

7. FIT FOR THE FUTURE SERVICE REVIEW – LEISURE SERVICES

- 7.1 The Committee received a report on the proposals to initiate and complete the service review for the council's Leisure operations including the three leisure centres, sports development and sports facilities in the parks.
- 7.2 It was reported that although the centres generated an income, overall the service was delivered at a cost to the Council. It was reported that due to this, one option that would be explored would be to seek a private sector operator to run the centres on behalf of the District Council. It was noted that other neighbouring Local Authorities had outsourced their leisure service and their experiences would be drawn upon.
- 7.3 Members asked if the ground lease at Burntwood Leisure Centre would be affected if the service was outsourced and it was reported that the lease had been checked and it would not be as the nature of the site would not change.
- 7.4 Members then asked if people would still be able to access affordable leisure and it was reported that it was anticipated that protecting access for target groups would be at the heart of any contract offered.
- 7.5 Members noted that leisure facilities including the provision swimming pools had been included in the Local Plan.
- 7.6 Members felt that other ways of making savings should still be explored and the results of the District wide Fit for the Future survey should be considered.
- 7.7 Members noted that this report was as an introduction to the Service Review and more detailed reports would be forthcoming in due course.
- 7.8 The report was noted.

8. FIT FOR THE FUTURE SERVICE REVIEW UPDATE – PARKS GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND COUNTRYSIDE

- 8.1 The Committee received a report on the progress made in reviewing the Council's parks, Grounds Maintenance and Countryside services as part of Phase 2 of Fit for the Future.
- 8.2 It was reported that key actions had been identified and delegated to lead Officers. It was also reported what progress had been taken to date.
- 8.3 It was reported that it had become apparent that there were different data sets on the ownerships of open space but this had been rectified and it was agreed to circulate plans when completed.
- 8.4 Members had some concern that transfer of Parks to Parish Council could cause problems as they were also experiencing financial difficulties and they could just end up having to put up their Council Tax precepts. It was reported that parks would only be offered for transfer to Parish Councils if they desired.
- 8.5 Members also had concerns of the potential closure of public toilets in Chasetown as it could discourage people from visiting the area and so affecting retail businesses.

PROCEDURE RULE 9 WAS SUSPENDED TO ALLOW THE MEETING TO CONTINUE AFTER 9.00PM

- 8.6 Members asked if the bowling clubs were in agreement to take on the greens in Chasetown, Chase Terrace and Beacon Park and it was reported that there had been a mixed reaction but Uxbridge, who play at Chasetown, were particularly keen.
- 8.7 The report was noted.

9. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

- 9.1 Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme and Council's Forward Plan and was noted.

Mrs H. Tranter
Chairman
Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee