

**Minutes of: POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Date of Meeting: 25 January 2010**

**Present: Councillor H Steen, (Chair)  
Councillors Farrington, Forshaw, Morris, C Pilling and  
Stansfield (substituting for Milling)**

**In Attendance: Philip Mepham, Environmental Health Manager  
Catherine Price, Area Manager  
Emma Hussain, Principal Policy Officer  
David Pierce, Principal Environmental Health Officer (Health  
and Safety)  
Adrian Smith, Principal Planner, Forward Planning  
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer**

**Also Present: 1 Members of the public**

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Dickinson, Milling and Philip Ham (co-opted Member).

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 1 December 2009 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

No urgent items were raised.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No questions were raised by members of the public. The Chair agreed to allow the member of public present to raise questions as the reports were discussed.

**6. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair outlined the proposed Agenda for the next meeting on 23<sup>th</sup> February 2010 as follows:

- Enforcement Policy Review on Licensing (taxi and entertainment)
- Draft Vacant Property Strategy

- Reuse of Building on the Countryside
- Local Development Framework Evidence Base

The Scrutiny Support Officer circulated an amended version of the Community Cohesion Policy Statement following further internal consultation. The main change was the shift from a council statement to a partnership statement

## **7. REVIEW OF ENFORCEMENT POLICIES BRIEFING NOTES**

The Environmental Health Manager gave an overview highlighting the purpose of producing the different enforcement policies.

The Statutory Code of Practice for Regulators, known as the Regulators' Compliance Code, applies to all regulatory services except Development Control. In February 2009 the Council approved an Enforcement Strategy and Policy to cover all services in general. The way the strategy applied to specific services would be shown in a series of appendices. The first two to be considered are those for the Communities Team and the Environmental Health (Commercial) services.

### **a) Communities Team**

The Area Manager gave an overview of the different enforcement services delivered by the Communities Team and confirmed how the Council was complying with Regulators Code. The service was responsible for the enforcement of the following:

- Residential and business waste
- Abandoned vehicles
- Litter
- Graffiti
- Dog Fouling
- Land and properties detrimental to the amenity

The Area Manager indicated that the Dog Warden and Pest Control Service were delivered by outside agencies, co-ordinated by the Communities Team.

There was discussion on enforcement of dog fouling, particularly in parks and the Area Manager informed the Committee that enforcement notices have to be visible to enable Officers to enforce dog fouling. The Communities Team indicated had ordered small notices to put on grassed areas of the parks.

In considering the report the following issues were discussed:-

- Issuing of fixed penalty notices and the need for the Council to raise the profile through the media explaining the intentions of the Council to use enforcement
- The need for enforcement of dog fouling over the weekend and not just weekdays

Members asked if the Council had received feedback from other authorities who do not allow dogs in parks.

Concern was also raised at the amount of black bags left outside local charity shops during the times when they are closed. The Area Manager agreed to look into the problem.

The Area Manager indicated that an Annual Report would be produced which would include enforcement activity. This would be presented to Performance Overview and Scrutiny and also sent to Policy Overview and Scrutiny for information.

## **b) Commercial Environmental Health**

The Environmental Health Officer indicated that the main purpose of all Policies was to ensure consistent enforcement services across the board. These documents could be used for consultation through the Neighbourhood Forum involvement to get the views of the community.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer for Food and Health Safety indicated that they were working closely with all Regulators to target enforcement activity as required for the Borough.

The overall aim of the service was to promote and protect the health of persons, both within and outside the Borough, by controlling the risks associated with the consumption of food and drink, and the investigation and control of designated communicable diseases and by working in partnership to tackle obesity and promote and encourage health eating.

The Service also aims to ensure the health, safety and welfare of people in the workplace and the public generally through enforcement of health and safety legislation.

The service is now moving away from visiting premises with a new detailed audit scrutiny of their food safety plans, although this is restricted to bigger businesses. The 'Safer Food, Better Business' food safety plan discusses how small businesses are complying.

