

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
13 September 2011 (7.30 - 9.45 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Jeffrey Brace (Chairman), Dennis Bull, Garry Pain and Lynden Thorpe

Residents' Group John Mylod (Vice-Chair) and Barbara Matthews

Labour Group

**Independent Residents
Group**

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors David Durant.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

8 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 June 2011 and the Joint Meeting held on 28 July 2011 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the following comments, and signed by the Chairman.

A member asked for clarification on the work programme, specifically on the schedule of the review of Waste Management. The Head of Streetcare confirmed timescales would be around the Christmas period and therefore he could not report back to the committee until the January meeting.

9 **MONITOR OF SCHOOLS UNDER THE CARBON REDUCTION COMMITMENT**

The Committee received an update on the position of the monitoring of schools as part of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC), from the Energy Strategy Team Leader.

The Committee were informed that all state-funded schools (including academies) within Great Britain participated within the CRC scheme under the umbrella of their local authority. In doing so, it was the carbon footprint of the local authority that was legally and financially responsible for participation in the CRC scheme that was considered, rather than that of the individual schools.

The Committee were informed that Havering had produced both a footprint and consumption report, which was a total of £380,000, of which £197,000 (52%) was made up of schools' energy costs.

Officers explained that the Department of Energy and Climate Change had published a discussion paper on Academies' participation in the CRC. The paper addressed how academies could be dealt with under the CRC scheme and laid out four possible options:

Option 1: Retain the status quo. This option noted that the Department for Education (DfE) was consulting on school funding reforms that may allow the cost of CRC allowances to be retained centrally before calculating budgets for both maintained schools and Academies.

Option 2 and 3: Proposed the individual qualification and participation of schools (option 2 for all schools, option 3 for Academies only).

Option 4: Proposed the optional disaggregation of Academies, who would qualify with their LA but participate individually.

The Committee were informed that there was very little impact that the Council had on the energy use of schools. The service did provide advice on energy efficiency to schools, however not all schools seek this advice. The Committee noted that the majority of schools had increased energy consumption in recent years with the introduction of more PC's, Smartboards, and community lettings.

If Option 1 was taken, then there would be a "top-slicing" across the total budget for schools, however this would be done before the budget allocation, and therefore schools would not be directly affected by the cost. The Committee agreed that the CRC allowance costs should pass directly to the schools, so that they are accountable for the energy they use. This may be an incentive for schools to reduce their energy consumption.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed that a Topic Group should be established to scrutinise how to get schools to be more accountable for their energy use.

10 **SCORES ON THE DOORS**

The Committee received a presentation on the “Scores on the Doors” scheme by the Food Safety Divisional Manager. Scores on the Doors is a Food Hygiene rating scheme. It provides details of inspections carried out of all food premises, including restaurants and manufacturers of food. Scores on the Doors is not an award scheme, it offers consumers guidance and transparency about the hygiene of food premises.

The Food Safety Divisional Manager was responsible for eight Environmental Health Officers and contractors. The officers carry out proactive and reactive work, relating to all aspects of food safety including dealing with food complaints, hygiene of premises, labelling of food and chemical composition of food. A significant part of their work involved routine proactive unannounced inspections which form the backbone of the scores on the doors scheme.

There are approximately 1500 food premises in the borough and 700 to 800 of these fall due for inspection each year. It is the responsibility of the food business to register with the Local Authority and the service links with other departments to gather information about businesses that fail to register. It would be useful to obtain information from non-domestic rates to find out more details of individual businesses, but this has not happened yet. It may be due to the way that the Data Protection Act is applied within the Council and officers are looking into how we can share data to help all services improve their functions to the benefit of the community.

The Committee were informed that a scoring system had been used for over 20 years, and that all high risk premises are inspected, unannounced within a 6 month period. Other premises are looked at more frequently based upon the risk to the public. This would include premises such as hospitals that provided food to vulnerable people, nurseries that cater for very young children etc.

