

MINUTES OF ENVIRONMENT AND GROWTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 DECEMBER 2019

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Sandison (Chair), Bearne, Mrs Bragg, Ellis, Mrs New and Mrs Roberts

Officers:

Dan Green (Head of Environment and Public Realm), David Burrows (Regulatory Services Manager), Dean Cooke (Environmental Protection Technician) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

In Attendance:

Councillor Roberts

16. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2019 were approved and signed by the Chair.

17. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Brader.

18. REVIEW OR PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDERS AND A POLICY RELATING TO GATING ORDERS

The committee considered a report (Part 1 – agenda item 4) concerning the issue of using Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to manage highways (alleyways) associated with anti-social behaviour. The committee had been asked to consider a draft policy, draft decision matrix and determine the relevant parties to consult before reporting back to Cabinet.

The matter was illustrated using a recent example involving an alleyway near a local secondary school where numerous reports of antisocial behaviour had been made and were subsequently being investigated.

In such circumstances, having a policy in place is critical, however there are numerous factors to consider, such as:

- Who would pay for gates?
- What would be the impact be on the local community?
- Who would be responsible for opening or closing the gate?
- Ownership of the alley

During further discussion, Members raised a number of points and questions, which will be considered at a future task group meeting.

The Committee agreed that those members that wished to, could undertake individual site visits to further understand the detail of the example case provided.

The Committee agreed that stakeholders, such as school youth councils, Rugby Youth Council, the Ambulance Service and Rugby Disability Forum should be engaged in the process.

The Committee did not consider the draft policy attached at appendix 1 to the report and the Regulatory Services Manager offered to collate members' questions and provide answers.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) Members would carry out individual site visits and a separate meeting would be arranged in the New Year; and
- (2) the one-page strategy be amended as minuted above.

19. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The committee received a report (Part 1 – agenda item 5) concerning the progress of scrutiny reviews and the overview and scrutiny forward work programme for 2019/20.

Concerns were raised that issues were being raised using motions and questions to council that were not suitable for review through a scrutiny committee. One example was houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) and the committee had already received and considered a report on the environmental impact.

The key issues relating to HMO's were environmental. Members asked about the Housing Act 2004 and hazards that could result in possible action. Some concerns reported included the quality of space and housing hazards such as damp or mould.

Legislation takes precedence. The extension of mandatory HMO licensing meant that smaller properties with two separate households would require a licence. Inspections were carried out by officers, but it was estimated there were 3-5,000 rental properties across the Borough, and in deprived areas the powers needed to be used with care. Licensing properties provided a way of setting a safe well-managed standard. Issues included HMO's that were not licensed, and the lack of requirement to identify enforcement issues because tenants were reluctant to complain and affect their tenancy. All complaints were investigated.

There were instances where residents were making complaints about neighbouring properties because they did not like the tenants, sometimes including ex-offenders. There was a view that they did not want HMO's nearby. There have been some occurrences of noise or waste nuisance, but these also occur at non-HMO properties.

A copy of the report could be sent to planning officers and a discussion could be held to separate legislative from borough issues.

The Committee reviewed the topics listed in the Forward Plan and raised the following points:

Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Policy – this could be linked to the annual crime and disorder topic. Following an audit carried out by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office a report was expected to be considered by Cabinet in June 2020.

Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning Policy – the Committee could review the decision due to be taken by Cabinet at its meeting on 6 January. The Cabinet report will cover a suite of policy statements specifying how services will be delivered in response to customers' expectations of standards of service.

Climate Emergency Working Group (Initial Report) – Cabinet will consider a report on the work carried out at its meeting on 3 February.

The Committee reviewed the forward work programme at appendix 1 to the report.

It was agreed that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Public Realm be invited to the meeting on 24 February to discuss performance and future strategy when the meeting would focus on waste and recycling, and the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Investment be invited to the meeting on 2 April to discuss performance and future strategy, including the approach taken to affordable housing.

A suggestion was made that the committee could focus on educational areas in relation to litter issues. This could also link to local pride and some form of community competition, or a reward programme or scheme for education within schools or communities. Members commented that there was a lack of resources to carry out enforcement and practical action was often the exception.

RESOLVED THAT – the work programme be updated to reflect the changes made.

CHAIR