

## **ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30 pm on 29 January 2014

### **Present**

Councillor William Huntington-Thresher (Chairman)  
Councillor Samaris Huntington-Thresher (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillors Reg Adams, Peter Fookes, Julian Grainger,  
David Jefferys, Nick Milner and Catherine Rideout

### **Also Present**

Councillor Colin Smith and Councillor Peter Fortune

#### **31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were apologies from Councillor Judi Ellis and Councillor John Getgood. Councillor Peter Fookes attended as alternate for Councillor Getgood.

#### **32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations.

#### **33 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

There were no questions to the Committee.

#### **34 MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT PDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2013**

The minutes were agreed subject to the final sentence at paragraph (j) of Minute 29 being amended to read: *'Councillor Julian Grainger suggested that there were a number of locations in the vicinity where yellow lines could be removed temporarily'*.

#### **35 QUESTIONS TO THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ATTENDING THE MEETING**

Two questions were received from Mr Colin Willetts for written reply – details of the questions and responses are at **Appendix A**.

**36 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF REPORTS TO THE  
ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

**A) BUDGET MONITORING 2013/14**

**FSD14007**

Members considered the latest budget position for the Environment Portfolio.

Based on expenditure and activity levels to 30th November 2013, the 2013/14 controllable budget for the Environment Portfolio was projected to overspend by £109k.

Details were provided of the 2013/14 projected outturn with a forecast of projected spend for each division compared to the latest approved budget. Background to variations was also outlined.

Report FSD14007 also highlighted expenditure and progress against Environment Portfolio projects within the Member Priority Initiatives programme.

As The Environment Agency's regulatory guidance no longer permitted the composting of detritus and leafing collected from street cleansing, additional costs of £140k have had to be incurred in 2013/14 to dispose of the material. Given the magnitude of the costs, Councillor Grainger suggested independent testing of the collected leaves to demonstrate their fitness for composting. The Chairman felt it might be more productive for the Council to collaborate with other boroughs on testing arrangements and apply a risk based approach ranking streets according to traffic volumes.

*(Democratic Services Note: on testing Bromley's leaves, it was reported post meeting that discussions had taken place with officials from both the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Environment Agency (EA).*

*Officials accepted that more testing is needed to arrive at a better methodology for deciding whether collection methods might be a way of deciding what is acceptable – this based on the fact that 'fresh' leaves might be more acceptable.*

*Analysis by officers of tree types in each road, used to organise the leafing collections, had been sent to DEFRA and the EA as evidence of how L B Bromley differentiate between fresh leaves and older detritus. As yet there had been no feedback).*

**RESOLVED that the Environment Portfolio Holder be recommended to:**

**(1) endorse the latest 2013/14 budget projection for the Environment Portfolio; and**

**(2) note progress on the implementation of the Environment projects within the Member Priority Initiatives programme.**

**B) CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2ND QUARTER 2013/14**

**FSD14002**

At its meeting on 20th November 2013, the Executive agreed a revised Capital Programme for 2013/14 to 2016/17. Changes in respect of the Capital Programme for the Environment Portfolio were outlined and a revised programme for the Portfolio was presented. Details on scheme progress at the end of the second quarter 2013/14 were also provided including spend against budget.

**RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to confirm the changes agreed by the Executive in November.**

**C) PARKING BAILIFF SERVICES**

**Report ES14016**

Portfolio Holder agreement was sought for the procurement of bailiff services to provide debt recovery for collection of outstanding Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs). Report ES14016 recommended that parking services use JBW and Phoenix until October 2016 – the date at which all other key contracts managed by the Shared Parking Service are due to expire. Bailiff services would therefore be aligned with the main enforcement contract across both L B Bromley and L B Bexley. Liberata also use JBW and Phoenix for Council tax debt collection.

Dealing with more than two companies would increase the complexity of day to day management and communication, and the number of warrants issued to each company would be too few; retaining just one company would leave the service vulnerable to the risk of poor performance.

**RESOLVED that the Environmental Portfolio Holder be recommended to approve the use of JBW and Phoenix for bailiff debt collection services from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 until 31 October 2016.**

**D) PLANNED HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME**

**Report ES14009**

Members considered proposed programmes of planned footway and carriageway maintenance for completion during the 2014/15 financial year. Roads to be considered in subsequent years as reserve schemes or potential programmes of planned maintenance were also provided to Members.

The approach to prioritising roads for maintenance was discussed. Officers considered the prioritisation strategy to have worked effectively with value

management helping to direct funds to the busiest roads in poorest condition. However, it was acknowledged that this may have been to the detriment of unclassified roads - the condition index suggesting that 20% of unclassified roads now required planned maintenance soon.

Councillor Grainger supported the direction of some resources to unclassified roads, questioning the inclusion of A223 Sevenoaks Road (High Street to Cardingham Road) in the Priority 1 Programme, suggesting it appeared to be in a reasonable condition (although the Chairman considered its condition poor between Charterhouse Road and Park Avenue). Officers were looking to work with Members to address unclassified roads and the stage was almost reached where measures other than surface patching were necessary to prevent further reactive costs.

In view of the Council's financial position and the condition index for unclassified roads, officers would welcome a discussion with Members on trialling different road treatment materials for unclassified roads. Some carriageways had already failed structurally and officers were looking at other treatments. The Vice-Chairman suggested a breakdown of roads needing more than surface repair.

Councillor Rideout referred to any risks from heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and plant travelling to building works along unclassified roads. She suggested visiting roads where there had been significant building work to assess whether HGVs/plant had caused any road damage. However locating such roads was considered difficult, and unclassified roads should be able to withstand the impact of HGVs at low levels. More impact might arise if any vehicle/plant applied consistent road pressure from "mechanical feet". It would be difficult to impose weight limits in view of access requirements for emergency vehicles. Councillor Grainger suggested smaller blocks rather than large slabs to prevent footway damage by HGVs; any increased costs could be worthwhile longer term.

Councillor Grainger provided further observations. He understood that Medway Council carried out surface dressing on unclassified roads. He also advocated the division of minor roads into treatment lengths e.g.40/50 metre in order to treat solely those lengths requiring attention. He further suggested that Members contact officers if there were specific maintenance problems with roads in their ward.

Concerning a working group to consider, *inter-alia*, the level and projections of the condition index and treatments for unclassified roads, the Chairman recommended that this should be considered at the first Environment PDS Committee of the new Council Year - a further meeting of the Waste Minimisation Working Group being the highest priority for the current year. In advance of any working group next year, the Vice-Chairman suggested that officers research the approach taken by Medway Council on surface dressing for unclassified roads.

**RESOLVED that the Environment Portfolio Holder be recommended to:**

**(1) agree that the schemes listed at Appendix A to Report ES14009 should form the basis of the Council's programme of planned highway maintenance for 2014/15 and, subject to budgetary provision, that the works be progressed;**

**(2) note the reserve schemes and potential programmes of work for future years as listed at Appendix B to Report ES14009; and**

**(3) note the proposed TfL funded programme of highway maintenance works (Principal A Roads) for 2014/15 as set out at Appendix C to Report ES14009.**

**E) PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR NON-PROGRAMMED PARKS WORKS EXPENDITURE AND SOFT LANDSCAPING PROCUREMENT**

**Report ES13128**

Portfolio Holder approval was sought to a proposed procurement strategy for Park Works Expenditure not already captured in the Term Contracts. This aligns with the overall strategy for procuring Grounds Maintenance services, to provide maximum flexibility over future contracting options at the conclusion in 2017 of the current contract with The Landscape Group.

The following were covered by the proposed strategy:

- Playground Maintenance
- Hard Landscaping
- Parks Furniture
- Soft Landscape Works
- Plants, Shrubs and Bedding

In discussion Members were advised that further analysis had been conducted in respect of Hard Landscaping and Plants, Shrubs and Bedding. This had indicated that current term contract rates are not particularly competitive, and as such it was recommended that all elements of the Parks Non-term Contract Works expenditure are put to the market.

Although floral bedding was now largely sponsored, it was agreed that officers would investigate whether there might be any further scope for sponsorship. It was also confirmed that Ward Members would be advised of any proposal for a new playground. However, Members would not normally be advised on matters concerned with for minor playground maintenance or equipment replacement.

**RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:**

**(1) agree that all the non-programmed works for parks outlined in Report ES13128, be subjected to market testing rather than offered to existing term contractors, in order to obtain favourable costs at competitive rates for the works; and**

**(2) approve the tendering timetable for the works as outlined in Report ES13128 and Appendix C to the report.**

#### **F) SOFT LANDSCAPING TENDERING**

##### **Report ES14018**

Related to the procurement strategy for Non-Programmed Park Works (Report ES13128), Members considered a Gateway Report seeking Portfolio Holder approval to a proposed Soft Landscaping tendering process.

It was intended to maximise procurement options for Soft Landscaping prior to the end of the current Main Term Contract for Grounds Maintenance in December 2017 and to maximise flexibility after this for overall Grounds Maintenance procurement.

**RESOLVED that the Portfolio Holder be recommended to:**

**(1) approve the tender process to bring the six soft landscape elements into one package, to be tendered as one contract from May 2014 to December 2017; with the option of awarding single or multiple elements to a single provider or a number of providers; and based on a term co-terminus with the expiry of existing contracts in December 2017; and**

**(2) approve the tendering timetable outlined in Report ES14018 for soft landscape works.**

#### **37 THE STREET ENVIRONMENT CONTRACT REVIEW 2012-13**

##### **Report ES14008**

The contract for frontline street environment services (incorporating street cleansing, graffiti removal, cleansing of public conveniences, and highway drainage cleaning) was let on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012 for a period of five years with an option of a two year extension. The report outlined contract performance against key issues raised by Members, taking account of resident perceptions of street cleanliness and satisfaction with the service.

Mr Terry Allen, Regional General Manager of Kier Environmental Service and Mr Darren Retour, Contract Manager of Kier Environmental Service attended the meeting to answer Member questions.

A weekday programme of deep cleansing was provided for tightly parked streets along with a weekend programme of road channel cleaning for streets with heavy weekday parking. A particular street could be considered for one of the programmes if requested by Members. Adjustments had been made to the programme since its introduction in the first year of the current contract. Increasing the number of roads for programme adjustments (e.g. late night/weekend cleans or alternating some roads on weekdays with some at weekends) could be considered but there were limitations in view of financial constraints and the number of streets to clean (some 3,000).

Difficulties clearing leaf fall had been experienced following recent prolonged rainfall; heavy mechanical sweeping machines have been used to clear gutters and road gullies. It has sometimes been difficult to keep pace with the volume of fallen tree debris; and the extra staff and machines used for the autumn leafing programme were withdrawn at the beginning of January. Removing material from channels has been as efficient as possible with the machinery available – no further machinery is available on the market to clean channels more efficiently. Leaf mulch left in a drain grate required manual removal. The contractor was required to prioritise areas at risk of flooding to ensure gullies remained free of debris (there are some 35,000 gullies in the borough). The contractor expected to clear all residual leaf fall waste within the following two to four weeks. Councillor Rideout commended work of the street cleaning service given the current volume of waste.

Councillor Grainger referred to debris at Windsor Drive, Woodside and Warren Road where cars would normally be parked mid-week, close to Chelsfield Station. These roads were included in the weekend road sweeping programme due to the volume of commuters. He also highlighted two corner locations where mechanical sweepers appeared unable to sweep, the locations not having been attended to since Christmas. Councillor Grainger advocated more focused and effective sweeping with fewer routine sweeps; he considered deep cleans effective, wishing to see more of them.

