

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 AUGUST, 2012 AT 4.00 P.M.
IN THE CIVIC CENTRE, BEECROFT ROAD, CANNOCK

PART 1

PRESENT: Councillors

Bottomer, B. (Chairman)
Lovell, A. (Vice-Chairman)

Anslow, C.	Sutton, Mrs. H. M.
Ball, G. D.	Toth, J.
Jones, R.	

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

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

No declarations of interests were submitted

3. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March, 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Proposed Work Programme 2012-2013 Municipal Year

Consideration was given to the proposed Work Programme.

The Head of Environmental Services advised that in order to increase dry recycable waste a pilot scheme was to be undertaken with respect to small electrical items, such as kettles, toasters, hairdryers etc., and batteries. The contractor, Biffa, had offered to fit some cages on the side of their collection vehicles for this purpose and the waste electrical and electronic equipment (Weee) would be recycled rather than go to landfill. The outcome of the scheme would be reported to the Committee in either December 2012 or March 2013. If the scheme was successful it would be rolled out across the district at no financial cost to the Council.

It was intended to publicise the scheme on the sides of buses and through 'Chase Matters'. Officers were meeting with the P. R. and Marketing Section to find the best ways of publicising the pilot scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted.

5 Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Provision within Cannock Chase

The Committee received a presentation from the Waste and Engineering Services Manager and the Parks and Open Services Manager.

The Head of Environmental Services advised that street cleansing and grounds maintenance had, over a number of years, been outsourced to an external contractor. On 23 January, 2012 the contractor that was being used, Fountains PLC, had gone into administration and emergency measures had been put in place in order to provide a service. He had met with the Leader of the Council and the Environment Portfolio Leader and it had been decided to engage agency staff whilst matters were being considered.

Cabinet at their meeting in March 2012 had agreed that the Streetscene service would be provided in-house for a period of up to 18 months, whilst a full evaluation and appraisal of future service provision was undertaken. The in-house team would be employed within existing service budgetary constraints, the majority of whom would be former Fountains PLC employees, who would have previous experience of the service provision.

The Waste and Engineering Services Manager explained that the Cleansing Service was made up of 1 Supervisor, 15 employees, 2 precinct sweepers, 1 road sweeper and 3 cage vehicles. The main duties included mechanical sweeping, litter picking, fly tipping, emptying rubbish bins, collecting needle sticks and removing graffiti.

The mechanical sweeper swept over 46,000 square metres of town centres every day, 7 days a week, 1,000 kilometres of roads on a 13 week programme, 4 times a year and 50,000 square metres of shopping areas and car parks each week. Litter was collected from town centres and roads and open spaces each day and from over 40 play areas twice a week and all B roads within a two week period. Over 370 street bins were emptied twice a week and 100 town centre bins every day. An average of 6 needle sticks was collected each week which was considerably lower than a number of other authorities. The Police were informed of the areas concerned. Fly tipping was aimed to be removed within 24 hours of it being reported or on the same day if considered to be dangerous, with 131 tonnes being removed in 2011/12. If it was possible to trace those that had been responsible for the flytipping, they were prosecuted. Graffiti was also aimed to be removed within 24 hours of it being reported or on the same day if considered offensive.

A Member asked if a flood risk assessment was carried out and was advised that this was a County Council issue. The Chairman advised that the matter would be discussed at the meeting of the Rugeley & Brereton Forum to be held on 11 September, 2012.

Members reported a number of areas of concern with respect to litter issues, which the Officers undertook to investigate.

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager Services explained that the following services were currently being provided in-house –

- Streetscene staff
- Cemetery staff
- Countryside Rangers

- Play area staff

It was explained that approximately 514 acres of grass were cut with areas being mown either once a year or up to 126 times a year. Cannock Chase Council also acted as an agent for the County Council and cut 620,000 square metres of highway verges. Staff also looked after 133,000 square metres of shrub beds and 7,800 on behalf of the County Council. Some 19,207 square metres of hedges were cut, some once a year, others twice, by a mixture of hand or by flail, and 24,500 square metres was cut on behalf of the County Council.

Labour intensive maintenance work was carried out at Cannock Park Golf Course on the tees, fairways, greens and bunkers. Floral displays across Cannock Chase were made up from in the region of 107,000 plants and 168 hanging baskets. Staff looked after 24 football pitches, including their fertilisation and renovation, and 85 countryside sites in the area (equal to 800 football pitches). Volunteers worked on nature conservation areas, such as Castle Ring, and training was provided as a means of developing their skills to try and get people back into work.

The Council maintained 3 cemeteries and 6 closed churchyards and undertook all burials and headstone testing. Each cemetery had an on site presence who could deal with any problem that may arise.

Weekly checks were carried out on the 45 play areas, 3 skate parks and 4 teen shelters with 95% of the repairs being carried out by staff. An independent check was carried out annually on these sites.

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager advised that external partners provided staffing for Cannock, Elmore, Ravenhill and Hednesford Parks, and carried out spraying of weeds and undertook tree work, including planting. It was explained that weed control spraying was a specialist area and it was essential that the correct equipment was provided as substances used could be hazardous to health. Cannock Chase Council owned in the region of 28,000 trees, with approximately 8,000 trees being inspected annually. Tree Preservation Orders were administered and advice given by Officers on the care of trees.

Green Flags had continued to be awarded for Cannock Park, Castle Ring, Ravenhill Park and Elmore Park. Cannock Chase Council was in the top quartile in Staffordshire of those awarded Green Flags, which was a difficult award to achieve. Each park had its own unique features with Ravenhill Park having a paddling pool and Elmore Park a pet's corner and lake.

Grounds staff totalled 31 (10 seasonal) made up from –

- Contract Manager
- Golf Course - 3
- Grass cutting – 17
- Ornamental Horticulture - 10

Other Client staffing included –

- Streetscene Team Leader
- Contract Supervisor
- Play Area Staff – 2

- Principal Landscape Officer
- Landscape Officer
- Countryside Officers – 3

- Landscape and Tree Protection Officer
- Bereavement Services Manager
- Contract Support Officer
- Cemetery Supervisor
- Enquiries/ Bookings Officer
- Cemetery Operatives

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager explained that the Urban Forestry Officer and the Landscape Development Manager reported directly to him.

A Member raised concern relating to the number of scrap metal dealers driving around the area and the noise they were making. It was explained that it was illegal for them to use electronic equipment to amplify the sound to attract attention. Concern was also raised that when the pilot scheme was being undertaken to collect small electrical equipment, this may attract the attention of the scrap metal dealers.

The Parks and Open Spaces Manager was asked how steep banks were maintained. He advised that 5,500 square metres had been identified as banks which some were problem areas. Health and Safety Regulations would not allow operatives to use certain equipment on banks with a slope of 30 degrees or more. This was due to accidents having occurred resulting in a person being killed and another losing a limb.

Officers had looked at a number of ways to overcome this issue and viewed mowers that were fit for use on certain banks. They had been given a demonstration of the mower and had used that opportunity to have some problem banks cut. However due to the costs involved it was possible that the mower would be hired on a short term basis. When Cannock Cricket and Hockey Club hosted the hockey team from Pakistan for Olympic training purposes, the Council assisted the Club in preparing the site and had cut some of its banks. It was hoped that this could possibly continue on a regular basis at a charge to them, and this could potentially lead, in the long term, to a suitable mower being able to be purchased.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 5.15 p.m.