

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 December 2014 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Cathy Kent (Chair), Pauline Tolson (Vice-Chair), Andrew Roast, Susan Shinnick and Michael Stone

In attendance:

Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive
Mike Heath, Head of Environment
Gareth Olive, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager
Ian Rydings, Head of Asset Management
Matthew Boulter, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

8. Minutes

The Minutes of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 31 July 2014, were approved as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny held on 27 October 2014 were noted.

9. Items of Urgent Business

None

10. Declaration of Interests

None.

11. Current Response of Thurrock Council to Fly Tipping in terms of prevention, enforcement and Waste Removal

Officers outlined that fly-tipping had fallen by 55% between the years 2008 and 2012 but since that date they had started to rise. The cost of removing fly-tips in 2013-14 was £117,916. The Council was working on new initiatives with the police and Environment Agency to reduce this figure. Officers stated that there were two types of fly-tip, the opportunist and the organised high volume tipping. Members were assured that the five mobile CCTV cameras owned by the Council were deployed where trouble spots were identified.

The Committee discussed a number of issues surrounding fly-tipping and the following was noted:

- The number of officers in the enforcement team had reduced to two full time officers.
- The probation service did carry out community payback tidy trips but the lack of supervisors for the groups had frustrated this process in recent months. Officers believed supervisors were now available and the initiative would resume.
- On private land, the Council were prepared to collect rubbish if residents themselves piled it up at an agreed area. Councillor Stone highlighted this arrangement had worked very well in his ward.
- More CCTV was needed and this was being purchased.
- Residents should be encouraged to report fly-tips and those responsible for them. The Council required car licence plates and a general description of the vehicle to be useful. Residents could engage directly with the service through the 'report it' app.
- The Council had not prosecuted any fly tippers recently, although where there was strong evidence they would. In relation to the Purfleet fly-tip, eight people had been interviewed under caution.
- The Council could name and shame fly-tippers only after a successful prosecution.

The Committee moved on to discuss the recent large scale tipping at Purfleet. Officers explained that a group of travellers had forced entry onto the site on 8th July 2014. They were evicted on 30th July but a new group of travellers forced entry again on 25th September. They were evicted on 6th October on which day another group arrived. The site was finally cleared on 19th October. During this time a significant amount of tipping had occurred on the site.

A small amount of the tip was hazardous waste composed of pharmaceutical debris (unused syringes and adult nappies among other things) and some asbestos. This waste was removed at a cost of no more than £2000-£3000. The remaining waste was being estimated for removal but was likely to cost in the region of £350,000. The Council had yet to decide whether the rubbish would be removed as the area was part of the Purfleet regeneration site and could be removed by contractors in or before 2016.

The site had now been better secured with concrete blocks and although pedestrian access was still present, officers had witnessed people taking items away from the site instead of further tipping.

Following a question, the Head of Environment stated that there were comparable places of significant fly-tipping in other areas of the country, Peterborough being one example. He stated that not all fly-tipping was related to travellers and that it was sometimes very organised crime.

The Council were working with the Police and neighbouring councils to understand what happened and how, as a partnership, the situation could be dealt with differently in the future. A strong message needed to be sent out to potential fly-tippers that it would not be tolerated in Thurrock.

The Committee queried why the Council could not monitor the site throughout the period of occupancy to collect evidence and to take action. The Head of Asset Management explained that the site was potential violent and it may not have been possible for council staff to visit the site regularly. One example he gave was during a visit a police officer was bitten in the leg by a dangerous dog and the police officer told the Head of Asset Management to leave the site for his own safety. There were also laws surrounding the surveillance of people.

The Committee discussed the legal issues surrounding the encampment and officers explained that the Council had to approach a magistrate to evict. This took around five days to obtain. The Police had a different power under the Criminal Law Act to evict people immediately. However, these powers were used under the discretion of the commanding officer at the time. Members agreed that a protocol was needed with the Police about how these situations would be dealt with if they re-occurred.

RESOLVED: That:

1. **The report is noted**
2. **Cabinet be asked to establish a policy on how the Council, in partnership with relevant organisations such as the Police, deals with fly-tipping.**
3. **Invite the Police to attend January's meeting.**

12. Work Programme

RESOLVED that:

1. **The Police be invited to January's meeting to discuss their roles and responsibilities in relation to the recent Purfleet fly-tip.**
2. **A draft fly-tipping policy be brought to March's meeting.**

The meeting finished at 8.00 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact

Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk