

**REGENERATION AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Wednesday 5th March 2014**

PRESENT – Councillors *Surve (Chair), Entwistle, Hollings, S.Khonat, Whalley, K.Foster and Cottam*

Also Present –

Cllr Mahmood	Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services
Sayed Osman	Director of Environment, Neighbourhoods and Housing
Paul Lee	Officer Support
John Addison	Principal Scrutiny Officer
Sonya Palmer	Scrutiny Officer

RESOLUTIONS

30. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillors Hardman, Desai, F.Hussain and J.Smith.

31. Minutes of the Meeting held on 29th January 2014

Further to the Minutes of the meeting on the 29th January 2014 Members requested that discussions be recorded in relation to the cost of the indoor bowling facility at Witton Park. The Executive Member for Culture, Leisure, Sport & Young People confirmed that it had been agreed the facility would be cost neutral to the Council.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 29th January 2014 be agreed as a correct record.

32. Declarations of Interest in items on this Agenda

There were no Declarations of Interest received.

33. Work of the Executive – Corporate Budget Monitoring Report 2013/2014

The Chair welcomed the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services and the Director of Environment, Housing and Customer Services to the meeting. The Executive Member provided an update to the

Committee on the Corporate Budget Monitoring Report 2013/2014, highlighting a number of items for Members attention.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services reported to Members that it was predicted there would be an underspend in the overall budget for his portfolio this year. It was highlighted to Members that the underspend in Customer Services was due to vacancies being held as a result of spending cuts.

Members raised concerns regarding staffing levels and services available at Darwen Town Hall, in particular that residents of Darwen had to travel to Blackburn Town Hall to access services that are unavailable in Darwen. Members questioned whether the under spend in Customer Services could be used to resolve this. The Executive Member informed Members that the service cuts affected Blackburn Town Hall more than Darwen Town Hall but agreed to monitor the demand for services in Darwen.

In response to questioning from Members, it was advised that the Neighbourhoods and Learning budget was showing a cash variation because of the additional Troubled Families Funding. Members were assured that the budget for Neighbourhoods and Learning balanced and there was no overspend.

In relation to insulating properties the Executive Member informed the Committee that a change of suppliers and issues on how the system was implemented had resulted in funding for insulating hard to treat properties being reduced and that the Council was looking into how they could try to continue with the scheme.

In response to further questioning from Members relating to Troubled Families, the Executive Member informed them that the Council receive payment by result for the Troubled Families Scheme. He also advised Members that the Council receive just over £4000 per troubled family. The Committee requested that the Executive Member provide figures relating to the success rate for the Troubled Families Scheme to date.

Members were informed that the Council are working closely with Education Welfare, Job Centre plus, Department for Work and Pensions, Bootstrap Enterprise, the Police and MASH to try and help nearly 600 troubled families.

Members held a lengthy discussion relating to the role of key workers and the involvement they have with troubled families. Concerns were raised by Members regarding the safety of the Officers working with the troubled families and were assured that all Officers have received accredited training and follow lone working procedures when needed. Members were informed that each family is allocated a key worker to liaise with and build a rapport with which had resulted in fewer Officers visiting families and had been seen to be more effective than numerous Officers visiting.

The Executive Member provided an update in relation to the Empty Homes Cluster Scheme and advised Members that the Council was performing well,

however there were issues with the ownership of empty properties and contracts. It was advised that Twin Valley Homes would achieve the capital spend within the time constraints.

Members raised concerns about the length of time it was taking to bring empty homes back in to use and requested a proposed time scale for the areas of development and empty homes be circulated to Members.

The Executive Member informed the Committee that there have been cost issues with certain properties and in some cases it has been identified that it would cost too much to bring certain properties back into use.

Members requested that a site visit be considered (next year) to the empty homes that the Committee have previously visited to observe the improvements that had been made and speak to local residents/tenants of the properties for their opinion on the Empty Homes Scheme.

