

Environment Select Committee

A meeting of Environment Select Committee was held on Monday, 21st April, 2008.

Present: Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg (Chairman), Cllr Ann Cains (Vice Councillor Mick Stoker), Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Ken Dixon (Vice Councillor Andrew Larkin), Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Mick Womphrey and Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: Mrs D Hurwood (R), Mr G Birtle, Mrs T Harrison and Mr D Ladd (LD)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Michael Smith (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Andrew Larkin and Cllr Mick Stoker

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Draft minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2008

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2008.

Concluded that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2008 be approved and forwarded on to Council for consideration.

3 Terms of Reference

Members considered the terms of reference.

Members were advised that a 'PICK system' had been formulated which produced a number of potential topics to be scrutinised. The topics went to Scrutiny Liaison who chose a top ten of the topics. Executive Scrutiny then prioritised the scrutiny topics; as a result the Environment Select Committee was allocated the 'Customer First' topic.

The Environment Select Committee's chosen topic was not placed in the top ten and was therefore not approved for scrutiny.

Members expressed their concern about the PICK system and advised that they would keep pushing for the dog fouling issue to be scrutinised. It was felt that the scoring had not prioritised Members request, however it was understood that there would be changes to the process in 2009.

Members advised that they had not received any complaints regarding Customer First and were therefore uncertain of the benefits in undertaking a review on Customer First.

Members advised that the Select Committee could approach Viewpoint focus groups and Disability Advisory Groups to provide input if sufficient information was not gathered further into the review.

The Committee could undertake comparisons with other authorities.

Members queried the timescale of the review. Members requested additional meetings to ensure that the timescale was achieved. If an additional meeting in May was not possible the Committee would not be able to submit the completed review by the Cabinet meeting in October and the evidence gathering could not begin until June.

Concluded that the terms of Reference be agreed with the following amendments:-

- Addition of a meeting in May to endeavour to achieve the completion of the review by October 2008. The Democratic Services Officer would liaise with the Chairman to confirm availability for an additional meeting. Members will be informed at earliest opportunity of additional meeting.
- Undertake comparisons with other authorities and request information from Viewpoint focus groups and Disability Advisory Groups later in the review if information is still lacking.

4 Scrutiny Review of Customer First

Mrs Hurwood - The Head of Customer Services and Taxation gave a presentation on the role of Customer First which was to Develop a customer-focussed culture throughout the Council and deliver excellent customer service. Members were advised that stage 1 was launched in 2003 and was completed by over 30 services. Stage 2 was launched in June 2007 with a target of all services to have achieved the standard by March 2009. Members were informed that seven services had already achieved the standard.

Mrs Hurwood advised that there were five themes that were central to the programme:-

- ~Service Delivery
- ~Service Responsiveness
- ~Organisational Culture and Attitude
- ~Accessibility Services
- ~Service Equality

Members were advised on the following:-

- The Assessment Process
- Customer Services Standards
- Service Improvement Team
- Other Customer Service Excellence Schemes

Customer Service was an on going matter therefore the Customer First team was considering what direction the service would go to ensure continued service and improvement.

Members expressed concern with the jargon that was used in information provided to customers and suggested that a requirement to use "plain English" should form part of the Customer First Programme.

Members discussed the benefits of mystery shopping and the role that Members could play in this and acting as volunteer assessors.

Members expressed an interest in establishing what customer service

excellence schemes existed in private sector organisations as well as in other local authorities.

The Committee acknowledged that more could be done for deaf, blind and disabled customers.

Members were advised that the first face to face contact centre would be in Thornaby.

Mrs Hurwood was thanked for her presentation.

Concluded that the report be noted.