

## **BOROUGH OF BARROW-IN-FURNESS**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting:- 7th December, 2011  
at 2.00 p.m. (Committee Room No. 4)

## **A G E N D A**

### **PART ONE**

1. To note any items which the Chairman considers to be of an urgent nature.
2. To receive notice from Members who may wish to move any delegated matter non-delegated and which will be decided by a majority of Members present and voting at the meeting.

3. **Admission of Public and Press**

To consider whether the public and press should be excluded from the meeting during consideration on any of the items on the agenda.

4. Disclosures of Interests and any declarations under Paragraph 16: Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (Party Whip).

A Member with a personal interest in a matter to be considered at this meeting must either before the matter is discussed or when the interest becomes apparent disclose

1. ***The existence of that interest to the meeting.***
2. ***The nature of the interest.***
3. ***Decide whether they have a prejudicial interest.***

A note on declaring interests at meetings, which incorporates certain other aspects of the Code of Conduct and a pro-forma for completion where interests are disclosed will be available at the meeting.

5. Apologies for Absence/Attendance of Substitutes.
6. Confirmation of Minutes of the meeting held on 9th November, 2011 (copy attached).
- (D) 7. Work Programme.

(D) 8. Street Cleansing.

**NOTE (D) – Delegated**  
**(R) – Referred**

**Membership of Committee**

Councillors Roberts (Chairman)  
Doughty (Vice-Chairman)  
Biggins  
Derbyshire  
Hamilton  
Husband  
Johnston  
R. McClure  
Opie  
Preston  
C. Thomson  
M. A. Thomson

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# **BOROUGH OF BARROW IN FURNESS**

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting, Wednesday, 9th November, 2011  
at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillors Roberts (Chairman), Doughty (Vice-Chairman), Cassidy, Derbyshire, Hamilton, Husband, Opie, Pointer, Preston, C. Thomson and M. A. Thomson.

### **20 – Apologies for Absence/Attendance of Substitute Members**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor McClure.

Councillors Pointer and Cassidy had replaced Councillors Biggins and Johnston respectively.

### **21 – Minutes**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28th September, 2011 were taken as read and confirmed.

### **22 – Street Cleansing**

The Policy Review Officer reported that the Street Care Team were continuing to focus on improving heavily contaminated areas and it was clear that presentation of side waste, particularly food waste was a major contributor to the lower standard of cleanliness in some areas. The Street Care Team and the Waste Collection Contractor were working to reduce side waste and therefore reduce the burden on the Street Cleansing Teams.

Councillor Mrs Thomson continued to attend the contract meetings and was kept up to date with any significant issues. She informed the Committee that sticky labels had been put on side waste over the last few weeks explaining to residents why it was not to be collected in the future and how they could reduce waste in their wheeled bins by recycling. She stated that this would happen up until Christmas then following that fines would be handed to residents who did not comply.

The Chairman commented that there may be big changes to the way waste and recycling was collected once the Mechanical Biological Treatment at Sowerby Woods was commissioned in 2013.

Councillor Mrs Thomson also requested Member representatives on the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership report regularly to this meeting to provide Members with

updated information. Cllr Doughty currently attends the CSWP meetings and will share information on a regular basis.

RESOLVED:- That the information in the report and details discussed at the meeting be noted.

## **23 – Allotments**

The Policy Review Officer reported that the Council currently provided 770 allotment plots on 17 different sites. The number of people on the waiting list for allotment plots was estimated to be in excess of 600. In 2010/11 the cost for the provision of allotments was £88,380, of which £33,200 was recovered in rent so the total expenditure was £55,180. The review was undertaken to explore options for reducing the cost of allotment provision so that it was cost neutral to the Council. In addition the review considered options for reducing the current waiting list.