Concerns were raised regarding the St Peters Church area; in particular the house with a tree growing out of it and the effect it was having on residents. The Executive Member advised that the Council were trying to resolve the problem but due to legalities it was taking longer than anticipated. It was noted that proving ownership of the property was also an issue.

On behalf of the Executive Member for Environment, the Director for Environment, Neighbourhoods and Housing provided an update to the Committee on the Corporate Budget Monitoring Report 2013/2014, highlighting a number of items for Members attention.

It was reported to Members that the predicted spend was on balance for the Environment portfolio this year. It was also reported to Members that there was an increase in waste disposal last year therefore the tonnage cost may increase. The Council was hopeful that the increase would not affect the budget.

Members raised concerns regarding green waste and whether residents were aware that recycling of green waste was now up and running. Members requested that the Council look to remind residents that they can recycle their green waste using their green bin.

Questions were raised regarding the cost of replacement bins. The Director informed Members that anyone wanting a replacement bin can request one from the Council but they would incur a charge. Members were advised that residents can use green bags as opposed to green bins if they choose or residents can gather all their waste together and contact the Council to arrange a collection.

Discussions took place regarding street lighting and Members were informed that £4.7 million needs to be spent to replace street lamps. The Director for Environment, Neighbourhoods and Housing told members that it would be more cost effective to replace all the street lights as part of a single scheme than just to

replace one at a time. Members were informed of the benefits of switching to LED lighting and the net savings on electricity per annum.

The Director provided Members with an update on waste procurement. Members were reminded of the background into the Residual Waste Procurement Project and that the Council were examining two principal options:

- A collaboration with a neighbouring local authority through existing contracts (Great Manchester Waste Disposal Authority - GMWDA and Lancashire CC); and
- A 'merchant solution' whereby a contractor is engaged to receive the Council's waste for a gate fee that includes all the costs of processing, recycling and disposal of residuals to landfill.

It was advised that discussions were held with two local waste disposal authorities (GMWDA and LCC) and from the feedback received a risk management workshop in October identified that the risks associated with LCC were high but concluded that a further meeting with GMWDA should be arranged.

The Director told Members that following on from the meeting with GMWDA in November 2013 a note was reported to the Procurement Board on the 9th December 2013 which advised, the Council had received an offer of joint working from GMWDA that merited in depth consideration. Members were informed that the Procurement Board concluded that the price and terms offered represented a good deal for the Council.

The Director advised Members of several operational issues which included:

- The nearest GMWDA facility is in the Bolton incinerator, approximately 12.5 miles from the Davyfield Road depot using the direct route via Darwen, or 15 miles via the motorway network.
- The facility would be available to accept waste for approximately 42-44 weeks per year, allowing for planned maintenance of the plant.
- During the down times, there is a new facility at Over Hulton in Bolton, near to Junction 4 of the M61. These distances are considered too long for collection vehicles to deliver directly and it would have an adverse impact on productivity and require additional vehicles to be acquired
- Arrangements for the disposal of bulky items and HWRC waste may still be required as the GMWDA plant may not be geared up to accept them, however GMWDA have indicated that they are examining the scope for their contractor (Viridor) to accept these, after shredding, to produce a fuel suitable for recovery at their Runcorn facility.

- GMWDA are only interested in the processing of the wastes. The responsibility for transporting the waste to GMWDA is outside of the scope of their involvement meaning BwDBC will need to consider options for the transfer and transportation of the waste from its refuse collection vehicles. The options would be:
 - To outsource the transfer and transportation, although there are only 2 providers with adequate facilities within the borough to currently do this, Neale's and SITA.
 - The Council to develop, via capital funding, the existing waste transfer facility at its Davyfield Road depot, with transport to take the waste to Bolton, either provided by the Council or hired in.

