

Environment Select Committee

A meeting of Environment Select Committee was held on Monday, 1st November, 2010.

Present: Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg (Chair), Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Bill Noble (Vice Councillor Cains), Cllr Roy Rix, Cllr Michael Smith, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: M Chicken, N Gibb, P Shovlin, B Trewick (DNS); Mrs J King (R); Mrs J Ballinger (CESC); G Birtle and Mrs T Harrison (LD)

Also in attendance: Ms L St. Louis (Head of Customer Services and Development, Sunderland City Council)

Apologies: Cllr Dick Cains and Cllr Mick Stoker

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Draft Minutes of the meeting dated 4th October 2010

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2010.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2010 be agreed as a correct record.

3 EIT Review of Built and Natural Environment

Members received a presentation from the Head of Customer Services and Development in Sunderland City Council advising how they had reduced the time taken to receive and process blue badge applications and therefore made significant savings for the Council.

Applicants also benefited from the changes through savings on time and money as paper based application forms had been replaced by an initial phone call or visit to the contact centre to determine the application for blue badge applicants. The £2.00 application fee had also been removed as the Department for Transport had shown that it cost between £12-£25 to process an application. Applicants were advised of their acceptance or rejection at the conclusion of the phone call which had improved customer satisfaction.

Following details on how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council dealt with issuing of Blue Badges from the Car Park Manager, a discussion took place.

Members were provided with a presentation from the Urban Design Manager from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council advising on the services they provided to the Council which were:

- Urban Design;
- Landscape Architecture;
- Highway Safety;
- Project Management;
- Contract Procurement and Site Supervision.

Members were advised that the design services element of Urban Design operated as an internal trading account with fees being charged for commissions undertaken. The main work areas where fees were chargeable were Development Control (Planning) Advice, Design (Landscape Architectural and Urban Design) Commissions, Contract Procurement and Site Supervision. Strategic Masterplanning, Planning Policy, Community Participation Budget (Small Environmental Projects), Street Clutter and Alleygates were also design and project management services provided by Urban Design. There was limited revenue budget funding to the team for the delivery of these services, the level of which did not fully cover the cost of provision of these Council initiatives.

The aim of Urban Design was to promote, develop, enhance and conserve the environment of Stockton-on-Tees as well as influence new development proposals to achieve high quality, legible, vibrant, secure and sustainable environments.

Members were advised on ways that efficiencies, improvements and transformations could be achieved.

Members discussed matters regarding urban design.

CONCLUDED that the report be noted.

4 Progress Updates on Previously Agreed Recommendations

Members considered the progress updates.

It was noted that there was no funding to achieve recommendation 23 of Cemeteries 1 Future of Cemeteries

In regards to recommendation 4 of the Animal Welfare and Dog Fouling review the Chair expressed the need to investigate what had been done with the evidence of progress and what it meant therefore the Chair would seek an update on the implementation.

CONCLUDED that the:

1. Updates be noted.
2. Chair would investigate what has been done with the evidence of progress and would seek an update on the implementation.

5 Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the shortened timescales of the EIT reviews could require additional meetings to be scheduled. The Scrutiny Officer advised that he would discuss the matter with the Chair and if additional meetings were required Members would be informed.

The Chair expressed reservation as to whether the EIT Built and Natural Environment Review would be ready to report to Cabinet in December.

CONCLUDED that the Scrutiny Officer will investigate the need for additional

meetings to be scheduled and will discuss with the Chair. If additional meetings are required Members of the Committee will be notified.

6 Chairs Update

The Chair had nothing to report.