

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 3 December 2015

Attendance

Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Chair)
Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Andrew Wynne

Employees

Nick Alderman	Service Director - City Environment
Martin Fox	Finance Business Partner
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Chris East	Head of Facilities

In attendance

Cllr Peter Bilson	Cabinet Member for City Assets
Cllr Steve Evans	Cabinet Member for City Environment

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

In the absence of Cllr Angus the meeting was chaired by Cllr Haynes

- 1 Chair announcement**
Cllr Haynes and the panel wanted to record their congratulations and best wishes to Cllr Angus following the birth of his son.
- 2 Apologies**
Apologies were received from the following member(s) of the panel:

Cllr Ian Angus
Cllr Keith Inston
Cllr Lynne Moran

3 **Declarations of interest**

Cllr Phillip Bateman declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 Budget Review Draft Budget 2016/17

4 **Minutes of the previous meeting (1.10.15)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1.10.15 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

6 **Budget Review - Draft Budget 2016/17**

City Assets

Cllr Peter Bilson, Cabinet Member for City Assets, gave a brief introduction to the report and invited panel members to comment on the proposals related to his portfolio summarised in Appendix A, B and C.

The panel discussions about the proposals were recorded as follows:

Transfer non HRA tenanted garages from HRA to General Fund

No panel comments on the proposal

Rationalise all catering across the Council

Cabinet Member for City Assets commented that he was confident that the savings could be achieved.

No panel comments on the proposal.

Review Public Conveniences Provision

Cabinet Member for City Assets outlined the proposals and explained that the change would not affect the toilet facilities at Bob Jones Community Hub.

The panel queried the proposed increase in the charge to use toilet facilities. Chris East, Head of Facilities, explained that the proposal is to recommend an increase in the charge from 10p to 20p. The plans involve the closure of toilet facilities at Ashmore Park due to low levels of number using the facility compared to other sites. The panel commented that in response to complaints about vandalism that access to the facility was managed by a shop owner on the site, which may explain the low numbers recorded. The panel commented that the facility is an important community asset and is helping the shops to attract people.

Cabinet Member for City Assets agreed to reconsider the proposal to close the toilet facility at Ashmore Park in response the comments of the panel.

Highways Maintenance – Reduction in Borrowing following successful grant bid

Cabinet Member for City Assets outlined the proposal.

No panel comments on the proposal.

Acceleration of Savings in Facilities Management

Cabinet Member for City Assets outlined the proposal.

No panel comments on the proposal.

Reprofile of School Meals Income Targets

Cabinet Member for City Assets outlined the proposal and explained that the charge would be a charge direct to schools and not on pupils. Cabinet Member explained that this change would represent a small increase in the current charge.

No panel comments on the proposal.

The panel thanked Cllr Bilson for attending the meeting.

Cllr Steve Evans, Cabinet Member for City Environment, gave a brief introduction to the report and invited panel members to comment on the proposals related to his portfolio summarised in Appendix A, B and C.

The panel discussions about the proposals were recorded as follows:

Highways Management

Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that this change is the next phase in a programme of work following the transfer of responsibility from the police to the local authority. The panel were advised that the scheme went live on 30.11.15. Cabinet Member for City Environment explained the circumstances were a fixed penalty notice would apply for people using bus lane which had been recorded by the camera. To date there had no successful appeals against the penalty notice due to the use of video recording evidence.

Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that bus lane cameras only apply to small number of roads. Service Director - City Environment explained that the number of vehicles caught using the bus lane had reduced from 3,000 per week to 1,700 since it was introduced. The enforcement policy was aimed at improving traffic flow and not generating income.

The panel queried the number of fines paid and unpaid since the scheme was introduced. Service Director - City Environment explained that about 70% of fines had been paid and the Council works hard to recover the debt, this will include the use of bailiffs. Service Director - City Environment agreed to provide details of the payment rates for traffic fines.

Review residential parking across wider New Cross area

Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that the proposed changes would affect parking at the rear of the hospital site. The Cabinet Member advised that in response to previous residents parking complaints there was a consultation on the introduction of residents parking permit scheme. However, it was not possible to devise a scheme that would meet the concerns of residents on the limits on parking space for visitors and or family members. The proposal is an alternative scheme which will be subsidised by funding from the introduction of a pay and display parking scheme for non-residents.

The panel discussed the areas to be covered by the scheme. The panel were advised that it was estimated that 60 properties would be affected by the introduction of a pay and display parking scheme. Cabinet Member for City Environment acknowledged the concerns of local residents about the problems caused by parking. The panel sought reassurance that the scheme would not applied too rigidly in the dedicated parking spaces –for example, the period that charges will apply.

