
**MINUTES OF THE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 27 JULY 2015 AT 7.30 P.M.
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES WEELEY**

Present: Councillors Griffiths (Chairman), Ferguson (Vice-Chairman), Fowler, Hones, Miles, Pemberton and M J Skeels.

Also Present: Councillor Talbot (Environment Portfolio Holder).

In Attendance: Corporate Director (Public Experience) (June Clare), Open Space and Bereavement Services Manager (David Hall), Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney), Benefits Manager (Jenny Haggis), Street Scene Officer (Jonathan Hamlet) and Democratic Services Officer (Michael Pingram).

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There was an apology for absence submitted by Councillor Yallop.

7. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 15 June 2015, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

9. UPDATE ON DOG-FOULING ENFORCEMENT

The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Street Scene Officer (Jonathan Hamlet) with regard to the Council's dog-fouling enforcement processes.

He explained that the Council had two designated dog wardens that covered the Tendring area and that they could issue a fixed penalty notice to any dog-fouling or littering offenders. He also stressed that other authorised Officers, including himself, had the ability to issue fixed penalty notices.

He informed the Committee that, since September 2014, five dog fouling notices, zero littering notices and 39 duty for care notices had been issued. Whilst the numbers appeared low, he said that this was because it was difficult to detect when an offence was being carried out. Mr Hamlet stressed that residents had a key role in helping the Council to catch offenders and urged them to contact his Team if they had any evidence to suggest dog-fouling had occurred.

Mr Hamlet then explained that he and his team had worked on a number of initiatives to prevent dog-fouling, including high profile public events such as 'Tidy Tendring', covert operations and the upgrade of litter bins along the seafront.

During discussions, the Committee asked that, in areas where repeat offences were occurring, could it lead to the Council installing new bins, and was told there were cost implications involved with new bins and therefore a resolution to the issue could not be guaranteed. The Committee also asked for information on the current situation of signage for play areas within the District and was told that due to by-laws, only fenced play areas were currently able to display signage and that it would be a lengthy process to amend that.

The Chairman requested that, at a future Committee in early 2016, the issue of the Council's football pitches in relation to dog-fouling be discussed.

Following further discussions it was **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that:

- a) The Council review the bins and signage along the lower promenade from Kings Cliff to Holland-on-Sea;
- b) The Council adopts a similar review of the Walton seafront between Walton Pier and Holland Haven;
- c) Dog control by-laws be extended to all play areas and football pitches that were fenced areas in the District;
- d) The Council encourage the wider public to help with the problem of dog-fouling and to take responsibility for their antisocial behaviour;
- e) The Council look to reprise the previous scheme whereby Police Community Street Officer (PCSO) had the ability to issue notices; and
- f) Member involvement with local GP Surgeries on the dangers of dog fouling be encouraged.

10. INFANT CREMATIONS AND CREMATOR TECHNICIAN TRAINING AT WEELEY CREMATORIUM

There was submitted a report by the Corporate Director (Public Experience), which advised the Committee of the Council's procedures for infant cremations and cremator technician training at the Weeley Crematorium.

The Council's Open Space and Bereavement Services Manager (David Hall) explained to the Committee that the report aimed to provide reassurance to Members, following recent national events, where parents of deceased infants had campaigned for a national investigation into the lack of ashes being returned to them following a cremation of their deceased children. He detailed the process involved, explained that the Council's procedures had been in place for many years and stressed that the Council was currently meeting the required standards imposed by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM).

Mr Hall then informed the Committee that, in line with the new additional cremators currently being installed, full training would be provided for operators.

Following discussions, the Committee **COMMENTED TO CABINET** that it was delighted with the detailed report provided by the Officer and that it was reassured and confident that the Council was meeting the standards required.

The Committee stood adjourned between 8.33 p.m. and 8.40 p.m.

11. UPDATE ON INFORMATION HANDLING BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND THE DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS

The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Benefits Manager (Jenny Haggis) with regard to the introduction and implications of Universal Credit.

Mrs Haggis explained to the Committee that the benefits system was in a period of great change as the Council was starting to adapt working practices to comply with Universal Credit legislation. Universal Credit combines six current benefits (Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit) into one monthly payment. The scheme, she said, was wholly

administered by the DWP and the rollout in Tendring commenced in April 2015 but had had a minimum impact thus far with only 13 housing benefit claimants converting to Universal Credit to date.

She informed the Committee of the changes for claimants under the new Universal Credit approach, including that all applications would be online and payments would be paid monthly, in arrears, into a bank account. She then explained how it would impact upon the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, and that any changes of circumstances would no longer be passed automatically from DWP to the Council and therefore there would be a reliance on the claimant to inform the Council.

During discussions, the Committee highlighted that this was a complex subject and asked how the Council would look to manage potential problems relating to online-only applications, as some claimants may not have access to a computer or understand how to use the internet. Mrs Haggis stated that the new system was under the control of the DWP and not the Council and said that a contact hub at the Council's site in Pier Avenue, Clacton-on-Sea had been discussed to provide customers with online access. The Committee also expressed its concern that payments changing from a weekly basis to a monthly basis and in arrears, could potentially lead to issues of non-payment to landlords.

It was **AGREED** that;

- a) The Council's Benefits Manager be thanked for her presentation, which had made a complex subject far clearer; and
- b) Councillor Hughes, as Revenues and Benefits Portfolio Holder, be invited to a special meeting of the Committee to be held in October 2015 to provide an update on Universal Credit.

12. ANY NEW ITEMS TO BE ADDED TO THE WORK PROGRAMME

There were none.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman confirmed that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee was to be held on Monday 2 November 2015 but reminded the Committee that a special meeting would be arranged to further consider Universal Credit in October 2015.

The meeting was declared closed at 9.48 pm.

Chairman