

# Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

## Minutes - 14 April 2016

### Attendance

#### Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Ian Angus (Chair)  
Cllr Val Evans  
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal  
Cllr Malcolm Gwinnett  
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Keith Inston  
Cllr Lynne Moran  
Cllr John Rowley  
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz  
Cllr Andrew Wynne

#### In Attendance

Cllr Steve Evans – Cabinet Member for City Environment

#### Employees

Ross Cook	Service Director, City Environment
Andy Jervis	Head of Regulatory Services
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Steve Woodward	Head of Service Public Realm

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*    *Title*

- 1**        **Apologies**  
There were no apologies recorded for the meeting.
- 2**        **Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest recorded.
- 3**        **Minutes of the previous meeting (11 February 2016)**  
That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4**        **Matters arising**  
Minute 5 – Review of Age Designation on Council Flats.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that an interim public communication plan was sent to all panel members.

## Minute 9 – Improving the City Offer Housing Company Outline Business Case

The Scrutiny Officer advised that meetings of the Council steering group for the local housing company will be arranged before the end of July 2016.

### 5 **Keeping the City clean**

Ross Cook, Service Director – City Environment, introduced the report and commented on the positive first impressions of the city. The Service Director commented on the improvements in the service and the high ratings from customers.

The panel discussed a range of issues linked to the issue of fly tipping and the work that the service is doing to help keep the City clean. The panel commented on the overall positive experience of using the Councils ReportIt app and the service more generally in dealing with litter complaints.

Steve Evans, Cabinet Member for City Environment, welcomed the positive comments but accepted that the experience of people who have used the reporting system has not always work in all situations. The Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that the system will be upgraded to ensure that people get a prompt response and will be more user friendly.

The panel discussed the issues linked to fly tipping. The panel welcomed the display of warning street signs about fly tipping and despite early reservations about its impact; evidence has shown that it has helped to reduce the problem. The panel discussed the Council policy towards prosecuting offenders for fly tipping. Andy Jervis, Head of Regulatory Services, explained the Council has used intelligence from cameras to prosecute offenders.

The Head of Regulatory Services explained that two cases have been successfully prosecuted in court recently, two more have been approved and a further four to six cases were in the final stages of investigation.

The Head of Regulatory Services acknowledged that the level of fines is low, but the Council does seek maximum fines. The issue of fines does get press publicity which helps to get a message out that the Council is prepared to prosecute. However, the Council is selective when making a decision to investigate as it will involve the detailed collection of supporting evidence which is very resource intensive so only those cases with a realistic prospect of conviction are pursued.

In relation to litter, fixed penalties are issued for the vast majority of offences and the majority of people who are given fixed penalty notices for littering pay within 30 days.

The Cabinet Member for City Environment suggested that the panel would find it useful to visit City Direct to see how reports and complaints about litter are dealt with. The panel welcomed the idea of the visit. The scrutiny officer to make the necessary arrangements for the visit.

The panel discussed the fly tipping of goods such as fridges and if there was a link to the change in opening hours at recycling centre.

The Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that there is no obvious link between the dumping of specific goods and changes to opening hours. The situation is similar across other regions in the West Midlands.

The panel queried if the quality of the collection service has led to increased budget pressure and also encouraged people to use it as alternative to paying for the collection and disposal of large goods. The speed of rubbish collection was highlighted as a possible factor behind the increased report of fly tipping.

Steve Woodward, Head of Public Realm, explained that the Council charges a fee for the collection of five household items. The panel discussed the significant increase in number of enquiries about fly tipping since 2012/13 and the possible reasons.

The Head of Public Realm commented that the decline in the scrap value of white goods and stricter regulations about their disposal may be the reason behind the increase in the number of enquiries received. The Head of Public Realm explained the options available to the Council to deal with fly tipping on private land. The Head of Public Realm explained that the Council will consider cases carefully where rubbish has been illegally dumped on private or commercial land.

The Head of Regulatory Services explained that cameras are used to monitor the dumping of rubbish in known hotspots, but due to limited resources they will be located in high crime areas. The panel discussed the use of fake cameras by the Council to cover other areas.

The panel discussed the need for education for new residents, who may not understand the process for disposing of rubbish in the different collection bins. The panel suggested that stickers could be used on bins to people who have arrived from outside the UK what they should do.

The panel discussed the issue of complaints about rubbish being dumped outside flats. The panel suggested that a report on the landlord accreditation scheme could be added to a future agenda.

The panel welcomed the increase in the reported customer satisfaction rates for the grass cutting service. The panel wanted to record its thanks to the employees for the quality of the service. The Head of Public Realm briefed the panel on the work done to prepare for the programme of grass cutting needed to deliver a better service.

#### Resolved

1. The panel welcomed the progress made to keep the City clean and wanted to formally congratulate employees in the service about the high standard of their work.
2. The scrutiny officer to arrange a tour of City Direct to meet employees and to see how enquiries are dealt with.
3. A report on the effectiveness of the landlord accreditation scheme to be presented to a future meeting of the panel.