

Report to Safer, Cleaner, Greener Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 6 January 2011

Subject: Christmas and New Year shutdown period

Officer contact for further information:

Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry



Recommendation:

- (1) To receive and consider the recommendations of the officer working group on the Christmas and New Year shutdown period;**
- (2) To receive and consider the views and recommendations of Management Board;**
- (3) To receive and consider the views of Portfolio Holders; and**
- (4) To make any further recommendations as considered appropriate to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Report:

1. At the meeting of the Panel on the 1st of July 2010, Members received a report reviewing the delivery of the waste and recycling collection services during the adverse weather in December 2009 and January 2010. The report set out in detail the steps which had been taken to provide the best possible service during what was a very abnormal period of winter weather.

2. The Panel resolved to receive detailed information on:

- (a) the manning of the Civic Offices over the Christmas and New Year break;
- (b) the ability to update the website and the answer phone messages remotely;
- (c) what other councils do over the Christmas and New Year break; and
- (d) amending the various collection streams during adverse weather conditions.

3. Management Board concluded that the best approach was to establish a small officer working group, to be chaired by the Director of Environment & Street Scene. Following the establishment of agreed terms of reference, the Group met for the first time on the 16th of November. The terms of reference were:

- (i) To review the background to the current Christmas and New Year closure arrangements;
- (ii) To review the nature and scale of services currently provided through the closure period and whether any can be discontinued;
- (iii) To identify any services which ought to be provided but currently are not, through the closure period;
- (iv) To review the staffing for and handling of emergencies / call outs during the closure period;

- (v) To review the arrangements for the provision of information via the web, telephone etc during the closure period;
- (vi) To consider current personnel arrangements;
- (vii) To consider options for and the resource implications of, dealing with:
 - (a) emergencies;
 - (b) severe weather events;
 - (c) other unusual events; and
 - (d) changes to personnel arrangements during the closure period;
- (viii) To consult relevant Portfolio Holders; and
- (ix) To report to the Management Board with recommendations

4. The officer group was able to deal with most of the above issues at that first meeting, but in particular arrangements for dealing with similar circumstances arising during this year's shutdown period were explored in detail. The following recommendations were made to Management Board:

- (1) There were no pressing reasons to revisit the shutdown agreement at this time in order to deal with the issues of concern.**
- (2) It was not considered necessary to recommend the inclusion of any further services to be provided during this period;**
- (3) It is not considered necessary to provide a skeleton staff presence during the current shutdown period. This recommendation could be subject to review as part of future negotiations on the present shutdown arrangements;**
- (4) The distinction between "emergencies" and severe weather events be retained;**
- (5) In the event of severe weather and the need to provide customer contact during the shutdown period, Epping Depot be utilised, subject to testing to demonstrate ICT capabilities;**
- (6) Directorates to ensure that they have adequate numbers of trained/authorised officers to provide updated web pages to the Council's website and that Public Relations give consideration to the availability of officers to update the front page of the Council's web pages;**
- (7) The Director of Finance & ICT investigate means by which the messaging system of the telephony system can be updated using other officers or remotely by ICT engineers;**
- (8) In the event of severe weather during the 2010/11 shutdown period and the need to provide customer contact, Epping Depot be utilised; and**
- (9) The availability of key PR and ICT staff during emergencies and/or shut down periods be considered.**

5. The Board considered the above recommendations at its meeting on the 1st of December 2010 when it agreed to accept them. The report, proposed action plan and related documents are attached to this agenda for Members' information.

6. The Panel is requested to consider the outcomes of the officer working group, Management Group and any comments of Portfolio Holders and to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee accordingly. Officers will also provide an update of any activity required during the recent Christmas and New Year shut down period.