

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
Thursday, 19th May, 2005

Present:- Councillor Atkin (in the Chair); Councillors Burke, Clarke, Hall, Hodgkiss, McNeely, Nightingale and P. A. Russell. together with Mr. D. Alderson (Housing Tenant Panel)

Councillor Ellis was in attendance at the invitation of the Chairman.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rushforth, Vines and The Mayor (Councillor F. Wright).

159. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Chairman expressed his disappointment that the Scrutiny Panel had not received the report on the possible split of the Housing Revenue Account between Neighbourhoods and the ALMO which had been deferred since 24th February, 2005 (Minute No. 128 refers).

Resolved:- That the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods clarify with the Head of Corporate Finance the position with regard to the report and that it be submitted to the 16th June meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel.

160. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS.

There were no members of the press and public present at the meeting.

161. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

162. NEIGHBOURHOODS RESTRUCTURE - PROGRESS REPORT

The Executive Director of Neighbourhoods submitted a progress report on the restructuring of the Neighbourhoods Programme Area.

Recruitment to the new posts was almost complete with only 6 members of staff not in a permanent post. A total of 295 full-time equivalents had been successful in obtaining a new post, 62% of which represented a promotion. 162 full-time equivalents had remained the same principally within the Neighbourhood Services Departments with 12 new employees having joined the Programme Area.

The restructuring had been a massive exercise and it had been down to the efforts of the staff that the Service had continued functioning and meeting the Performance Indicators.

Work was now taking place to ascertain what level of savings had been

achieved by the restructuring.

Discussion ensued on the report with the following points raised/clarified:-

- Weighted criteria had been applied to the Area Offices and those suffering from multiple deprivation had seen an increase in staffing levels.
- 2010 Rotherham Ltd. would review everything that was transferred to them. They would have to ensure they achieved the 2* rating and focus on the 3 issues identified by the Audit Commission i.e. equality and diversity, value for money and the competitiveness of the DSO.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Head of Corporate Finance submit a report to the June meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel on the savings achieved by the restructuring.

163. FLYTIPPING SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - UPDATE REPORT

The Head of Neighbourhood Services presented a joint report produced by Economic and Development Services (Streetpride Services) and Neighbourhoods on the 12 recommendations the Fly Tipping Scrutiny Review Group had identified as areas of potential service improvements.

Several of the recommendations were already planned and resource allocations made within either Streetpride or Neighbourhoods Service Plans. A review of Warden Services had been undertaken by the Scrutiny Review Group, the proposals from which would inform the future direction and funding of Warden and Ranger services. The development of IT compatibility and web sites required RBT engagement and firm costings agreed; no detail was available at the present time.

Discussion ensued on the report. The following points were raised:-

- The number of fixed penalty fines issued for littering and small scale fly tippers had increased over the past year. Attempts would be made to further increase this year.
- The Service continually monitored the take up of the bulky item collection service. The price had been held in 2003/04 and 2004/05 but had increased this financial year.
- The "Toxic" waste education campaign was currently being taken on board by schools.
- 6 staff dealt with "Streetpride Connect" which was much wider than just environmental issues and covered a whole range of Streetpride issues.
- The Waste Management Unit was aware of the commercial rates for waste disposal. Often private contractors followed Council price

increases.

- The Waste Minimisation Programme was still to be developed and worked through the Service Plan.

It was noted that the Caretakers and Wardens Review was to be submitted to the 14th July Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel.

Resolved:- (1) That the actions taken in response to the Fly Tipping Scrutiny Review Group's findings be noted.

(2) That the Scrutiny Adviser convene a meeting with local Magistrates as a matter of priority to discuss penalties for those found guilty of fly tipping.

(3) That quarterly reports be submitted to the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel on the take up of the bulky item collection service.

164. CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The Panel noted the decisions under delegated powers by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services held on 11th April, 2005.

Further to Minute No. 201 (Sheltered Housing and Aged Person's Accommodation Review), the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services reported that a project plan had now been drawn up. A letter was to be sent to all Members setting out 4 consultation dates and inviting Members to be involved. A letter was also to be sent to residents informing them of the next stage of the process.

165. ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st April, 2005, were noted.

Arising from Minute No. 153 (Asylum Seekers Team), it was noted that a visit had taken place on 9th May, 2005, a report on which would be submitted to the June meeting of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel.

166. PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

The Panel noted the minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee held on 8th April, 2005.

167. CO-OPTED MEMBERS

The Chairman reported that a letter had been sent on his behalf to all Co-opted Members thanking them for their work during the 2004/05 Municipal Year. The next meeting would consider the issue of co-option for 2005/06.

168. CHAIRMAN

Councillor Atkin thanked the Panel for their work and help over the past year whilst he had been Chairman.

The Cabinet Member of Housing and Environmental Services expressed her appreciation to Councillor Atkin in his work as Chairman.