

scrutiny

focus on performance

REPORT OF: The Regeneration & Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny Committee

REPORT TO: Policy & Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee

ON: 30th March 2015

RE: End of Year report for 2014/15

1. Purpose of the Report

For Members of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny Committee to note the outcomes of their work programme 2014-15.

At the first meeting of the municipal year, the Executive Members for Regeneration, Environment and Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services presented the Committee with an overview of the key priorities and risks for their portfolio for the year. Using this information as a guide the Committee identified target areas that they felt were significant and required further scrutiny.

The following headlines were agreed to be scoped as the work programme for 2014-15;

- “Alley Gates”
- “The 12 Point Plan and Image of the Borough”
- “Performance and Downsizing of Environment (with Highways)”
- “Troubled Families”
- “Parking & Enforcement”

The Committee selected specific key areas upon which to focus and timelines over which to scrutinise each item:

Topic	Timeline	Completed
Alley Gates	September	✓
The 12 Point Plan and Image of the Borough	September	✓
Performance and Downsizing of Environment (with Highways)	September - March	✓
Troubled Families	October	✓
Parking and Enforcement	January	✓

Recommendations already agreed and/or submitted

The following topics have been completed throughout the course of the municipal year and recommendations were agreed as outlined below.

Alley Gates

Following the outline of the Regeneration and Neighbourhood priorities by the Executive Members an in-depth briefing was presented to the Committee on the 17th September 2014 to provide Members with an overview of the Alley Gate scheme.

At this meeting, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services and the Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods provided Members with the history of the Alley Gate scheme and advised that the programme was introduced in 2009 as a pilot and developed into a 4 year programme from April 2010 was due to end in March 2015 and an application would be made to the Council's capital programme for a further 2 years of funding running to March 2017 to cover existing applications.

The Committee challenged whether the Alley gates have had an impact on crime and anti-social behaviour and were advised that following on from a resident questionnaire the vast majority of residents, averaging between 90-94% believed crime had been reduced and 83-90% believed anti-social behaviour had reduced as a result of the gates being installed.

The Committee were reminded that alley gates were not a panacea problem solver and there had been evidence of displacement to adjacent streets and that alley gates were ineffective against environmental crime.

Concerns were raised regarding the cost of each alley gate and also the damage and repair bill for the gates which was increasing the more that were installed.

The Executive Member advised the Committee that the Council was looking at possible cost saving measures for 2015/17 and provided a summary of his recommendations, which were asked to be considered. The Committee agreed and finalised their recommendations in relation to the alley gate scheme at the meeting on the 27th October 2014.

It was recommended:

- 1.1 No more applications would be accepted for alley gates.
- 1.2 Alley gates have had a limited impact on crime and anti-social behaviour and have potentially shifted problems elsewhere, it is felt that Alley gates are not a default solution to neighbourhood ASB and crime issues but could help in certain circumstances.

- 1.3 An application to the capital programme would be made for a 2 year £100k per annum programme to complete the highest need schemes in the borough of those that have already applied to run from April 2015.
 - 1.4 Residents would pay for keys (£10.00) as a contribution to the scheme, all residents must agree as a pre-requisite to the scheme being implemented.
 - 1.5 Ward Councillors would be required to complete the statutory consultation and agree resident sign up to the £10 contribution.
 - 1.6 The alley gating programme would be tendered with a view to securing a contractor that is both cost effective and supportive of local training and employment opportunities for young people.
 - 1.7 A scheme would be set up to offer advice and guidance to residents and landlords who wish to self-finance their own schemes.
2. That the Executive Member look to identify additional cost saving measures to minimise revenue implications for the medium to long term maintenance of the Boroughs Alley Gates.
 3. That where possible the portfolio considers for all its consultations on applications for Alley gates that they be conducted digitally to avoid paying publication fees.
 4. That officers examine the options available to get the most cost effective price for gates/installation to help further reduce the cost of the scheme.
 5. That the Executive Member explores the possibility of receiving a financial contribution from partners agencies for the installation of a gate, where a clear benefit to the partner can be identified.

The 12 Point Plan and Image of the Borough

A task group meeting was held on the 7th August 2014 whereby the Committee were told that the ambition was to revitalise the town centre and the basis of which would be the delivery of a 12 Point Plan. The plan included activity to stimulate new creative business, develop a vibrant annual cultural events programme and schemes to kick start the night time economy. The town centre would provide new opportunities to develop skill and industry and in turn, reduce empty shops and increase footfall.

Each item on the 12 point plan was explained in detail and the Committee held a discussion on the marketing of the borough and of the 12 Point Plan. It was felt that Blackburn, as the largest section of the borough, needed to be successful and the success and history of the town needed to be promoted to sell the town. The Committee felt that the power of social media and other such resources should be utilised to their full potential.

