

Performance and Downsizing of the Environment and Highways Portfolio **Recommendations**

The Performance and Downsizing of the Environment Task Group propose the following recommendations based on its findings whilst conducting its Scrutiny review. The Task Group acknowledge that the Environment Portfolio will be conducting a detailed review of its own and these recommendations are designed to assist Officers and the Executive Member.

The Task Group also wish to place on record the excellent work staff and officers are doing in the Environment Portfolio, in difficult and challenging circumstances, and that this is formally recorded in the Minutes of the meeting held on the 16th March 2016.

General Recommendations

Following its review the Task Group have identified a number of recommendations that cross each area of the Environment portfolio.

Communication

One of the key messages that the Task Group has heard is that communication within the portfolio needs to improve, in particular within teams and sections and when communicating with the public.

- 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

- 2) That the Portfolio look to where possible to make use of the youth offending team and community service to support appropriate areas or the portfolio.
- 3) 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 consider 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 out right, 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.