

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

19 July 2005

Attendance:

Councillors:

Pearson (Chairman) (P)

Bidgood (P)
Busher (P)
De Peyer (P)
Higgins (P)
Jackson (P)

Mather (P)
Pearce (P)
Sutton (P)
Verney (P)
Wright (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Beveridge (Portfolio Holder for Planning)
Councillor Wagner (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health)
Councillor Davies

192. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2005/06 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Sutton be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2005/06 Municipal Year.

193. **TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Chairman advised that it may be necessary to arrange an additional meeting of the Panel in October 2005.

RESOLVED:

That future meetings of the Panel commence at 6.30pm for the 2005/06 Municipal Year and that the timetable of scheduled meetings for 2005/06 Municipal Year be noted.

194. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

195. **DEFECTIVE PRIVATE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS**

(Report EN1 refers)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Davies addressed the Panel. He considered that most of the occurrences of defective private drainage systems as detailed in the report relating to Stanmore had been now been dealt with. Furthermore, as building regulations and associated legislation regarding defective drainage systems were increasingly a matter of concern to all local authorities it may be an appropriate course of action to lobby the Local Government Association.

Following discussion, the Director of Communities explained that there was no statutory requirement for new housing developments to include drainage systems constructed to an adoptable standard (although they did need to meet Building Regulations) or to have arrangements in place for their future maintenance.

The Panel agreed that the approach suggested by Councillor Davies be undertaken as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

1. That the issues raised in the report be noted.
2. That Cabinet be asked to approach the Local Government Association (LGA) to lobby Government to request them to reconsider the current Building Regulations and associated legislation, with a view to ensuring that, wherever practicable, all new drainage systems serving developments are built to a standard that ensures they would be adopted by the local water company as public sewers.

196. **WORK PROGRAMME AND APPOINTMENTS TO INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS**

(Report EN2 refers)

The Panel supported the Director of Development's suggestion that a possible topic for an in-depth study could be an investigation of the Council's current approach to use of 'open space funds'. As part of this, Members could look at the current methodology for securing funds by legal agreement from developers.

Following discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health, it was agreed that the Commercial Team Inspections Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) should not be re appointed at this time, although it may be required at a future date should the proposals to produce the Service Plans become more inevitable. It was also agreed that the Waste Management ISG should not be reappointed at this time, but the decision to reappoint might need to be reconsidered should the trial project board decide to recommend district-wide alternate weekly collections.

RESOLVED:

1 That subject to the approval of Principal Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, the following appointments to Informal Scrutiny Groups be agreed:

(i) Open Space Funds Informal Scrutiny Group:

Councillors Pearson (lead Councillor), de Peyer, Mather, Pearce, Sutton and Verney.

2. That the following Informal Scrutiny Groups be not reappointed at this time:

(i) Commercial Team Inspections Informal Scrutiny Group

(ii) Waste Management Informal Scrutiny Group

3 That the Work Programme for the Panel as set out (subject to the amendments to the Informal Scrutiny Groups) be agreed.

197. **FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE MONITORING – GENERAL REPORT**
(Report EN3 refers)

Following a question, the Director of Communities reported some Parish Councils had indicated that they could undertake grass cutting within their Parishes on behalf of the Council. However, this had not been progressed as contracts were in place with an existing contractor to undertake such works.

The Panel discussed performance indicators and associated costs relating to waste collection and recycling. Further to questions, it was explained that end of year figures had yet to be finalised and so actual expenditure was not shown. Furthermore, the figures as presented were not separate from those associated with the alternate weekly collection trial. The Director of Communities reported that he would inform the Panel in due course as to whether the targets achieved for percentage of household waste recycled had been impacted by the number of rejected lorry loads. He would also advise the Panel regarding the reasons for the reduction in funding provided by the Health Protection Agency for food sampling (LPI EH 09a). The Director explained that the reduction in the number of premises inspections undertaken in Quarter 1 of 2005/06 (LPI EH 01/02) was largely due to holiday absence and that the targets were likely, as in previous years, to be achieved by the end of the year.

The Panel expressed concern at the changes to the out of hours services for the impounding of stray dogs (previously undertaken by the Police) and urged the Cabinet to continue to investigate solutions regarding this matter.

The Panel referred to the Key Elements of Risk Management at Appendix 3 of the report. Following a request from a Member regarding lost Air Quality Monitoring Data, the Director stated he would advise the Panel in due course whether this had actually occurred and of the possible reasons behind this.

Following discussion of Appendix 4, the Director of Development reported that Hampshire County Council, as lead authority for Emergency Planning, had no proposals to amend the County Emergency Plan following the recent terrorist attacks in London.

RESOLVED:

That subject to clarification of the matters raised above, the Scrutiny Panel is satisfied that work is progressing as required, so that targets agreed by Council and Cabinet, required to deliver the Council's strategic priorities, can be achieved by the deadlines set.

198. **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – PERFORMANCE OUTTURN 2004/05**
(Report EN4 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the progress made over 2004/05 regarding actual performance be noted.

199. **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES – SUMMARY OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE 2004/05**
(Report EN5 refers)

The Director of Communities explained that budget variances associated with Dog Control would be assisted in future by increased recharges to Parish Councils and the Town Charge.

RESOLVED:

That the outturn figures for 2004/05 for Environmental Health Services be noted.

200. **PLANNING PORTFOLIO FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE MONITORING**
(Report EN6 refers)

Following discussion, the Director of Development clarified that Village Design Statement policies would need to be checked before their integration within the Local Development Framework. It was agreed that Parish Councils be advised of this issue as soon as possible.

In answer to a question, Councillor Beveridge (Portfolio Holder for Planning) suggested that the target of 28% for 2005/06 for Planning Enforcement site visits was realistic, as officers were currently clearing a backlog of such work. He was satisfied that a modest increase would be proposed for next year and that, in the meantime, the Panel could monitor progress quarterly.

Councillor Beveridge informed the Panel that it would be able to monitor the implementation of the Planning Improvement Plan as part of future performance monitoring reports

The Panel referred to Appendix 4 of the report regarding the Buildings at Risk Register and the Director of Development agreed that in future, the addresses within the the register show the relevant Parish and Ward.

RESOLVED:

1. That subject to clarification of the matters raised above, the Scrutiny Panel is satisfied that work is progressing as required so that targets agreed by Council and Cabinet, required to deliver the Council's strategic priorities, can be achieved by the deadlines set.

2. That the Portfolio Holder for Planning advise all appropriate Parish Councils of the necessity to revise Village Design Statements accordingly to allow for their integration into the Local Development Framework.

201. **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES SUMMARY OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE**

2004/05

(Report EN7 refers)

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Director of Development answered the Panel's questions on the areas of significant budget variance and overspend as highlighted within the report.

The Panel was generally satisfied that the majority of these were unavoidable but reminded the Portfolio Holder, that wherever possible, officers continue to monitor the budget and in future advise Members as soon as possible when variances are likely to occur.

The Director of Development reminded the Panel that it was the policy of the Council to not have budget reserves within Directorates.

It was agreed that future performance monitoring reports contain figures of the number of planning applications received and that the number of planning appeals be shown in addition to the percentage which have been allowed.

RESOLVED:

That the outturn figures from 2004/05 be noted and that the Portfolio Holder for Planning have regard to the comments of the Panel as set out above.

202. **DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL REPORT APRIL 2004 – MARCH 2005**

(Report EN8 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the performance information contained in the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.20 pm.

Chairman