

Environment Select Committee

A meeting of Environment Select Committee was held on Monday, 9th March, 2009.

Present: Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg(Chairman), Cllr Michael Smith(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Colin Leckonby, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: M. Batty, J. Robins, S. Daniels (DNS); G. Birtle, S. Whaley, C. Lunn (LD)

Also in attendance: No other persons in attendance.

Apologies: Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Andrew Larkin

1 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 February 2009**

- For approval

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2009.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2009 be approved and forwarded to Council for consideration.

3 **Monitoring Reports**

- Cemeteries and Memorials - Update

The Registration and Bereavement Services Manager provided the Committee with an overview of Stockton Borough Council's Bereavement Services, highlighting the information and advice available to families within the Borough, to provide a greater and informed choice.

The Committee visited the newly opened Bereavement Suite and coffin display unit, and received information concerning the various environmentally friendly options available. Members queried the various types of caskets available for green funerals; the Registration/Bereavement Services Manager informed that a cardboard casket was the most suitable option. Members also queried the availability of large coffins, and whether or not there was a legal requirement to be buried in a coffin at all. It was explained that various size options of coffins were available, and that unless the deceased had suffered a notifiable disease, it was not a legal requirement to be buried in one.

The Head of Performance and Business Services presented the Committee with a report which detailed the feasibility of a crematorium within Stockton-on-Tees. Members were informed that five provision options had been identified; these were discussed by the Committee.

Members queried burial figures within the Borough, and discussed whether there was an indication that cremations would out-weigh these in the future. The Committee considered the legal obligations surrounding mercury extraction.

The Committee discussed the potential development sites of a crematorium within the Borough, highlighting the importance of selecting a location that would maximise Stockton's potential and increase catchment perimeters to include villages, etc.

The Head of Performance and Business Services suggested that a working group of officers be established to consider the options in greater detail, and members queried the projected timescale in relation to the availability of this report. It was noted that the report was scheduled to be completed within three months; the committee welcomed this.

Members discussed the impact that development of a new crematorium would have on stakeholders, and welcomed the next instalment of the report.

CONCLUDED that the monitoring reports be noted.

4 Review of Animal Welfare/Dog Fouling

The Scrutiny Officer introduced the draft recommendations to the Committee and informed Members that a recent tri-partite meeting had taken place. The following amendments in respect of the report and the draft recommendations were highlighted to the Committee:-

- Section 3.2 - 07/08 stray complaints should total 344 as opposed to 123, and Ward areas to be updated.
- Section 3.24 - days and times to be altered to 9-5pm Monday-Friday.
- R3 - This would be re-worded to explain that the applicable lamp post number would be sought if an identifiable address could not be provided.
- R4 - The Head of Community Protection explained that due to the economic climate, this recommendation was unlikely to be implemented and it may be advisable to remove it.

Members considered the financial costs of pet ownership in relation to R8 of the report, and discussed whether the introduction of fees would make people re-consider getting a dog.

CONCLUDED that:-

1. The information be noted.
2. The recommendations be amended, as outlined above.

5 Work Programme

- **To prepare questions for witnesses attending the next meeting**
- **To prepare the project plan in respect of the current review**
- **To discuss ideas for future review topics**

Members were informed that the Scrutiny Liaison Forum had recently discussed potential review topics for the Environment Select Committee; however, it was noted that new review topics would need to meet the requirements of the Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation programme.

It was explained to the Committee that decisions would be made at the following Executive Scrutiny Committee meeting on 24 March 2009.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.