

Meeting of the Council – 8th October, 2012

Annual Report of the Environment Scrutiny Committee for 2011/12

Purpose of Report

1. To submit the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee for 2011/2012.

Background

2. Article 6 of the Council's Constitution requires that Scrutiny Committees report annually to the full Council on the work carried out over the previous municipal year making both recommendations for key areas of future work and any amended working methods, if appropriate, for the forthcoming year.
3. In deciding its work programme for 2011/12, the Committee chose to concentrate on a manageable list of important issues to ensure that they could be properly scrutinised, whilst at the same time giving the Committee some flexibility to add some additional items that arose during the course of the year.
4. Accordingly, items included in the planned work programme for the Committee in 2011/12 were as follows:-
 - (a) The Homelessness Service Annual Report 2011/12;
 - (b) Air Quality Action Plan;
 - (c) Food Service Plan;
 - (d) High Cost Voids;
 - (e) The Outcome of the Recycling Trial and Recycling Proposals;
 - (f) Rogue Traders and Doorstep Crime;
 - (g) Age Restricted Products;
 - (h) Tenancy and Estate Management;
5. The Committee's Work Programme for the 2011/12 municipal year also included the following standard reports:-
 - Quarterly Reports on Corporate Performance Management;
 - Update on the Council's Capital Strategy;
 - Revenue Budget Strategy for 2012/13;

- The Equality and Diversity Report 2011/12 of the Directorate of Corporate Resources.

Food Service Plan 2011/12

6. Reports were submitted and noted on the Food Service Plan for 2011/12 and 2012/13. Copies of the Food Service Plan Summaries were also submitted.

Housing Matters

- 7(a) A report was submitted on the actions taken in respect of high cost voids since the previous report submitted to the Committee in January, 2011 and the actions taken in respect of high cost voids were noted by the Committee.
- 7(b) A report was submitted and noted on homelessness activity during 2010/11. It was also noted that opportunities for additional funding and partnership working in order to meet acute housing needs were always actively pursued.
- 7(c) A report was submitted and noted on Housing Management Activity. The outcomes from the consultation on the Council's Review of Anti Social Behaviour, and the Welfare Reform Key Measures were also submitted.
- 7(d) A report was submitted and noted on the approach taken by Housing Services on the prevention and detection of Housing Fraud. The Housing Counter Fraud Policy was also submitted. Arising from consideration of the report it was agreed that reports would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the Council's participation with the "best use of stock summit" and the actual cost implications to the Council in relation to housing fraud.

Progress with Dudley MBC Air Quality Action Plan

8. A report was submitted and noted on an update with progress with the Dudley MBC Air Quality Action Plan. Details of funding obtained from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in relation to re-locating air quality monitoring equipment and the Council resources in relation to the delivery of the Plan were also considered. Support was given to the proposal that the final version of the Air Quality Action Plan be reported to Cabinet for adoption by the Council.

Recycling Trial Collection Scheme

9. A report was submitted and noted on the outcome of the plastic and card recycling trial and containing details in relation to a possible Borough-wide roll out. Details in relation to the new Blowers Green Recycling Depot were also considered.

Rogue Traders and Doorstep Crime

10. The Committee considered and noted a report submitted on the role of the Council's Trading Standards Service in combating the problems of doorstep crime and investigating rogue traders.

Age Restricted Products Enforcement

11. A report was submitted and noted on legislation enforcement and advice activity carried out by the Trading Service, concerning the sale of alcohol to persons aged under eighteen. An annual report on tobacco enforcement activity detailing the current and forthcoming tobacco control legislation was also submitted.

Network Management Strategy 2012 – 2015 and compliance with the Traffic Management Act 2004

12. The Committee considered a report on the Network Management Strategy including legislative requirements imposed on local traffic authorities by the introduction of the Traffic Management Act, 2004. The report also outlined how the Council would respond to the legislation to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on the road network and achieve compliance with the Act. The Network Strategy Plan incorporating the Speed Management Strategy was circulated to Members.
13. At the meeting held on 14th June, 2012, the following items were proposed for inclusion in the work programme for the 2012/13 municipal year:-
 - Matters for information, e-mailed to Members that they may wish to ask questions about.
 - Work Programme for 2012/13.
 - Food Service Plan 2012/13.
 - Housing Fraud.
 - Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee to Council.
 - Welfare Reforms.
 - Badgers to include residential support and the duties and responsibilities of the Council for dealing with Badgers.
 - Rogue Traders and Age Restricted Products.
 - Anti Social Behaviour Review Update.
 - Proposed Revenue Budget.
 - Trade Waste and Recycling.
 - Air Quality Management Report.
 - The Regulation of Private Landlords.
 - Provisional Work Programme 2013/14

In addition to the above, following a referral from the Cabinet Meeting on 20th June, 2012 the Committee also considered report entitled Complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman – Enforcement Matter.

At the meeting on 5th September, 2012, it was requested that reports on Housing Fraud and Best Use of Stock Summit be incorporated into the work programme for the 2012/13 municipal year.

Conclusion

14. The areas forming the bulk of the Committee's work continue to concentrate upon issues relating to housing, promoting environmental well-being and consumer issues.

Finance

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage.

Law

16. The requirement for the Committee to submit an annual report to the Council is contained in Article 6 of the Constitution as read with Part II of the Local Government Act, 2000, together with Regulations, Orders and Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Equality Impact

17. This report complies with the Council's Equality Policy.
18. This report has no specific effect on children and young people. There is no requirement for consultation with children and young people in producing the report or the development of proposals.

Recommendation

19. That the Annual Report of the Environment Scrutiny Committee for 2011/12 be noted.



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Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Committee