### Costs

The review identified the main direct costs for allotment provision were:-

- Grounds maintenance which includes the removal of rubbish;
  - Collection of rent; and
  - Provision of water.
1. The cost of grounds maintenance for 2010/11 was £26,230 and over 80% of this cost was removal of rubbish from allotment plots. There were two categories of rubbish removal; one was the provision of trailers to remove the accumulation of waste generated by typical allotment activities. The review concluded that waste generated in this way was the responsibility of the allotment holders and they should be encouraged to dispose of their own rubbish. To support this transition the Council continued to provide a restricted number of trailers at specific times of the year and these should be used for disposing of bulkier items. The other category was the removal of rubbish from allotments prior to letting. The cost of this disposal was significantly disproportional to the rent value and the Council should consider other methods of removing the waste or in exceptional circumstances leave the plot vacant.
  2. In 2010/11 the recharge cost to the Borough Treasurers was £12,550 which included the collection of rent. Currently the rent for each allotment was charged on size and although the calculation was electronic the Council had to generate individual invoices, which was inefficient. The Council should consider moving towards a fixed rent for a standard size allotment and a higher fixed rent for larger allotments.

Currently there were a number of methods for collecting rent and for some, the Council incurred external charges. The most efficient way of collecting rent was via direct debit

and the Council should move to this method of collection for all new tenants and encourage existing tenants to switch to direct debit. The Council should also consider introducing a surcharge for tenants who did not wish to use direct debits.

3. The cost of supplying water was currently included in the rent for the plot and on average was equivalent to a third of the rent. The Council had undertaken a monitoring exercise to identify areas of high usage or wastage to try to reduce water charges. The output from this exercise had indicated that there were significant variations in water usage. The Council had carried out leak repair and tap replacement work at a number of sites and had reduced water usage. The Council should encourage allotment holders to work towards reducing water usage and should consider having a separate charge for water based on the usage at site.

The review recognised the internal recharges for allotments were significant because as with other Council departments, allotments had to bear their share of the Council's overheads. Although these costs would be reduced, as the Council reduces its budget, it was clear that more significant savings would be made if allotments were self-managed.

#### Waiting list

There was not a statutory number of allotment plots that local authorities had to provide but most authorities used the arbitrary figure of 15 per 1000 properties which was recommended in the 1969 Thorpe report. The Council provided 770 allotment plots which was equivalent to 23 plots per 1000 properties so it did exceed the recommended number, but despite this there were still significant numbers of residents on the waiting list. Officers had contacted those residents to confirm their interest and as a result the numbers of residents who still wanted allotments had reduced from 644 to 493.

The review recognised that the process for re-letting allotment plots had become unwieldy and had made a number of recommendations to improve this:-

- Vacant plots should let on an "as seen" basis with temporary rent reduction for heavily contaminated plots.
- Residents should be allowed three weeks to respond to an offer and if there was no response after three weeks the resident would be removed from the waiting list.
- If a resident rejected an offer they should be informed that they would only be offered one more plot and if that was rejected they would be removed from the waiting list.
- Plots may be handed over to a family member provided that person was on the waiting list and with written agreement from the Council. If a tenant had more than one plot only one of the plots may be handed over to a member of the family.

The Council should also review the tenancy agreement for future leases and include:-

- Restrictions on keeping livestock so that at least 75% of all allotments were cultivated for growing plants.
- A clear procedure for the process of cancelling a tenancy agreement for non-payment of rent or for dereliction of a plot.

Members of the Group discussed these proposals with allotment site representatives at a meeting on 2nd November and feedback from that meeting was tabled for Members consideration.

