

**MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL
WEDNESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2014**

Councillors B Blake (Chair), Gunes, Hare, Newton and Wright

CSP21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gallagher and Jogee and Mr Sygrave (co-opted Member)

CSP22. URGENT BUSINESS

The papers in relation to agenda item 5 (Scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy) were admitted as a late item of urgent business as they needed to include information regarding proposals for consideration by the Cabinet which were not available for release until after the agenda for the Panel had been circulated.

CSP23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

CSP24. DEPUTATIONS/ PETITIONS/ PRESENTATIONS/ QUESTIONS

None.

CSP25. SCRUTINY OF THE DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Panel considered the budget proposals contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) covered within the terms of reference for the Panel as follows:

Reference 31: Residential Street Cleaning

Panel Members expressed concern that the reduction in the level of street sweeping might impact on levels of cleanliness. It was noted that the service had comprehensive information available regarding cleanliness levels in the borough and there were clear differences between areas. Consideration was therefore being given to where savings could safely be made without adversely affecting levels of cleanliness. The proposal was to introduce a litter picking service which could cover a far larger area in a day than sweeping. Streets would nevertheless get both litter picking and sweeping. It was anticipated that the changes would lead to a more consistent level of cleanliness.

Panel Members felt that money should be invested in publicising the cost of littering and other measures to prevent it occurring. It was important that civic pride be developed as part of this. Residents soon became aware of any deterioration in cleanliness. The arguments in favour of introducing litter picking appeared persuasive but Panel Members would want to see evidence that it was effective in practice.

The Assistant Director stated that the service would look at what others boroughs did and adopt of more pro-active approach. The vast majority of people viewed littering as unacceptable though.

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The Panel noted that the proposals were being developed in consultation with Veolia. The Assistant Director reported that incorporating feedback from local residents and ward Councillors into plans could potentially be the next stage of development.

AGREED:

That information regarding comparative level of cleanliness of different parts of the borough be shared with Panel Members.

32: Borough wide sweeping reductions

Panel Members were concerned that this proposal might impact negatively on the level of cleanliness of town centres and that this might adversely affect local businesses. The Assistant Director reported that there were no plans to change the cleaning of town centres at the moment other than the introduction of litter picking.

33: Removal of Recycling Bring Sites

The Panel noted that sites for charitable collections of shoes and clothing would not be affected by the proposals.

35; Reorganisation of the Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Team (ASBAT)

The Panel stated that the service was very important to residents and were concerned that the budget reductions might impact adversely on the service that they received.

The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that the aim was to make the service more efficient by bringing together a number of teams that had responsibility for enforcement. The Assistant Director for Environmental Services and Community Safety reported that the reductions in staff would be at managerial level. The intention was to offer a broader anti social behaviour function that also included noise and street enforcement and other activities. Staff would have a range of enforcement capabilities. No front line staff would be affected by the proposals and the impact of the changes would be monitored.

Panel Members asked what action was being taken to encourage people to improve behaviour. The Assistant Director reported that this could be addressed by developing a greater level of pride amongst residents for their area. However, this was not necessarily easy to achieve across the borough. Communication was important and, in particular, promoting the message that people would be prosecuted if necessary if they committed anti social behaviour. Some excellent results had already been achieved by the ASBAT and publicising successes acted as a deterrent to others through increasing the perception of risk.

The Panel noted that Estate Managers already addressed issues regarding behaviour with tenants and intervened, where appropriate, at an early stage. The thresholds for the ASBAT were quite high and a softer approach to addressing issues was used in the first instance.

36; Reorganisation of part of the Neighbourhood Action Team

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The Assistant Director reported that it was proposed to pool all street enforcement functions as part of a new delivery model. A new role would be designed for staff that would involve them concentrating solely on issuing fixed penalty notices. Research had been undertaken with other local authorities on how they provided similar services. Based on this, it was anticipated that the issuing of fixed penalty notices would increase and that they would help cover the cost of the team.

The Panel noted that the service currently issued 1200 notices per year. Other boroughs that had teams that were focussed solely on enforcement issued up to 5000 per year. Increasing the number of notices issued would increase the perception of risk amongst people who might be tempted to commit offences.

