

Minutes of: POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 6th October 2009

**Present: Councillor H Steen, (Chair)
Councillors Farrington, Milling and Morris
Councillor Essex (as Portfolio Holder)**

**In Attendance: Liz Murphy, Head of People and Policy
Steve Jackson, Head of Regeneration
Cathy Lord, Strategic Housing and Partnership Manager
Tracy Brzozowski, Licensing and Planning Enforcement
Manager
Jenni Cook, Committee Officer**

Also Present: 1 Member of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Milling, Councillor C Pilling, Councillor P Steen and Mr P Ham.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 11th August 2009, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Although he was not a member of the Committee, Councillor Essex asked that it be noted he was a Member of the Free Lane Allotment Society and his wife held a tenancy.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

No urgent items were raised.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were raised by members of the public.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and informed Members that the following policies would be rolled forward to the next meeting; Public Toilet Strategy, Conservation Strategy prior to consultation, Update on Approval of the Core Strategy and the Information Sharing Protocol.

7. ALLOTMENT AND GARDEN LETS POLICY

The Head of People and Policy presented a report to the Committee which outlined the proposed Allotments and Garden Lets Policy. The policy confirmed that areas of responsibility in relation to the administration and management of allotments and revised the charges associated therein.

In considering the report the following items were discussed:-

- Concerns were raised that high administrative costs may deter applicants. The Committee requested that the administrative cost of £40 be reviewed and compared with other local authorities' costs.
- It was noted that there was a 12-18 month waiting list for allotments.
- Procedures that must be followed if land is suggested as suitable for allotment use.
- Clarification of legal duties and difference between allotments and garden lets. It was noted that once land was designated for statutory allotment use, there is a complicated set of legislation which would then apply to the land.
- Extension of tenancies to over 12 months could attract more funding opportunities.

Resolved:

1. That the administrative costs be reviewed and the results of this review be incorporated into the final report to Cabinet.
2. That Cabinet be recommended to develop an Allotments Strategy for the Borough which should include exploration of opportunities for increasing the number of allotments and an exploration of external funding opportunities.

8. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY AND DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

The Head of People and Policy outlined the Policies which updated Members on the development of a Bullying and Harassment Policy and a Dignity at Work Policy. The Policy had been developed to manage the Council's duty of care and commitment to providing a working environment free from bullying and harassment and to create an organisation that treats employees fairly and with dignity and respect.

In considering the report the following issues were discussed:-

- Duty of care to employees and to set the standards of employee/employer behaviour throughout the Borough.
- Importance of confidentiality for employees wishing to report problems. It was noted that this could be done via HR and/or the trade union.

Resolved:

That the contents of the Policy be noted.

9. REVIEW OF THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH GREEN VALE HOMES

The Head of Regeneration provided members with an update on the Homelessness Service Level Agreement with Greenvale Homes. It was noted that the homelessness services were a statutory function, contracted out to Greenvale Homes at the time of stock transfer. As the original three year period of the Agreement had expired this service was now in a position to be reviewed. This would be done via a report to Cabinet, however the Head of Regeneration was keen to consult with Policy Scrutiny Committee to gain initial views.

The Strategic Housing and Partnership Manager provided Members with an outline of the Council's review of homelessness services so far. The current services had been independently examined by the Homelessness Specialist Advisor from Communities and Local Government and the Regional Champion on Homelessness.(Blackpool). The Strategic Housing and Partnership Manager had also carried out consultations with service users, stakeholders and relevant local groups together with benchmarking with other homelessness services in Lancashire.

In considering the matter the following issues were discussed:-

- Importance of an easily accessible and independent service with face to face contact which would involve a simple process and privacy for enquirers.
- The number and recent increase in the level of enquiries to this service.
- Usage of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Importance of ensuring publicity for the Homelessness Service was available in all mediums, such as leaflets and Rossendale Alive
- It was noted that the work of Rossendale against Recession was playing an important part in the prevention of homelessness.

It was noted that the Regeneration Team should consult all Elected Members via email to gather views on the Homelessness Service, as they were receiving more enquires on this matter.

Resolved:

1. That the update be noted.
2. That Members be consulted with regard to the Homelessness Service.

8. STREET TRADING WITHIN THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

The Licensing and Planning Enforcement Manager presented a report to Members which asked that Members recommended adoption of the control of street trading in Rossendale be approved by Council. The Licensing and Planning Enforcement Manager noted to Members that a standard condition had been omitted from the version of the Street Trading Conditions that was presented to the Licensing Committee and it was requested that the recommendations include this condition.

In considering the report the following matters were discussed:-

- Importance of protecting traders and enforcement against unlicensed street traders.
- Clarification that Christmas Markets would not be affected by regularisation of street trading.
- Extension of prohibited areas – it was confirmed that the Licensing Committee could be asked to add/remove streets as necessary once the conditions had been formally adopted. Members were encouraged to contact the Licensing Unit if they felt any areas could be added.

Resolved:

1. That the Policy Scrutiny Committee recommend that Council adopts Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, the proposed fees, locations and conditions.
2. That the following text be included in the Street Trading Conditions at Appendix B:-
 - The consent holder and or any assistant(s) shall comply with any reasonable request made by either an authorised officer of the Council or a police officer.

Specifically:

The Consent shall be produced on request to either the authorised officer or police officer.

Requests regarding the display of either the Consent plate or badge shall be complied with immediately. The Consent holder and/or any assistant(s) shall give the authorised officer or police officer such information as is requested, to enable those officers to undertake their duties under the relevant legislation. The Consent holder and/or any assistant(s) shall comply with any requirements made by an authorised officer or police officer regarding the siting of operation of the street trading business.

11. FORWARD PLAN 1st October 2009 to 31st January 2010

The Committee Officer reported on the key decisions within the Forward Plan for the period 1st October 2009 to 31st January 2010.

It was agreed that there were sufficient items for discussion on the next agenda.

A member of the public was permitted to ask a question in respect of the Conservation Strategy which was currently being worked on, and usage of vacant, buildings in Bacup town centre. The Committee agreed to pass these comments onto the Conservation Officer.

Resolved:

That the information be noted and comments noted above be passed to the

Council's Conservation Officer.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and finished at 7.55pm

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date