Following on from the Task group meeting a site visit was held on the 18th September 2014 for the Committee to walkthrough the Cathedral Quarter development and new bus station.

The Committee agreed to revisit this topic at a later date once key developments from the 12 Point Plan had progressed.

Performance and Downsizing of Environment (with Highways)

A series of task groups were held in September and October 2014 whereby the Committee looked at the performance and Downsizing of each department within the portfolio. The Committee heard from the Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods and the Head of Environment who provided an in-depth briefing to allow Members to understand the priorities of how the service would look going forward and how previous and future budget cuts had affected the performance and downsizing of the service.

Following on from the Task Groups the Committee felt they wanted another perspective and wanted to look further into the efficiencies within the various sections.

A series of Engagement events were held in February 2015 to enable the Committee to gain a perspective from:

- The Customer – Understanding KPIs, Customer complaints, Performance data, Service requests, Type of calls coming in. Members would like to look at the last three/ five years.
- The Unions - A perspective of their views on what is working, what isn't working and how the service could be improved.
- Staff/Frontline workers - A perspective of their views on what is working what isn't working and how the service could be improved.

It was recognised and agreed that staff morale was low within the Environment and Highways department and there was a lack of communication between frontline workers and management.

It was recommended:

Communication

- 1) That the Task Group feels more time and consideration needs to be taken in communicating changes (both current and proposed) within the department to ensure more engagement from front line staff.

- 2) That a clear management structure(s) and lines of communications be clarified across all teams and sections within the Portfolio and that these are shared with all staff.
- 3) That all teams and sections hold regular team/section meetings to allow two way feedback between Managers and staff, and to allow the opportunity for problem sharing and finding collective solutions.
- 4) That the department look to establish a line of communication between road cleaning and ward Councillors to assist in the efficient delivery of the service by the removal of cars.
- 5) That the department make use of its noticeboard(s) and other appropriate methods to keep staff updated who don't have access to a PC and email.

Education

- 1) That an education programme be introduced with schools and children to support the long terms aims of the environmental policies of the Council, such as understand the importance and use of a gully.
- 2) That Elected Members be given appropriate advice, support and literature to support the Portfolio in the education of residents and children in the borough, to ensure consistent and key messages are given out.

Apprentices

- 1) That the Portfolio look at the possibility of recruiting more apprentices than it currently has to support the work across the department and allow apprentices the opportunity to work with and benefit from being trained by experienced and qualified staff.

Youth Offending Team/Community Service

- 1) That the Portfolio look where possible to make use of the youth offending team and community service to support appropriate areas or the portfolio.
- 2) That Officer's explore the option to assist the youth offending team in gaining a licence to assist in the maintenance of the boroughs cemeteries, which could help alleviate complaints from the public about maintenance of graves.

Public Protection

- 1) That any future efficiencies or cuts to the service be balanced with service expectations and prioritising of workloads, to ensure a balanced approach to the service delivery, avoid fire-fighting and are prioritised on need.
- 2) That the department create a consistent, transparent and fixed procedure for its Service Level Agreements (SLA's) it has with others.
- 3) That staff who are asked to undertake multiple roles due to reduced staffing levels be given appropriate training and support to ensure best use of resources.
- 4) That the Committee acknowledge the good working relationships of the merged Community Hygiene & Environment Crime teams and their inter agency cooperation. However the Committee ask that every effort is taken to ensure that "bottlenecks" in certain areas identified by staff are ironed out where possible.
- 5) That the Executive Member considers how to better utilise Elected Members in educating the public around key issues such as community hygiene and fly-tipping.
- 6) That Public Protection Officers' receive clarity around staff roles and appropriate training for Community Protection Notices before they replace ASB's.

Highways

- 1) That team meetings be held quarterly (or sooner if required) between all staff within HAMIS for the sharing of information between staff and management.
- 2) That a review of the arrangements covered by HAMIS is considered in the re-letting of the CAPITA partnership agreement and by the Environment Portfolio review to ensure continued best value.
- 3) That a review of equipment used be undertaken and where needed, appropriate equipment is sourced to enable staff to improve the quality of their work and allow staff away from base to remain in contact.

- 4) That the Executive Member look to review the use of subcontractors in the Highways area by CAPITA ensuring that they are being used to produce an economic + efficient outturn.