The criteria which make up the scores for the Scores on the Doors are:

- Compliance with – Structure and cleanliness
- Confidence in Management
- Compliance with– Food Hygiene and Safety procedures

These criteria are specified within legislation. All food practices are inspected include training records, controls, monitoring and verification

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including packaging materials and specialist processes. The division has a large covert sampling program linked to regional and national priorities. Sampling for adulteration of foods sold in the borough from the UK and imported foods from all over the world. Sampling includes microbiological testing and composition and labelling testing. It is now possible to use DNA testing on meats and fish and other products to determine species. Sampling is an important part of the food safety and inspection program.

All scores are published on the website www.scoresonthedoors.org.uk. Once business have been inspected and the scores established, the business is informed and a sticker showing how many stars they have is sent to them to display. Most businesses feel that they should be 5 stars, however a 3 star is very good, and a 2 star was the average score.

Members asked if it was necessary to have licensees for food premises. The officer explained that this was not the case, whilst there needed to be a trained person present; there was no requirement for a licensee. The committee were informed that the Food Standards Agency had campaigned for licensees in food premises but this policy had been abandoned about two years ago.

Contrary to public belief, 90% of food poisoning occurs in the home.

Supermarkets were pushing for longer use by dates and this therefore meant that food manufacturers are inspected to ensure that they have scientific evidence to prove that the food product would in fact be safe for the period specified. As a result, if a food product was used after the "use by" date it could potentially be very harmful and should not be consumed after the date has expired.

The Committee were informed that there were also other instructions on packaging along with the "use by" date. This is the instructions for safe storage. It will say keep refrigerated (and it may specify a temperature) it will also say something like "use within three days of opening". These instructions should be followed even if it means throwing the food away before the end of its "use by" date.

"Best before" dates indicate that the quality of the food may not be as good after the date specified. The Committee were informed that it should be safe to eat food after its "best before" date has expired. (Within reason).

The Committee were informed that there should be a paper-trail and audit of all food products across the world, so they can be tracked back to the source.

Improvement notices and prohibition notices can be issued to premises that do not comply with food safety. Remedial action notices can be issued to

manufacturers for a number of reasons. One of these reasons may be to require the business to reduce an unsafe "use by" date.

The Committee noted that there were two schemes operating, one was the FSA scheme, the other was the transparency scheme (Scores on the Doors). The Committee were informed that the FSA had recently bought the software rights from transparency data and it may now be possible to merge the two schemes so that we have one national scheme instead of two. This will improve consumer confidence in the scheme and remove any inconsistencies that the two schemes currently create and allow widespread advertising of the scheme to inform the consumer and encourage food businesses to comply with food safety in advance of inspections.

The Committee thanked the officer for his informative presentation and asked that he report back in the future on further developments.

11 BUDGET VARIANCE REPORT

The Committee received a verbal presentation from the Head of Streetcare on budget variance. The current data related to Period 5 and the Head of Streetcare agreed to circulate a copy of the figures, and also to provide details in the next agenda pack, so that Members could view the data before the next meeting.

The Committee agreed on the areas they wished to have details on, including the current budget and spend to date.

12 PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

The Committee were provided with service performance information from the Head of Streetcare. The Committee noted that fly tips were on the downward trend, and this had been brought down with enforcement. They further noted that the average period for the service to remove fly tips was 1 day, although the service often exceeded this target and removed fly tips within 1 day.

The Committee were informed that information relating to waste and recycling was currently being verified by the East London Waste Authority (ELWA), and figures would be available at the next meeting. The Committee were informed that the tip tonnage was down 25% which was a significant saving for Havering and it was further noted that there were 18,000 customers on the green waste scheme, which gave an income of £540,000 with a profit of £150,000.

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The Committee asked if the authority would go to fortnightly domestic waste collections, and when this would happen. Officers responded that this would be unlikely to be happening in Havering although a range of options were being considered for Members approval. The Committee discussed the issue of missed collections, and how these were put right. The Committee were informed that if missed collections were reported before midday, they would be collected the same day, if it was after midday, they would be collected by midday the following day. The cost of the missed collections was included in the contract with Biffa.

The Committee were informed that the repairs to streetlighting would improve, it was hoped to start as they would be starting a new contract as of 1 November subject to approvals being in place.

Chairman