Panel Members commented that it was possible that the swift removal of dumped items might encourage people to fly tip. It was noted that various methods could be used to try and encourage behavioural change and that appropriate options would be explored by the service.

AGREED:

That statistics regarding the number of reports of fly tipping that had been received would be shared with the Panel.

37; Restructure of the Emergency Planning Team

The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that the Emergency Planning Team were responsible for a number of functions, including the setting up of Community Assistance Centres when necessary. Pan London discussions were taking place regarding the way that emergency planning was undertaken and it was possible that it would have changed by the time that the savings were required to be implemented. The Assistant Director reported that the team was small but there were a large number of other officers who provided assistance when required.

38; Improved Street Lighting – LED Investment

The Panel noted that the investment would cover the remainder of street lighting i.e. that which not already LED. The Panel also suggested that old lamp standards may have re-sale value that the Council could exploit.

39: Future of Wolves Lane Nursery Site

The Cabinet Member reported that the provision of alternative facilities was being considered as well as staffing issues. In addition, alternative options for the people with learning disabilities who used the site were also being looked at.

The Panel noted that funding came from a range of sources. The intention was to continue the service from another site. There were no staff reductions involved in the proposal.

Panel Members felt that the service was of social value to the community and were concerned that this might potentially be diminished.

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That a report back on progress with the implementation of the proposal be made to the Panel in due course and that a visit for Panel Members be arranged to the site.

40: Closure of Park View Road Re-use and Recycling Centre

The Panel noted that most boroughs only had one centre. Park View was comparatively small. Users of the site would be notified of alternative options when it was closed, including those in other boroughs.

41: Increased Income from Parks Events and 28: Efficiency Savings and Delivery Review of Parks

Panel Members stated that Parks Forums had expressed concerns regarding the reduced staffing levels in parks. The Panel noted that the proposals entailed reductions in the back office for allotments through a parks management reduction in year 1 and a back office reduction in year 3. The future of allotments was likely to be based on self management.

The Cabinet Member stated that the increased income from events was helping to maintain the service. The Finsbury Park Stakeholder Group had proven to be successful and there were areas where there was consensus. He wanted the Stakeholder Group to improve and include the neighbouring boroughs of Hackney and Islington so that a joint approach could be agreed. Concert promoters were required to observe licensing conditions and any breaches would be acted upon.

The Panel noted the proposals were within the existing policy and only two large events had taken place in the current year. Four would be required to achieve the savings. Officers considered that it would be possible to reduce the amount of time allowed to promoters for set up and take down.

42: Increased Income from Licensing and Enforcement Action

The Panel noted that services such as pest control operated in a commercial environment and therefore had to be mindful of what others charged. This had been taken into account in the proposals.

43: Increase in Parking Charges, 44: Increased Enforcement of Moving Traffic Offences, 45: Delivery of Parking Plan Including Expansion of CPZs

Panel Members expressed concern at the possible implications for town centres of increasing parking charges as this might deter visitors. In addition, they felt that any additional use of bailiffs should be handled sensitively.

The Cabinet Member for Environment stated that the service had difficult choices to make. The rates of parking charges that were being proposed were not above that of statistical neighbours and the changes would bring them into line with them. Some of the Council's car parks were very busy whilst others were under used. He would be happy to undertake a joint piece of work on the issue with the Panel on the issue.

The Panel noted that there had been no increases since 2011 and the proposed increase was merely to keep up with inflation. There was a particular issue with the

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lack of availability of parking spaces. In respect of bailiffs, they were only employed as a last resort. The intention was to improve recovery levels by improving internal processes.

The Cabinet Member stated that the issue of parking charges was controversial. Some Councils had provided a limited amount of free time but had found that there had been no evidence of greater footfall. London Councils had undertaken work on the issue and had found that the attractiveness of shops was more of an issue for visitors than the price of parking. Additional evidence would nevertheless be welcome.

AGREED:

That the Panel consider the issue of parking charges as a potential future in-depth project.

General

The Panel felt that the MTFs proposals had been presented in an interesting and thoughtful way. The proposals were also clear within the documentation.

CSP26. WORK PLAN

AGREED:

That the future work plan for the Panel be noted.

**Clr Barbara Blake
Chair**