A number of questions were raised in relation to the following:

- The number of Officers available to undertake visits
- The process for reviewing small businesses
- Different types of visits ie restaurants

The Environmental Health Manager indicated that a Peer Challenge and Self Assessment process was currently under way and an action plan will be agreed for implementation during 2010/11. This would be presented to Performance Scrutiny and copied to Policy Scrutiny members for information.

## **8. COMMUNITY COHESION POLICY STATEMENT INCORPORATING THE EQUALITIES STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Principal Policy Officer informed the Committee that the Policy Statement had been amended following a management team meeting and further internal consultation. The main change was the shift from a council statement to a partnership statement, of the Rossendale Partnership (LSP).

The Council took the decision to mainstream its approach to community cohesion via its Neighbourhood Forums and more specifically the development of Neighbourhood Plans, which would capture actions related to building cohesive communities.

She highlighted the concept of Community Cohesion which was 'building and strengthening strong communities that get on well together throughout the Borough.

In 2009, the Council was awarded Beacon Status for Building Cohesive and Resilient Communities and there were a number of things that the Council had contributed to to support this, which includes:

- Welcome packs for new communities
- Supporting local events that bring people together, such as the Mela
- Intergeneration work
- Dispelling myths
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A number of other projects/actions also contributed – further detail can be provided.

The Principal Policy Officer informed Members of the Summary Community Cohesion Statement which would be included in the adoption of Neighbourhood Plans.

There was a suggestion for an Open Day, bringing all Leaders from the different communities together.

### **Equalities Strategy Review**

The Principal Policy Officer explained that the Council was required to undertake a refresh of its Equalities Strategy every three years. The Strategy links to the new Equalities Framework, and the Equalities Bill 2009, which confirmed that everyone has the right to be treated fairly and equally. The Bill brings together all existing equality legislation and strengthens protection, as well as putting new duties on all public bodies.

An Equalities Report was presented to the Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee annually. It was suggested by a Member that the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee also received a yearly update. The Principal Policy Officer

indicated that there will be an Annual Report on the Neighbourhood Plans which would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny.

**Resolved:**

1. That the Committee approve the Community Cohesion Policy Statement and the revised Equality Strategy.
2. That the Committee agree that any further amendments to the Community Cohesion Policy Statement and Equalities Strategy be delegated to the Head of People and Policy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

## **9. NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT**

The Principal Planner, Forward Plan informed Members of the publication of the National Policy Statements and their impact on Rossendale.

The 2008 Planning Act introduced a new regime for determining large planning applications of national interest. A new Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) will now make decisions on applications above specified thresholds, which would essentially remove decision making from local to national level.

The draft National Policy Statements are intended to provide a framework for consideration of nationally important infrastructure. The major focus of the current consultation is on energy matters and the only site specific Policy Statement published to date is EN-6 on nuclear energy. The other documents on topics such as renewable energy offer guidance on what information should be included in applications. The current consultation for the energy element covers renewable energy schemes of over 50MW for onshore wind (eg about 17 large wind turbines). Anything above about 17 wind turbines would be submitted to the IPC for their decision. Electricity lines, gas and oil pipelines of over a certain measurement are also covered.

Local planners would have to produce an Impact Report on any application submitted to the IPC from the Rossendale area. This would have to assess the developers technical data and public consultation and could be quite resource intensive.

A member of the public asked about the use of hydro power and the Principal Planner indicated that there is a sub-regional study being undertaken, along with other Councils, to include Hydro power. It was agreed that this be included in the Council's response to the consultation.

**Resolved:**

That Members agree that the following should be included in the Council's

response to the Consultation.

- a) That local Planning Authorities should be involved at the earliest possible stage by developers and the Infrastructure Planning Commission.
- b) That landscape impacts should take into full account local studies, such as those currently being undertaken for the Council and neighbouring authorities
- c) That hydro power be addressed in the Renewable energy NPS.

**10. FORWARD PLAN 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 to 30th April 2010**

Members discussed the Forward Plan for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

It was agreed that there were sufficient items for discussion on the agenda for the meeting on 23<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

**The meeting commenced at 10am and finished at 12.40pm**

Signed.....  
(Chair)

Date .....