

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 29 September 2016

Attendance

Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Ian Angus (Chair)
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Keith Inston
Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Andrew Wynne

Employees

Chris Jones	Senior Development Officer
Colin Parr	Head of Governance
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Susan White	Section Leader
Steve Woodward	Head of Service Public Realm

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following member(s) of the panel:

Cllr Val Evans

2 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest reported.

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (30 June 2016)**

Corrections

Cllr Keith Inston apologies were not recorded for the meeting.

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 be approved, subject to the correction, and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Cllr Angus queried the late withdrawal of an agenda item for the panel meeting. Colin Parr, Head of Governance, explained that reasons should be given when a report is withdrawn and agreed to contact the relevant employee to provide a response.

Resolved:

Head of Governance to contact service for a reason for the late withdrawal of the report and to advise the panel.

5 **Reclamation of Lunt Road/Queen Street Wasteland (next to Bilston Town Football Ground) (Bilston East Ward)**

Cllr Angus advised the panel that the lead petitioner Graham Hodson had given his apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting as planned.

Susan White, Service Lead, briefed the panel about the background to the petition. The Service Lead advised that Council has taken enforcement action against the land owner in response to complaints about fly tipping which had resulted in the site being recently cleared. The Council will continue to monitor the site to check that it is being maintained. The Service Lead advised that the Council were not aware of the specific complaints detailed in the petition before it was submitted.

The public protection team will take appropriate action to investigate complaints. The team continue to have discussions with owner of the land about the site.

The panel were reassured that the public protection team will continue to monitor the situation.

Resolved:

The panel to receive an update report from the service lead in six months on any issues with complaints about the site from residents.

6 **Children's Play Area at West Park**

Cllr Angus welcomed the petitioner Ms Montana White and explained that the process would follow the protocol as detailed in Appendix 2 of the meeting papers.

Ms White, petitioner, gave a short introduction to the reasons for submitting a petition about the children's play area at West Park. Ms White explained that she is a member of National Citizen Service and as part of the scheme participants were asked to undertake work that benefits the local community.

The issue of play provision in West Park was highlighted as issue for local parents with disabled children who could not use some of the equipment. Ms White suggested that parents would like to see changes to the play equipment – for example, adding back supports to swings to make it more accessible to more children. In total 113 people signed the petition. The petition was also posted on social media and has had a lot of positive responses to the issue highlighted.

Steve Woodward, Head of Public Realm referred to Appendix 3 in the papers which detailed the Council response to the issues raised in the petition. The Head of Public Realm explained that the play area had been partially refurbished with the aim of making all the equipment as accessible as possible for a range of children to use.

The Head of Public Realm explained the policy towards the selecting of play equipment and the consideration given to finding the balancing to giving children a challenge, and ensuring the Council meets its responsibilities to make all play equipment compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The Head of Public Realm explained that the Council will aim to enhance play provision across the City when funds allow. Typically play equipment is normally replaced after 15 years of use and decision will be made about either changing or upgrading the equipment. The Head of Public Realm explained that the public are consulted about planned changes, for example, residents were asked for their views about the plans when Ashmore Park was being refurbished.

The panel queried the provision of play equipment across the City. The Head of Public Realm responded that not all parks have the same level of play equipment. The aim of the service is to get a blend of play equipment and to refresh equipment that is safe.

The panel discussed the provision of play equipment generally and the facilities available in community centres that disabled children could use as alternative to the provision in the park.

The Head of Public Realm commented that the Council will look for possible funding opportunities to meet the cost of improving play provision. For example, S106 grant funding has been used to support improvements of play equipment in Ashmore Park.

The panel discussed the Council policy towards the buying play equipment and how issues such as cost and longevity are considered. The Head of Public Realm commented that these issues are considered and also how the needs of disabled children will be met, but agreed that it is a challenge.

The panel discussed the provision of specialist play equipment across the City in parks, open spaces designed for disabled children and also in special schools. The panel discussed how parents with disabled children can be told about the play provision that is available in their area that they could potentially use.

The panel queried the groups consulted about plans for replacing play equipment and specifically if families with disabled children were contacted to get their views. The Head of Public Realm explained that the access officer would have contacted known groups to ask for invite them to comment on the plans. The Head of Public Realm commented that there have been a lot of positive responses from the public to the changes.

The panel queried the possibility of meeting the concerns of petitioners by following up the idea of making small changes to existing play equipment to make it easier for disabled children to use. The Head of Public Realm explained that the Council has to comply with the manufacturer's installation requirements and cannot make modifications as suggested.

Ross Cook, Service Director, City Environment, thanked Ms White for bringing the issue to the Council and suggested that it might be useful to meet members of the landscape scheme to get better understanding of the factors considered when replacing play equipment.

The panel thanked Ms White for attending the meeting and for her excellent presentation.

Resolved:

1. The panel to receive an update in six months on the Council's response to the issue highlighted in the petition.
2. The service to give due regard to the needs of disabled children when considering replacing play equipment and to consult with relevant groups.
3. The service to suggest ideas for raising awareness of the provision of play equipment in different sites across Wolverhampton.

The meeting closed at 18:51