

MINUTES of the MEETING of
the ENVIRONMENT &
LEISURE PERFORMANCE
SUB-COMMITTEE held on
4th January 2010 at 5pm

(To be read in conjunction with the Agenda for the meeting)

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| * Cllr Diane James | * Cllr Jim Edwards |
| * Cllr Patricia Ellis | * Cllr Tony Gordon-Smith |
| * Cllr Andrew Wilson | |

*Present

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 2)

There were no apologies for absence.

12. TERMS OF REFERENCE (Agenda Item 3)

RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee be noted.

13. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (Agenda Item 4)

Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest in item 4, General Fund Revenue Estimates, as he was a member of Haslemere Town Council. Councillor Wilson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the same item when there was discussion on the transfer of Borough Hall as he was a Godalming Town Councillor. He left the room during discussion on this issue.

14. GENERAL FUND REVENUE ESTIMATES 2010/11

The Chief Accountant and Heads of Service responded to Councillors' questions on various aspects of the General Fund budget, in particular the proposals from the Star Chamber for reducing the budget shortfall. Considerable savings had been identified for 2010/11 and Members were invited to comment upon those within its remit.

The Sub-Committee sought a number of points of clarification on the proposals, these and comments from Members are noted below for consideration by the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Planning Services

- Members were concerned about the potential impact on performance by the deletion of the two monitoring posts. The Head of Planning, Matthew Evans, confirmed that the work has been absorbed into other posts without impacting performance on the service due to improved procedures for presenting performance information and managing complaints. A review of policy monitoring will be undertaken to reflect capacity constraints
- Members noted that the budget for using specialist consultants had been reduced. Developers would now be required to fund their own

consultants for specialist advice where possible but Matthew Evans assured Members that this would be independent advice and that Officers would have the final say over which consultants were used.

- Members were concerned about the restriction on the budget for use of consultants as part of the LDF process and whether this would impact the timetable. Members were advised that the budget had been considered very carefully and should adequately fund necessary work without impacting on the current timetable. Specialist advice would be covered in-house as far as possible and consultants would be sought only where essential. Matthew confirmed that Surrey County Council had confirmed their ability to deliver on the areas of the LDF where their input was required. The revised timetable for the LDF and the revised list of consultants costs would be circulated to Members.
- Members noted that the inquiry costs for the LDF would still be met but from the revenue reserve fund rather than the general fund.

Leisure Services

- Members were concerned about the costs for running Farnham Museum, which appeared to have increased by some £50,000. Members were advised that this increase was due to higher asset charges that now included depreciation on the new Garden Gallery. The asset charges were an internal accounting charge that was not a real cost to the Council or the taxpayer. Operational costs had not increased and the Star Chamber proposal was for these to be reduced by a further £20,000. The Head of Service would be looking into ways of achieving this, including making more effective use of its volunteers.
- Members were advised that the reduction of £10,000 from the Countryside budget could be recovered through additional grant funding.

Building Services

- The Head of Building Control, Engineering and Car parking, Paul Frame, advised Members that £60,000 of additional income and/or savings had been agreed for Building Control because the service was not breaking even. The service had to balance surpluses and deficits year on year. This year additional income and/or savings were required to balance the budget.
- Members were advised about the administration involved in changing the name of a residents house and agreed that introducing a charge was fair. Members were advised that the charge was similar to that of neighbouring authorities.

Environmental Health

- Members were concerned about the revised out of hours noise standby arrangements for residents. Councillors received many calls from residents about noise complaints and although assured that a targeted service would continue, Members wanted more information about how this service would be changing.
- Members were also concerned about the continuing reduction in service for animal control. They were advised that for stray dogs, the normal position would be that the public would be advised to deliver

found dogs to the Kennels unless it was not possible or high risk, the kennel would collect as per the existing back up service. Members wanted assurance that this service would still be delivered and performance maintained.

Environmental Services

- Dual hatted Members from Cranleigh Parish Council were concerned about the costs arising from the transfer of the public conveniences from Waverley to Cranleigh. They were advised that officers would be meeting with the Clerk to the Parish Council shortly to discuss the process and it was anticipated that a similar arrangement to that at Farnham Town Council would be implemented. If the £5k saving could not be realised from transfer to Cranleigh PC this year, it would need to be found through closure/ rationalisation elsewhere in the Public Conveniences budget.
- Members suggested that the Council considered charging for public conveniences.
- Members were surprised that there were still some households on weekly refuse collection and agreed that they should be on alternate weekly collections with careful consideration being given to the management of this.
- Members accepted the increase to collection charges for two bags of green waste noting that there was no increase to collection of four bags of green waste. Members were advised that if residents chose to increase the number of bags of waste collected because of this, the efficiency of the service would be Improved in both environmental and financial terms.

15. DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2010/11

The Sub-Committee considered the Draft Capital Programme and the capital schemes relevant to the Committee. Members sought a number of points of clarification on the proposals, these and comments from Members are noted below for consideration by the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Members questioned whether or not additional expenditure was required on parks signage. The Head of Environment advised Members that for someone visiting or new to an area, there was insufficient signage to locate parks around the Borough and it was necessary to improve this situation to raise awareness of the services provided by the Council.
- Members were concerned about the money being spent on children's playgrounds but were advised that the 2007/2008 capital programme only funded improvements to 20 of the 55 playgrounds in the Borough, and, this latest rolling programme was intended to pick up where the previous work finished. The cost of making these improvements was significant, but an element of grant funding and S106 funding reduced the overall cost to the Council.
- Members questioned the capital expenditure on food waste and were advised that the £44,000 had been provided from Surrey County Council to cover the costs of purchasing bins. It had been agreed that

any surplus could be used to offset revenue costs, which was a more significant amount to cover.

The meeting concluded at 7pm

Chairman