Members were advised of the next steps if the Council decide to accept the GMWDA offer:

- Legal advice will be needed on the nature of the arrangement
- Waste composition data has to be updated
- The provision of transfer and transport would be for the Council to arrange
- Logistical planning in respect of the efficiency of collection routes
- Stakeholder consultation
- Review the financial position, post Spring 2014 Budget Statement
- If a Waste Transfer Station is to be constructed, planning permission needs to commence very soon, and provision made in the Council's Capital Programme.

In response to questioning from Members the Director for Environment, Neighbourhoods and Housing reported that the challenges involved in waste disposal were complex. He added that the Council have an obligation as a Local Authority to divert away from landfill and more towards recycling. The Director told Members that incinerating may not be as bad, in relation to pollution, as initially thought and the Council were looking into the legislative issues around bio mass as technology was improving all the time.

RESOLVED –

That the update on Waste Procurement be noted and the Director of Environment, Neighbourhoods and Housing be thanked for his attendance.

That a proposed time scale for the areas of development and empty homes be circulated to Members.

34. Committees work programme

The Principal Scrutiny Officer presented to Members a list of recommendations and detailed notes for the Shisha Task Group based on Members comments and observations.

Councillors requested information regarding the outcome of the prosecution against a Blackburn Shisha Bar and also requested that in addition to the notes it was addressed that discussions took place regarding Shisha Bars advertising as restaurants as opposed to shisha bars.

Members were also presented a list of recommendations and detailed notes for the Scrap Metal Task Group based on Members comments and observations.

The Principal Scrutiny Officer also presented to Members a short review from the work programme Committee which would be presented at the Annual Review of Scrutiny on the 7th April 2014.

RESOLVED –

That the recommendations for the Shisha task group be agreed;

- 1) That the Committee would support a programme of education in schools on Shisha in particular around Health risks and Child protection.
- 2) That the Council explores and promotes the best, evidence-based methods of providing Shisha education to young people outside of schools.
- 3) That the Executive Member request that Public Health undertake research and provide analytical evidence on the use of Shisha by 14-24 year olds in the Borough.
- 4) That the Council look to impose a ban on under 18 year olds entering Shisha Bars.
- 5) That Members would like to see statutory requirements highlighted in the Taufiq (code of good practice), when Shisha Bar owners signed it.
- 6) That the Council continue to work with key partner stakeholders and to look into the legal possibility of introducing a Shisha Bar Licencing scheme.
- 7) That the Council's Public Health Team and Trading Standards along with appropriate colleagues, review areas where enforcement and educational activity can be combined. An example would be that, when conducting compliance duties, officers identify an opportunity to refer, educate or advise about health risks of Shisha smoking.
- 8) That the Environment portfolio lobby on behalf of the Council appropriate bodies to ensure that Shisha smoking (and Shisha bars) are covered in appropriate legislation.

- 9) That the Committee commend the Council and Officers for their effort and varied approach to tackling Shisha smoking in the Borough and the compliance of Shisha bar.
- 10) That the Council through local media and communication avenues highlight successful enforcement of Shisha smoking.
- 11) That Trading Standards investigate if appropriate the use of RIPA in tackling Shisha smoking enforcement in the Borough, were normal enforcement is not deemed safe.

That the recommendations for the Scrap Metal task group be agreed;

- 1) That the Committee note the success of the Partnership approach through Partnership Operations to reduce metal theft within Blackburn with Darwen.
- 2) That the Committee would support the continued use of mobile scrap metal enforcement with partner organisations to tackle scrap metal theft and unlicensed dealing.
- 3) That the Executive Member appeal to have legislation changes on the appeals process for Scrap Metal dealing from an Executive Member function to a Licensing Committee function.
- 4) That the Council look to provide information on its website of licensed scrap metal dealers in the Borough to assist residents.
- 5) That the Council apply appropriate pressure, guidance and support to Landlords to tackle unlicensed dealing and storage of Scrap Metal in private dwellings.
- 6) That the Council provide training to Members to help identify unlicensed scrap metal trading in the Borough.

Signed.....

Chair of the meeting at which the Minutes were signed

Date.....