It was moved by Councillor Roberts and seconded by Councillor Derbyshire, and

RECOMMENDED:- (i) That the Executive Committee agreed to the following recommendations:-

- Vacant plots should let on an “as seen” basis with temporary rent reduction for heavily contaminated plots.
- Residents should be allowed three weeks to respond to an offer and if there was no response after three weeks the resident would be removed from the waiting list.
- If a resident rejected an offer they should be informed that they would only be offered one more plot and if that was rejected they would be removed from the waiting list.
- Plots may be handed over to a family member provided that person was on the waiting list and with written agreement from the Council. If a tenant had more than one plot only one of the plots may be handed over to a member of the family.
- That the appropriate department put in a bid for additional funding from the Capital Programme to replace the water supplies and pipes to the allotments over a 4-5 year programme; and

(ii) The Council should review the tenancy agreements for future leases and include:-

- Restrictions on keeping livestock so that at least 75% of all allotments were cultivated for growing plants. This may be relaxed for the small number of plots that are not suitable for cultivation and will be assessed on an individual basis.
- A clear procedure for the process of cancelling a tenancy agreement for non-payment of rent or for dereliction of a plot.

The meeting closed 2.36 p.m.

<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 7</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 7th December, 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Policy Review Officer</b>	
<p><b>Title: Work Programme</b></p> <p><b>Summary and Conclusions:</b></p> <p>Provide Members with an update of the scrutiny work programme.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p>Members are invited to consider the work programme and agree to delay the review into coastal protection until the Walney Island Coastal Protection Strategy is published in January.</p>	

### Report

This Committee has recently completed its review into the allotment service and has submitted its recommendations to the executive Committee.

The next item on the scrutiny work programme is coastal protection. I suggest that we identify a workgroup to undertake this review but wait until January 2012 when the Walney Island Coastal Protection Strategy is due to be published. In the mean time I will circulate other coastal protection information to allow Members to consider the scope of this review.

I have attached the current work programme below.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Scope of the review</b>
1	Allotments	To review the Council's arrangements for managing tenancies and the waiting list. Ensure the allotment service is financially sustainable
2	Street Cleanliness	To review to Council's arrangements for working with the contractor to deliver a higher standard of street cleanliness. To ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to manage external factors the impact on street cleanliness e.g. seagulls and fly tipping.

3	Coastal Protection	The implementation of phase four of the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy has resulted in changes to way in which coastal defence projects are funded. The review will focus on our medium term project plan and how it will be funded.
4	Estates and Asset Management	To review arrangements for maximising income from our assets and the potential for the disposal of redundant assets.
5	Town Centres Development and Supporting Local Traders	Review arrangements for supporting local traders in the current economic climate.
6	Highways and Car Parking	Review the provision of highways maintenance by Cumbria County Council. Review street lighting and on-street parking arrangements.
7	Economic Development, Planning and Development Control.	Review arrangements for planning and economic development in light of the reduced funding as a result of the Governments deficit reduction programme. Ensure the Council still has appropriate arrangements in place to access development funding
8	Cultural Services	Review the impact of the Council's service review on cultural services. The review will consider events, distribution of funding and service charges.
9	Policy and Strategy	Monitor the development of and performance against the council's key priorities.
10	Housing Strategy	Review availability of private sector and socially housing and consider partnership arrangements to ensure that the availability of housing in the borough meets demand.

### Background Papers

Nil



<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>		<b>Part One</b> <b>(D)</b> <b>Agenda</b> <b>Item</b> <b>8</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>7th December, 2011</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	<b>Policy Review Officer</b>	
<p><b>Title: Street Cleansing</b></p> <p><b>Summary and Conclusions:</b></p> <p>Provide Members with an update of the scrutiny review into street cleansing.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p>Members are invited to consider the information and determine how this review should be progressed.</p>		

### **Report**

The Streetcare Team are continuing to focus on improving heavily contaminated areas and it is clear that presentation of side waste particularly food waste is a major contributor to the lower standard of cleanliness s in some areas. The Streetcare Team and the waste collection contractor are working to reduce side waste and therefore reduce the burden on the street cleansing teams. A more effective street cleaning programme has been developed and implemented

Councillor Mrs Thomson continues to attend the contract meetings and is kept up to date with any significant issues.

Members of the work group are scheduled to meet the contract staff on 29th November and I will provide a verbal report from that meeting.

The Council is continuing to publicise changes to way in which we control the amount of side waste being presented.

### **Background Papers**

Nil