

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 20 APRIL, 2016 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT:
Councillors

Preece, J. (Chairman)
Witton, P. (Vice-Chairman)

Bowater, J.	Grocott, M.R.
Dean, A.	Lea, C.I.
Dudson, Miss M.J.	Pearson, A.
Foley, D.	Sutton, Mrs. H.M.
Grice, Mrs. D.	

Also in attendance:-

Councillor A. Dudson (Environment Portfolio Leader-observer)

23. Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

24. Declarations of Interests of Members and Officers in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No further declarations were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members Interests.

25. Minutes

With regard to page 17 reference was made to the continuing problem of vehicles that were being left with "For Sale" notices on them on green areas of land which did not belong to the individuals concerned. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager advised that Members should contact the Council's Enforcement Officer when they had problems of this nature and he would ensure the vehicles were removed.

Reference was also made to waste containers being left on the street and the Waste and Engineering Services Manager confirmed that once the policy was in place the Refuse Team would look at the areas where the problem was at its worst.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February, 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed.

26. Dog Fouling

The Senior Environmental Health Officer provided Members with a presentation which outlined the background, current legal position, education, enforcement, challenges and options.

It was explained that dog fouling was a high profile emotive subject that generated regular complaints. In the year 2012-13 there were 185 complaints, in 2013-14 there were 125, in 2014-15 there were 101 and in 2015-16 there were 100 complaints. Members noted that these figures did not include complaints made to the Street Cleansing Team.

Members were advised that Dog Control Orders were applied to some areas but not all land in the district. There was a requirement for dog fouling to be “removed from land forthwith” and failing to dispose of it properly amounted to littering. Exclusions applied on both private land and Forestry Commission land. The Dog Control Orders were to be replaced by Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) before 31 March, 2017.

In terms of education a number of things were undertaken. These included signage on lampposts, leaflets, stickers and stencilling pavements in hotspot areas. The Officer advised that community engagement was undertaken and in South Staffs District Council’s area Parish Council’s had been issued with stencilling kits to use at locations where there was the biggest problem with dog fouling. He commented that there was potential for Cannock Chase District Council to do something similar. In addition, Officers engaged with dog walkers and undertook work in schools. In South Staffs area school children had been involved in a competition to design posters to help remind dog owners to dispose of their dogs waste appropriately. These posters had worked well and there was potential for Cannock Chase to do a similar competition in local schools.

Enforcement patrols were conducted in hotspot areas and the following outcomes were noted:-

2015-16 – 0 Fixed Penalty Notices Issued and 0 Prosecutions;
2014-15 – 0 Fixed Penalty Notices Issued and 0 Prosecutions;
2013-14 – 2 Fixed Penalty Notices Issued and 0 Prosecutions;
2012-13 – 23 Fixed Penalty Notices Issues and 1 Prosecution.

There was a budget of £27k for Dog Control, £14k for stray kennelling and £13k for collection of stray dogs. It was a high cost service which was not covered by the income from any fines received.

Members noted the challenges facing the Service, these included:-

- Mixed messages. On Cannock Chase the Forestry Commission do not provide dog litter bins to dispose of bags; however, at places such as Castle Ring/Hednesford Hills the Council provided dog litter bins. Additionally there was confusion as to whether dog waste could be placed in all litter bins or only in the specific dog litter bins.
- Presence at time of incident
- Identification of offenders
- Public's assistance
- Poo fairy – a campaign undertaken a few years ago “Keep Britain Tidy”

With regard to future service delivery the Officer commented that a number of local authorities had undertaken various initiatives. These included naming/shaming offenders, spraying faeces with brightly coloured paint or sticking small sandcastle type flags with messages into the faeces.

Members noted the following options for future service delivery:-

- No change
- Contractor (additional cost – not balanced by income)
- Public/special interest groups
- CCTV Surveillance (limited effect)

The Officer was seeking feedback from Members on the methods undertaken to deal with the issue of dog fouling in terms of the approach through publicity, education and enforcement activities. He circulated a short survey and asked Members to complete and return these to the Environmental Health Team. Members were then offered the opportunity to ask questions.

A Member considered that there was also an issue with cats who generally left their mess in people's gardens. The Senior Environmental Health Officer commented that cats were wild by nature and there was no legislation to deal with this.

A Member made reference to the park in Brindley Heath, next to the railway line where she had witnessed dog fouling between the hours of 7.00am and 9.00am each day. The Officer advised that this area would be added to the list to patrol.

A Member asked whether the public should take photographs when they witnessed a dog fouling incident. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager commented that he would not advise anyone to do this. Even if a photograph was taken the individual concerned would still have to be identified.

Members considered that educating the public about being responsible dog owners was important and there was support for working with Parish Council's to tackle this problem. Additionally it was noted that working with the

community and in particular with local schools to produce posters was a good initiative.

27. Street Cleansing Contract

The Waste and Engineering Services Manager provided the Committee with a presentation which outlined the following:-

The Street Cleansing Service was made up of 15 employees, 1 supervisor, 2 precinct sweepers, 1 road sweeper and 3 cage vehicles. The main duties of the Team included mechanical sweeping, litter picking, fly tipping, emptying rubbish bins, removing needle sticks (syringes) and graffiti.