The panel discussed the impact of parking problems on the 59 bus service which often experience frequent delays as a result. The panel commented on the need to consider the travel needs of people using the bus service

Carry out a phase two restructure within the Highways Service Street Lighting

No panel comments on the proposal.

Alternative Environmental Enforcement Trial

Cabinet Member for City Environment explained the work of Kingdom Security in tackling problems of dog fouling and litter in the city. Cabinet Member commented on the media interest in the service. At present 70% of people pay their spot fines within the dates specified to avoid payment of a larger fine. A recent case led to a hearing in the courts where the decision was upheld and the original fine increased to £770 to cover costs and charges.

The panel queried that in the past Neighbourhood Wardens reported incidents of litter and public nuisance across the city, particularly in open green spaces. The incidents were then reported back to the Council to get the matter dealt with. Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that there is flexibility about where the resources are used. The current scheme is a 12 month trial and the work is not restricted to the specific areas and staff from Kingdom Security will be directed in response to public complaints.

Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that he is open to suggestions about use of staff from Kingdom Security.

Surface water management

No panel comments on the proposal.

Provision of Urban Traffic Control services for Walsall Borough Council

Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that he had recently visited the control room. Cabinet Member commented on the benefits of being able to co-ordinate the service and suggested that panel should arrange to visit to control room to see it in operation.

Amendments to Regulatory Services Operations

The panel commented on the reputation of the consumer advice service offered by Wolverhampton Council and the success of previous campaigns. The panel were concerned about loss of expertise.

Cabinet Member for City Environment commented that the recent evidence from fraud operations involving different agencies showed a reduction in the amount of seized counterfeit goods when compared to past campaigns.

Cabinet Member commented that he did not think that the change would have an impact on the delivery of the service.

Reconfiguration of Play Areas

The panel expressed supported for the provision of local play provision and the importance of considering the implications. Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that the planned review will look at the possibility of consolidating existing play provision from more than one site to a single location. The aim is to provide quality local play provision with lower maintenance costs and enhance provision.

Review of the employee structure for the Market Service

Cabinet Member for City Environment referred to the previous report presented to the panel on proposed changes to the market service. The proposal will involve the deletion of a vacant post.

No panel comments on the proposal.

Reduction in Waste Disposal Costs

The panel queried the lack of lack of green waste collection in the winter months and whether the period could be extended to those areas that make high use of the service. The panel discussed the policy of Birmingham to introduce an annual green waste collection charge and alternative options that would meet the needs of residents. Cabinet Member for City Environment explained the financial and practical difficulties of moving away from a city wide service to a service based on demand from areas wanting a green waste collection service during the winter months.

Grounds Maintenance reductions and efficiencies in service

No panel comments on the proposal.

One-off transport savings

No panel comments on the proposal.

Maintenance across City Environment Services Public Realm Environmental Maintenance

No panel comments on the proposal.

Street Lighting – replacement of existing street lanterns with more efficient LED technology

The panel discussed the costs and savings as a result of the policy. Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that there is no plan to turn off street lights. Cabinet Member for City Environment explained the programme to replace existing lights

does present a risk as future advances in technology may offer bigger future savings in energy costs.

Fleet review of capital spend profile of Vehicle Replacement Programme

Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that the policy is aimed at getting more use out of the existing fleet and to arrange maintenance programme of vehicles based on their condition.

No comments on the proposal.

Increase income targets for WV Active

Cabinet Member for City Environment commented on the success of WV Active programme and the focus on offering courses that meet the needs of customers. Cabinet Member commented on the positive marketing campaign to encourage people to use the facilities.

West Park Conservatory – alternative service provision

The panel commented on the historical heritage of the site and possible alternative uses. The panel suggested that it would be help to have a champion that could promote interest in the site and public awareness. Cabinet Member for City Environment commented that ideas for alternative use such as wedding venue would be welcomed.

Review of Stray Dog procedures and charges

The panel discussed the number of incidents reported about stray dogs. Cabinet Member for City Environment explained that the policy was aimed at supporting responsible dog ownership. The owners of stray dogs should be expected to contribute to the costs of Council providing the service when a dog is looked after before being returned.

Review School Crossing Patrols

Service Director - City Environment explained that it is not a statutory responsibility to provide this service. The planned review will look to identify priority sites. Schools will be given the option to continue financing the service if following the review it is considered to be low priority.

Review Allotment Costs

The panel queried the current annual cost of the service. The current charge is £24 a year and is proposed that this figure is increased to £38. Service Director - City Environment explained that the charges had not been increased by five years. The panel discussed the merits of freezing charges for services as opposed to annual inflation increases.

Resolved:

The panel's comments on the savings proposal are included in the report to be presented to Scrutiny Board.

The meeting closed at 19:50

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]