The Portfolio Holder supported more weekend cleaning, encouraging Members to nominate roads and recommend the best times to clean; such communication would help adjust the balance of cleaning in an area. Reporting via the Council website would also help. Within a limited budget, more communication would assist in further improving cleaning standards.

Officers offered to work with Councillor Fookes to address his concerns over street cleanliness in Penge, targeting the remaining leaf clearance in the north of the borough. Residents were encouraged to report problems via the Council website. It was confirmed that the contractor had 73 staff (including administrative staff) working on street cleansing in the borough.

Concerning bagged waste, and in view of the contractor's use of some 0.5m black bags annually, storage and collection options for green bags were being reviewed to ensure bags would not be left on the highway for extended periods. The Chairman had looked at finding improved locations for such bags in his ward and encouraged Members to be similarly involved.

In regard to surface water on the carriageway during heavy rainfall, the Chairman identified a capacity problem with the Thames Water sewerage system. The Portfolio Holder referred to leaves accumulating around drains, emphasising the need to report problem locations. Although flood related requests had been received, the Head of Area Management indicated that those requests were in addition to cyclical cleaning of gullies which continued on schedule. The street cleaning contractor had used mechanical sweepers to assist with removal of excess water from flooded road surfaces. It was acknowledged that the drainage contractor (Veolia), had attended several reported flooding incidents and attended many callouts of a night-time and over the Christmas period.

Concerned that some residents were known to deflect leaves on to the highway with leaf blowers, the Vice-Chairman suggested working with Friends Groups to discourage the practice. In response, it was explained that press releases last autumn highlighted the problem and a letter had been provided to residents known to be doing this.

The satisfaction survey of street cleansing comprised a major survey of Bromley town centre and a postal survey across the borough, carried out in August 2013. Councillor Milner drew attention to the fact that there could have been less litter during the holiday season and leaf fall would not have started. It was confirmed that timing of the survey would be considered.

On improving links between the Council and Resident Associations (RA) to improve local environments, Councillor Jefferys updated Members on the 'linkage' pilot scheme involving the Park Langley RA and Shortlands RA. Meetings had been held to share knowledge on service delivery and identify local issues and 'hot spots'. Sharing local intelligence was working well and residents were able to highlight street sweeping issues. RAs could also encourage vehicle owners to park on one side of a street (or away from the street) during periods of cleaning. Councillor Jefferys highlighted a need to be specific when targeting cleaning. Residents were understanding of the contractor's difficulties and *vice-versa*. There were advantages in having street cleaning the day after refuse collection. Suggestions were made to achieve maximum gains and a trend analysis carried out by officers would assist with further identification of local issues. Residents also wanted to take forward the purple bag scheme next autumn (used by Friends and voluntary groups to collect litter).

**RESOLVED that:**

**(1) the positive results of the independent resident satisfaction survey of street cleansing standards be noted with attention given to highlighted areas of concern;**

**(2) the reduced levels of public enquiries regarding street environment contracts be noted since the last report to the Committee; and**



**(3) the frequency of sweeping will continue to be monitored and adjusted where required to ensure cleanliness standards are achieved; and that additional programmes of work, including deep cleaning of streets and weekend road cleaning, will continue.**

**38 DRAFT 2014/15 BUDGET**

**FSD14008**

Members considered the Draft 2014/15 Budget for the Portfolio incorporating future cost pressures and initial draft budget saving options as reported to Executive on 15th January 2014.

Outstanding issues and areas of uncertainty remained and any further updates would be included in the 2014/15 Council Tax report to Executive on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

Report FSD14008 outlined both a breakdown of growth pressures in the four year forecast for the Portfolio and a summary of the new savings options for the Portfolio. Appendix 1 to the report included a draft estimate summary sheet, budget variations, notes on the budget variations and a subjective analysis. Expenditure pressures and service risks related to Portfolio services, particularly from unpredictable demand such as waste, parking, highways and winter maintenance, were detailed at Appendix 2 to the report.

