

Report to the Safer, Cleaner, Greener Standing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 9 December 2008

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry



Recommendation:

To receive and consider the first draft of the “Safer, cleaner, greener” strategy document and to make recommendations to Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Report:

1. The “Safer, cleaner, greener” (SCG) initiative was adopted by Cabinet back in November 2007 alongside the corporate restructure which was being undertaken at that same time. The initiative was a response to residents’ concerns raised through a range of different media (e.g. Forester, BVPP resident questionnaires etc. Residents had expressed concerns about:

- (a) environmental standards (especially street cleansing);
- (b) levels of crime & disorder and anti-social behaviour;
- (c) the need to react to climate change and related issues; and
- (d) waste management

2. The corporate restructure resulted in the formation of the Environment & Street Scene Directorate, the intention being to better integrate street scene related issues, pulling together into the one Directorate (amongst other things):

- waste management
- environmental & public health
- safer communities
- grounds maintenance

It also established a new Environment and Enforcement Team, with its own manager, tasked with using the powers available to the Council to ensure that the district’s environment was protected and the street scene improved. As part of this team, a new Environmental Response Unit was formed, with a dedicated vehicle, to deal with minor environmental issues such as small scale flytipping, overgrown vegetation, cleansing of street furniture – all the things which annoy residents and where a big difference could be made with relatively modest resources.

3. An enlarged Safer Communities Unit was also established, with two additional Anti-social behaviour officers and a new CCTV co-ordinator, under the management of a Safer Communities Manager.

4. In mid April 2008 the Audit Commission undertook an inspection of the Council’s waste service. One of the criticisms the Commission put forward was that whilst the Council clearly had the intent, through the SCG initiative, to deliver environmental improvements, it could not demonstrate that intent through formal documentation and associated action plans. Whilst this criticism was considered unreasonable given the timing of the inspection against the corporate restructure, the need for a formal strategy was however recognised.

5. It has taken some while to produce the first draft of the overarching strategy, due in the main to the need to concentrate on creating the new units and filling the positions within them. This process is pretty well complete, and the Environmental response Unit is ready to

start operations. A training/awareness session on the SCG initiative for members took place on the 13th of November, and the draft strategy which is attached to this agenda contains within it many of the key elements of that awareness presentation.

6. This overarching or high level document is just the first stage. It will be supported by individual service and action plans setting out in more detail what is planned for the future. It is proposed that these action plans be overseen by this Panel as part of its routine scrutiny business. The strategy was also considered by the Council's management Board at its meeting on the 26th of November, the outcome of which will be reported orally to the meeting. From here, the strategy will be considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 11th of December and then Cabinet on the 15th.