With regard to mechanical sweeping 46,000 m² of town centres was swept every day, 7 days a week. 1,000km of district roads were swept on a 13 week programme, 4 times a year. 50,000m² of district shopping areas and car parks were swept every week. This generated 845 tonnes on waste based on 2013/14 figures.

In terms of litter picking 46,000 m² of town centres was litter picked 7 days a week. 80km of district roads and open spaces was litter picked every day. A litter pick & cleanse took place twice a week at over 40 play areas. All district B roads were litter picked within 2 weeks. This amounted to 470 tonnes of waste based on 2013/14 figures.

The Committee noted that 390 street and open spaces litter bins were emptied at least twice a week and 110 town centre bins were emptied every day 7 days a week. A third of the total amount (over 150) of litter bins have been replaced (this includes all town centre bins and many bins on the district shopping areas and highways). All bins have a plaque or a sticker advising that dog waste was allowed. A new "trial bin" system was being undertaken to assess how well used the bins were in certain areas. This was designed to maximize the right locations.

Members were advised that on average 6 needle sticks were collected each week. This was a lot lower than a number of other authorities.

In terms of fly tipping Members noted that the aim was to remove all fly tipping and road kill within 24 hours of it being reported. It would be removed the same day if considered dangerous. This amounted to 20 tonnes of waste based on 2013/14 figures. It was the aim to remove graffiti 24 hours of it being reported; same day if considered offensive.

The Committee was advised that the service had been updated 12 months ago to include:-

- 3 new caged tippers
- 2 new precinct sweepers
- 1 new channel sweeper
- A high pressure washer for removing graffiti and chewing gum

There were a number of weaknesses affecting the Service, these included:-

- Employees days fully planned
- No response team
- Finite resource
- No internal employee HGV sweeper driver cover

Members were asked to consider whether they were satisfied with the present levels of cleansing across the district given the Council's current and medium term predicted financial state.

A Member asked the Officer to indicate what would be required to address the weaknesses in the Team. The Officer confirmed that ideally he would have a response team available and another trained HGV driver. He clarified that Members were being asked to consider whether they were happy with the current level of service. If it was considered that additional resources were required a report would be prepared for consideration by Cabinet.

A Councillor asked whether any existing employees could be trained to operate the HGV. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager advised that anyone wishing to operate a HGV had to undertake stringent tests and also have a medical. He would seek to recruit an individual with a HGV licence when there was a need to replace existing employees in the future.

A Member asked whether a claim was made against the County Council when the Street Cleansing Team undertook jobs that were the County's responsibility. The Officer commented that in cases such as this the County Council would advise that the job should be left and the County would do it in order of priority. However, he did not consider this to be acceptable to either the residents or Members. Therefore the Team often carried out the smaller jobs that the County were responsible for. The Member considered that the public should be made aware that Cannock Council were undertaking County Council duties on these occasions.

Members considered that the Street Cleansing Team were doing a good job given the size of the area they covered. It was considered important that the Team be kept at maximum efficiency.

The Waste and Engineering Services Manager confirmed that this item would be included on the 2016/17 Work Programme of the Committee for further consideration and discussion at the next meeting.

28. Waste Contract

The Waste and Engineering Services Manager provided Members with an update on the transfer of the Waste Contract.

He advised that the transfer of the contract to BIFFA had been undertaken extremely successfully and no major issues had been reported. All employees had transferred across and were still working for BIFFA. Telephone calls regarding waste collections were down by two to three percent.

He made reference to the work currently being undertaken to integrate the CRM system with the BIFFA system which enabled information from residents or issues regarding missed bins to be input straight away.

Members considered the service was operating well since the transfer. The Head of Housing and Waste Management commented that BIFFA had been asked to ensure that residents did not see any difference in the service following the transfer. The Waste and Engineering Services Manager advised that a default notice could be issued to the Contractor if any bins were not returned outside the residents homes once they had been emptied.

The Chairman agreed that Councillor A. Dudson, the Environment Portfolio Leader could speak. He made reference to Oak Tree Farm in Slitting Mill. The owner was allowing waste to be tipped on his land and had previously been fined a while ago for burying animals. The Environment Agency and the District and County Councils had been involved. He had been seeking information on the current position and considered the Committee should be made aware of this issue.

The Waste and Engineering Services Manager advised that this issue could be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

A Member considered that the Work Programmes of the Scrutiny Committees should be flexible to enable additional topics/issues to be added as necessary throughout the year.

The following suggestions for the Work Programme for 2016/17 were made:-

- Update on the concerns regarding Oak Tree Farm, Slitting Mill
- Countryside Review
- Implications following the closure of Rugeley Power Station

The Head of Governance reminded the Committee that any suggestions for the Work Programme would be considered by the new membership of the Environment Scrutiny Committee at their first meeting in the 2016/17 Municipal year.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm.

CHAIRMAN