In view of budget pressures with waste services (landfill tax and now the upturn in waste per household), the Chairman suggested a meeting of the Waste Minimisation Working Group, particularly in relation to budget planning for 2015/16. On parking enforcement, costs related to recent Government proposals (currently the subject of consultation) were not included in the Draft Portfolio Budget but would be reflected in the provision for risk/uncertainty in the Council's Central Contingency Sum.

The Vice-Chairman referred to the success of the Green Garden Waste collection scheme, suggesting it be made to work even better. A marketing campaign for the scheme was scheduled to start in the spring. Given the scheme's success, Members were advised that another collection vehicle was likely to be necessary, financed by revenue from more customers.

Councillor Grainger suggested the Council lobby Government on Landfill tax which he felt was approaching a level of counter-productivity. He also advocated the recycling of carpet waste and supported a balancing of parking fees according to higher and lower demand.

It was explained that carpets were complicated to recycle due to their varied use of materials and complex structure e.g. bonded underlay; officers were looking at additional materials that can be recycled with mattresses a recent addition. It was suggested the Waste Minimisation Working Group could look at any possibilities for recycling carpet material. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council had expressed its thoughts on Landfill Tax to the

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The tax had produced the effect it was designed for and it was felt there should be no escalation of the tax - recycling was a good habit which people had adopted.

**RESOLVED that the Committee's comments on the initial draft 2014/15 Budget be provided to the February meeting of the Executive.**

**39 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME, MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND CONTRACTS REGISTER**

**Report ES14002**

Members considered the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of the year and matters arising from previous meetings.

Referring to Minute 29 (h) from minutes of the Committee's previous meeting, Councillor Grainger referred to the lamp column replacement project. Acknowledging that most residents were content with the replacement LED lanterns, there had been some concern on the extent of glare into homes from lamp columns within close proximity to some properties.

Looking at the Committee's future work, Councillor Grainger enquired about scheduling a Working Group meeting to consider the Borough's transport strategy (transport statement) and Local Implementation Plan (LIP). The Chairman suggested that this and matters concerned with road surfacing for unclassified roads be taken forward in the new Council Year. Priority consideration for the remainder of the current year was to look at reducing waste costs for 2015/16.

**RESOLVED that:**

- (1) the work programme be agreed;**
- (2) the priority of working groups recommended for the Environment PDS in the new council year be (a) Waste Minimisation and Budget Review (b) Planned Maintenance Strategy and (c) Transport Strategy;**
- (3) progress related to previous Committee requests be noted; and**
- (4) a summary of contracts related to the Environment Portfolio be noted.**

The Meeting ended at 9.37 pm

Chairman

# Minute Annex

## QUESTIONS FROM MR COLIN WILLETTS FOR WRITTEN REPLY

### Question 1

(Referring to the written reply to the first question from Mr Willetts at Executive 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014)

Even with bollards this does not resolve the issue of traffic over riding footway either side of recycling banks and request on behalf of the community that in situ column is moved/ slight kerb line reduction allowing freer flow of traffic on this busy bus route in Station Approach?

### Reply

Your personal opinion has been noted.

As you have been advised previously, Cllr Ince is the lead Ward Councillor for this mini project locally and will relay a further update to the local Community, as soon as this work has been completed.

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### Question 2

Could you tell us the number of Environmental CRM's (Confirm reports) reported to CSC Agent by i) Cllr Stranger, ii) Cllr Ellis, iii) Cllr Ince & iv) Colin Willetts from May 2010 to present?.

### Reply

The figures you have requested are detailed below.

Could I take this opportunity to remind you however that CSC is NOT the preferred format to report Environmental faults through for those with the technical ability to do so online.

Significant money can be saved for local Council Tax payers, service standards improved and resolutions to problems speeded up and local residents served far better by the use of the Council's 'Fix' technology, which can be accessed via the following link : <https://fix.bromley.gov.uk/>

Cllr Ellis –	0
Cllr Ince -	25
Cllr Stranger –	0
Colin Willetts –	1,851

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