

## Environment Select Committee

A meeting of Environment Select Committee was held on Monday, 16th November, 2009.

**Present:** Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg (Chair), Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Mick Stoker, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Cllr Bill Woodhead

**Officers:** C Snowdon (DNS), G Birtle and Mrs T Harrison (LD)

**Also in attendance:** No other persons were present

**Apologies:** Cllr John Gardner and Cllr Andrew Larkin

### **1 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

### **2 Minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2009**

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2009.

Members observed that Councillor Faulks was not noted as being in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Larkin.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2009 be approved as a true record upon the addition of Councillor Faulks in the attendance as Vice Councillor for Councillor Larkin.

### **3 Minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2009**

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2009.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2009 be approved and forwarded to Council for consideration.

### **4 Initial Progress Report - Animal Welfare / Dog Fouling**

Members considered the assessment of progress on the implementation of the recommendations from the review of Animal Welfare and Dog Fouling.

Members were advised that collation of dog bin sites had been completed but required updating prior to going on the website; this would be done in the next couple of months.

The officer advised that recommendation 2 was on track as the GIS reports on dog fouling was available through the existing LAGAN link but when the connector from LAGAN to FLARE was in place, existing and previous information would be available on FLARE.

Members were advised that an error had occurred in relation to recommendation 5 as it had not been achieved. The biodegradable pavement

stencils were not actually in use but were on order so were expected shortly.

Members queried the areas which received specialist patrols and were advised that the list would be emailed to the Member's of the Committee.

The officer clarified that regular patrols took place across the Borough but the specialist patrols took place in areas around schools and walkways which were used to access school grounds. Areas that received significant amount of complaints in relation to dog fouling, also received specialist patrols.

Members were advised that the Animal Enforcement Team had a full team again and could now be proactive in their enforcement and education efforts.

Members were advised that education regarding dog fouling took place in schools and whenever wardens spoke with people during the course of their work.

Further to Members queries, the officer advised that CCTV was not used for evidence gathering.

Members queried whether a response had been received from the MP in relation to the letter that was sent from the Environment Select Committee regarding dog fouling. Members were advised that the Chair had not received a response but the Scrutiny Officer would enquire as to whether the Democratic Services Team leader had received a response and would report back to Members.

Members raised concerns at the outcome of a recent court case brought by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Animal Welfare Team against a pet establishment. Members of the Committee wished to record their unhappiness at the findings and give their thanks and support to the officers involved in the court case.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. Mr Snowdon will provide a list of all the areas allocated specialist patrols.
3. The Scrutiny Officer will enquire as to whether the Democratic Services Team Leader has received a response from the MP's who was sent a letter from this Committee in relation to dog registration.
4. Members want their thanks and support to be passed on to the officers involved in the court case.

## **5 Monitoring Updates**

The Committee was provided with reports monitoring progress made towards the implementation of recommendations agreed at the outcome of the following scrutiny reviews:-

Cemeteries 1 and 2

Members were advised that the two reports of the review had been amalgamated for the monitoring of the recommendations.

Officers advised that supporters groups had been formed at some cemeteries and have been useful in addressing problems, officers therefore felt that this achieved the recommendation for a 'friends group'.

Members requested that a letter of thanks go out to the supporter groups.

Members were advised that redevelopment of Durham Road Chapel had not taken place; however it was used for better storage.

It was observed that Oxbridge Chapel had not been mentioned in the recommendations. Due to the vacation of storage at Nursery Lane, the items stored in Oxbridge Chapel could be moved to Nursery Lane.

Members were advised that there was no clear completion date for the clearance of the Chapels.

Members requested an update on the list of land identified for use of future burial needs.

It was observed that a question of unused graves was a sensitive and difficult matter to address.

Members observed that a revised anticipated date of completion of the study for the crematorium in Stockton be provided and a date for when Members would receive the follow up report.

Members requested further detail regarding the woodland burial sites.

The Chair requested a check on the programme of compliance in relation to the right to erect a memorial.

The Chair advised that due to the change in cemetery rules and regulations, the recommendation relating to regulations had been achieved.

The Chair requested further information on the progress of enforcement in relation to unauthorised memorials and items on graves.

## CUSTOMER FIRST

Members observed that the recommendation regarding voicemail messages had not been adopted by all Council employees. The Chair encouraged Members to report incidents where Voicemail had not been used to the Head of Customer Services and Taxation.

A query was raised regarding requesting Police to go into one stop shops as part of the Customer First review; however Members were advised by the Chair that the Police were a separate organisation so could not be included under the Customer First review.

It was observed that Housing and Community Safety Select Committee could be a platform to discuss the invitation of Police to the one stop shops, especially as Police would be attending a future Housing and Community Safety meeting.

CONCLUDED that:

1. A letter of thanks be sent to the supporter groups of the cemeteries.
2. Members be provided with a revised anticipated date of completion of the study for the crematorium in Stockton and a date for when Member's will receive the follow up report.
3. Members receive further details regarding the woodland burial sites.
4. The Chair requests a check on the programme of compliance in relation to the right to erect a memorial.
5. The Chair requests further information on the progress of enforcement in relation to unauthorised memorials and items on graves.
6. The Chair encourages Members to report incidents where Voicemail has not been used to the Head of Customer Services and Taxation.
7. A request be sent to the Chair of Housing and Community Safety Select Committee requesting that they discuss inviting Police to the one stop shops.