Refuse

- 1) That the department look to assist Members by advising and encouraging them that if they assist residents in their ward by re-bagging waste in purple bags, that Members also educate residents of the need to place properly bag waste in the first place.
- 2) That the Executive Member considers additional ways to inform residents of the Council's policies and procedures around waste collection, e.g. purple not black bags.
- 3) That clarity is sought over the responsibility and collection of contaminated waste from recyclables between DLO & the recyclable collection contractor, and that education and guidance is issued to residents and B-direct on how to have it collected.
- 4) That new guidance and training be provided to encourage a more collaborative working relationship with the B-direct team to ensure that all relevant information is collected from residents and passed on to the refuse teams before they embark on calls out to ensure no wasted journeys.
- 5) That team meetings between refuse staff and a B-direct representative be held quarterly to allow for the sharing of information and feedback between the two departments.

Street Cleansing

- 1) That the Committee would support Officers, with staff conducting a review of working patterns to ensure that the most strategic management of staff and resources is used.
- 2) That Officers look to have a price list and contact details for the removal of bulky waste available to staff when undertaking waste collections in case they are approached by members of the public.

- 3) That Members would support where appropriate a more robust approach to misuse of public waste bins by local business.

Grounds Maintenance

- 1) That the Executive Member look at 'invest to save' options on machinery that the department currently hires by purchasing the machines outright, if a clear benefit and business case be identified.
- 2) That the Committee acknowledge the self-management of bowling greens was going well.
- 3) That the Executive Member ensures that all contracts let by the department are robust to mitigate recent problems and eliminate the need to re-let the contract.
- 4) That department ensures that all service requests from Members and the public are prioritised to ensure the best use of resources.

Troubled Families

At the meeting on the 27th October 2014 the Committee were provided with an overview of the Troubled Families programme and the outcomes of the programme up to October 2014.

It was recognised that the Government wanted Local Authorities to develop new ways of working with families, which focused on lasting change. These approaches were likely to incur extra costs but the result would be a difference in the way the Council worked with families in the future which would reduce costs and improve outcomes.

The Committee heard that troubled families cost a great deal of money to local services, with the resources not necessarily helping to change families' long term. £8 billion of the £9 billion estimated to be spent on these families each year was being spent reacting to problems rather than solving them.

The Committee were informed that this programme was designed to help find different ways of working to reduce costs and improve the effectiveness of interventions.

The Committee were satisfied with the current position of the Troubled Families programme and with the outcomes provided.

Parking & Enforcement

At the meeting on 28th January 2015, information was provided by the Executive Member for Regeneration and Senior Officers on parking and Enforcement within the Borough.

At that meeting several concerns were raised which included:

- Blackburn College parking
- Pay & Display machines
- Council car parks
- Enforcement of parking around schools
- Current Parking offers
- Parking Signage

It was advised that there would be a review of the Pay & Display machines in the borough.

2. Legacy items covered by the Committee from previous years

Included within their work programme the Committee looked at legacy items from previous years:

- Waste Procurement
- 20mph Speed Limit Pilot
- Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme

Waste Procurement

At the meeting on the 27th October 2014 the Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods provided the Committee with an update on waste procurement.

It was reported that in September 2014 a report went to the Executive Board whereby the Council approved the recommendation to proceed to enter into a waste agreement with Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority (GMWDA).

The Committee heard that the Council was also looking to tender the transfer and transport facility to take waste to Bolton to be incinerated. It was reported that the transfer tender would be a 10 year open tender and that there had been interest from a number of North West companies.

The Committee were satisfied with the current position of the waste procurement and with the outcomes provided.

Selective Landlord Licensing

At the meeting on the 27th October 2014 the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services and the Director for Environment, Housing and Customer Services provided the Committee with an update on the Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme.

The Committee received information covering the following:

- The Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme Report 2014
- Engagement with Landlords
- Boundaries for Selective Landlord Licensing
- The costs involved & what was included

It was recognised that the Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme was not a panacea and the Council should continue with the scheme and extend in some of the existing areas before they started to cause the Council problems.

The Committee were satisfied with the current position of the Selective Landlord Licensing and with the outcomes provided.

20mph Speed Limit Pilot

At the meeting on the 3rd of December 2014 the Executive member for Regeneration provided the Committee with an update on the 20MPH Speed Limit Pilot.

Concerns were raised by the Committee regarding Police enforcement and it was reported that the pilot was self-enforced with traffic calming measures and no Police involvement.

It was reported that the Police did not have the equipment for 20mph enforcement.

It was recognised that residents needed re-educating on road safety and speed awareness and It was suggested that this could be carried out to parents via schools.

Concerns were raised in relation to the cost of the pilot scheme and it was reported that the Council had spent £40k on the implementation of the pilot and signage.

It was agreed that a further update would be provided to the Committee after the trial period of the 20mph Speed Limit pilot.

6. Legacy

Members are asked to consider (what if anything) they feel this Committee should leave as legacy items for a future Regeneration & Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider. All recommendations made by

the Committee will automatically have a response brought back at an appropriate time.

Councillor Naushad Surve
Chair

Councillor John Roberts
Vice Chair

Regeneration & Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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