

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Streetscene Policy Development and Review Panel

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Thursday, 20 October 2016

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor L Keeble (Chairman)

(Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: J E Butts, Mrs L E Clubley, R H Price, JP and K A Barton
(deputising for G Fazackarley)

Also Present: Councillor's; Miss T G Harper, Executive Member for
Streetscene (item 8), S Cunningham (item 9), Mrs C Heneghan
(item 9) and M J Ford, JP (item 9)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor's; G Fazackarley, S D Martin and J M Englefield.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED that the minutes of the Streetscene Policy Development and Review Panel held on 8 September 2016, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcement:

Hampshire Waste and Recycling Centres are currently unable to accept Fridges or Freezers. This has impacted Fareham Borough Council as these items were collected under the bulky waste collection service, which has now been suspended.

The Director of Operations informed the Panel that this problem is not related to the review that is currently being undertaken by Hampshire County Council in relation to the operation of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. He went on to explain that it is believed to be a temporary problem and that Hampshire County Council is working with the Environment Agency and DEFRA to try and resolve this issue.

Members will be updated further when more information is available.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Operations which reviewed the Panel's work programme for 2016/17.

It was AGREED that the work programme for 2016/17, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

7. OUTCOME OF RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

The Panel received a verbal update by the Refuse, Recycling and Transport Manager on the outcome of the recent recruitment campaign for HGV drivers.

She informed the Panel that there were 4 vacancies, and due to the change in recruitment methods by expanding the advertisement remit which promoted a high level of applicants, they have successfully filled all 4 posts.

The Panel thanked the Refuse, Recycling and Transport Manager for her update.

8. ANNUAL REVIEW OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Operations on an annual review of the Grounds Maintenance Service.

At the invitation of the Chairman Councillor Miss T Harper, Executive Member for Streetscene addressed the Panel on this item.

The Panel asked several questions regarding the frequency of grass cutting, if any money from developers is provided for grass cutting on new developments, the pressures on the service as new land is taken into the Council's control and the issues surrounding identifying who is the responsible authority for grass cutting on land.

The Panel were informed that the grass cutting is down approximately 14 times a year, with the maximum that can be achieved being 16, but the frequency will depend on weather conditions throughout the year. In relation to developer contributions, the Panel were informed that through the 106 agreements that developers are required to pay an element of that will be for grass cutting, and that these agreements are generally for 10 years. The Director of Operations informed the Panel that the status of the grass cutting service is regularly evaluated especially as new land is taken on to ensure that the service can be maintained and delivered within the confines of the current budget. Lastly the Panel were informed that Fareham Borough Council has been working closely with Hampshire County Council on a mapping exercise to identify land ownership. This will result in a comprehensive map being produced clearly showing the ownership of each plot of land, which will make future enquires much simpler to respond to.

It was AGREED that the content of the report be noted.

9. MEMBERS OPEN FORUM

The Chairman invited Councillor Ford to address the Panel as he had submitted a question.

His question was "Given that we have a commercial arm to our waste collection service in order to generate income, does the same apply to our grounds maintenance function? For example, would we 'sell' our grass cutting service to other (Public Service) organisations such as schools?"

The Chairman provided the following response "The issue of 'selling' the Council's services such as grass cutting and other grounds maintenance operations is a matter that Officers will be exploring in greater detail in the future. The Grounds team already provide a small amount of minor works for

local sports clubs such as pitch marking and grass cutting. This year it is estimated that the above work will provide an income of approximately £1,000. This is in addition to the Street Cleansing service that provides litter bin emptying and litter picking for Hampshire Countryside and a bin emptying service for the English Heritage Site at Titchfield Abbey. This provides an income of around £2,600 per annum for the Operations team.

Caution is needed when progressing this proposal, particularly with regard to the scale of the work as smaller contracts and parcels of work can place additional operational demands on the team without always providing enough income for any additional resources. The scenario can place an extra burden on the existing maintenance teams that in turn can have a detrimental effect on the standards of maintenance achieved with the current grounds operations undertaken in the Borough.

Larger value contracts may need significant up-front capital investment to provide the necessary vehicles and equipment to undertake the work and also carry a risk that, after the initial term, the contract will not be won at the next attempt thus resulting in the need to dispose of the acquired assets. This type of contract also requires a significant amount of Officer time to be spent on the tendering process to ensure the bid not only has a chance to succeed but is also sustainable and affordable for the Council. This can place a high demand on the existing management resource that could lead to issues with the day to day operation all without any security that a bid will be successful.

Recently, the Grounds team have taken over the grounds maintenance of Daedalus Airfield and this has provided a saving in maintenance costs for the airfield operator and therefore in turn, for the Council. The Grounds service is also expanding annually as new areas of land are adopted in the Borough each year, most recently, the large and on-going Coldeast development. Officers need to ensure the service is not overstretched and is best placed to undertake the maintenance of these additional parcels of land without compromising the existing standards achieved generally in the Borough so that any further expansion of the service by selling its operations to others is sustainable for the service.

It is understood that the Portchester Crematorium Grounds Maintenance contract will shortly come up for tender and Officers are already looking into this as a viable option to submit a tender for the Council's services, as the work is located within the Borough and would be complimentary to the teams portfolio of work.

Officers in Streetscene are currently busy working with Hampshire Highways to secure a new agency agreement for Highway grass, shrub and hedge maintenance. The existing agreement comes to an end in Spring 2017 and Officers are working to ensure that existing maintenance standards are not compromised for the residents of Fareham and that Fareham Borough Council continue to provide this service.

Another project that Officers are looking to explore over the coming year is the option of bringing grounds maintenance work that is currently outsourced to private contractors back as an in house service. Officers will be evaluating if

work such as the Hedge and Sports Maintenance contract and a number of other smaller parcels of work could be brought back in house cost effectively. There would be a need for some capital investment in vehicles and plant to realise this proposal but there are a number of advantages that this option could provide:

- A more flexible management of the hedge and sport tasks by having direct control of the operational staff.
- Increased range of equipment available to the team and therefore, the opportunity to provide an income from selling the specialist operations to others.
- Ability to absorb small amounts of additional work without any extra cost compared to the current contractual arrangements requiring any extra work to be funded by an agreed scheduled rate.
- Greater team resilience and flexibility through more staff resource and equipment.

In summary, the priority for the team is to first secure a new Highway Maintenance Agency Agreement, then fully evaluate the potential to bring existing outsourced contract work back in house. Following this to ensure that the Grounds Maintenance team are in a strong and stable position before exploring further the expansion of our services to outside bodies. In the meantime, this would not preclude consideration being given for small items of work to be 'sold' if this can be achieved without compromising the existing service provision."

At the Invitation of the Chairman Councillor's Cunningham and Mrs Heneghan addressed the Panel on this item.

The Chairman thanked Officers and Members for their participation in the Members Open Forum.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 7.08 pm).