

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE  
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford  
14 January 2016 (7.30 - 9.45 pm)**

**Present:**

Councillors Barbara Matthews (Chairman), Barry Mugglestone, Alex Donald (Vice-Chair), Patricia Rumble and Viddy Persaud (In place of Carol Smith)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Carol Smith and Councillor Michael White

**9 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 2 September 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

**10 OVERVIEW OF RESIDENT PARKING SCHEMES: IMPLEMENTATION & ENFORCEMENT**

Following a request from the Sub-Committee an overview of the implementation and enforcement of residential parking scheme in the borough was given.

Officers explained that requests for parking schemes could be received from residents, members or businesses. This could be due to commuter parking or another issue. The area is assessed and a series of consultations are carried out. This would include presenting to the Highways Advisory Committee. A full consultation with the residents and businesses is then carried out before the scheme is implemented. Once the scheme goes live this is enforced over the first month and publicity of the scheme is carried out.

It was noted that there was often displacement following the implementation of a new parking scheme, therefore the team had to become proactive in enforcement.

The Enforcement CEO's acted as a deterrent, however it was important that residents had the first choice and convenience was maintained. The Enforcement team was made up of 22 CEO's, however it was growing with the priorities in the borough. The biggest issue was around schools, ensuring that residents had priority and the commuter parking. Most of these were considered to be poor parking behaviours. The Enforcement Team operated 7 days a week up until 10:00pm.

Members felt that often it took a long while for schemes to be implemented. Officers explained that there had been a number of key officers that had left the organisation, however there had been an active recruitment drive which brought the service back to full capacity.

It was noted that there were a number of areas that contributed to parking schemes, these included the schools expansion programme which included 8-9 schools who had project plans and would mean major schemes needed to be consulted upon. The service would need to mitigate any resident's challenges whilst ensuring that the school children were kept safe. It was possible that other schools may also expand in the future. The enforcement around schools had been only one officer; this had recently been increased to two however it was impossible to be at every school. There was a schedule for the enforcement of schools, however this was constantly changing and they were looking to adopt other options and powers to deal with the issue.

Officers explained that they would look to work with Head teachers, the local community and Ward Councillors about how school zones could be improved. They were looking to mitigate the problem and were trying to discourage short carjourneys, so there was an exclusion zone around the school, which would mean more safety for the children.

Members asked how the schemes were prioritised. Officers explained that if there was a scheme needed to prevent danger, this was prioritised; otherwise all schemes would be dealt with as they were received. Each scheme was assessed for safety issues and displacement and the effect this would have on residents in the area.

Discussions were had about residential parking zones and how these could lead to isolation for an older person living alone who did not have any permits. This reduced social visits or one-off visits. Officers stated that this was an area that needed to be investigated. However it would be open to abuse.

The Chairman suggested that a new Topic Group be established to look at how the visitor parking scheme could be improved so that the elderly people in the borough were not isolated, and short, one-off visits could be done in areas where parking permits were needed.

## **11 FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME**

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from the Interim Food Safety Divisional Manager. This gave an overview of the work of the Food Safety Division, an overview and the purpose of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme as well as the benefits to the local people, visitors and businesses.

It was noted that the number of food businesses operating in Havering had increased from 1586 in 2011 to 1892 in 2015. Each of these businesses had to be inspected on a regular basis according to food safety risk.

Officers explained that the Food Safety Division work consisted of:

- Food Hygiene Inspections
- Food Standards Inspections
- Investigation of complaints from members of the public
- Sampling for analysis
- Investigation of notifiable infectious diseases and or food poisoning
- Education, advice, coaching, information and intelligence gathering
- Feed Hygiene/ Standards Interventions.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme was a partnership between the local authority and the Food Standards Agency initiative for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This was to help consumers to choose where to eat out or shop for food by giving them information about the hygiene standards in food premises (found at the time they were inspected). This would in turn drive improvements in hygiene standards.

Officers explained how the rating worked. The scheme was simple for consumers to understand with a rating of “0” being the worst and “5” being the best. Simple words were used with each rating. Ratings of 3, 4 and 5 were considered acceptable and the premises were “Broadly Compliant”. Where ratings of 0, 1 and 2 were given there would be follow-up enforcement activity carried out. The frequency of follow-up inspections was dependant on the risk identified at the initial inspection. All visits were unannounced other than for establishments run from private homes.

Once an inspection has been carried out a rating was agreed and given to that business. The business was issued with a sticker which gave the rating on the front with details of the inspection on the rear. The stickers were encouraged to be displayed at the business, however this was not mandatory. Each business was obliged to inform the Council within 28 days that they would be operating a food business. The onus was on the operator to inform the Council and all business would be aware of this. If businesses were not compliant then support would be given to ensure that forms are completed so that ratings can be assigned. Where there was non-compliance the team could prosecute the business. The Sub-Committee noted that there were 200 unrated businesses as of January 2016.

Each premise with a food hygiene rating was sent to the Food Standards Agency so that it could be published. This was so that any person could check the ratings at [www.food.gov.uk/ratings](http://www.food.gov.uk/ratings). A free mobile app, was available, which provided the same information. Information on the local authority, the address of the business, the postcode or the name of the

business could be searched on. From this the consumer could see the rating of the business together with details about the location. It was noted that all ratings were taken at a point in time so there would always be an element of risk.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the scheme did not apply to business which did not supply food directly to consumers for consumption “on” or “off” the premises. E.g. manufacturers, packers, importers, exporters, business to business suppliers. The scheme was also not applied to businesses which consumers did not normally recognise as food businesses e.g. chemists, off licensing selling only drinks and wrapped goods. However it was added that where a chemist or off license had a fridge with food goods, the Environmental Health Officer would make a judgement at the inspection as to whether the rating needed to be applied.

The officer explained how the scheme was integrated into the work of the Food Safety Division. He stated that each full inspection assessed the business on 8 different criteria (this included the three Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Criteria (FHRS)). This determined when the next inspection was due to take place as part of the planned intervention programme.

The three FHRS criteria checked were:

- Hygiene: how hygienically the food was handled, how it was stored, prepared, cooked, cooled, reheated etc.
- Structure: the condition of the structure of the buildings, the cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and other facilities
- Confidence in management: how the business was managed, what it did to make sure food was safe, including documented procedures.

Each of these three elements were essential for making sure that food hygiene standards met requirements and food served or sold was safe to eat.

The mapping of numerical scores was explained to the Sub-Committee and how the three FHRS criteria were scored. The lower the overall number the better the score. It was noted that there was an appeal process in place should the business wish to appeal. Information on the number of premises inspected over the last 3 years together with the rating was presented to the Sub-Committee. It was noted that there were a lower number of premises with 0, 1 and 2 ratings in Havering.

Research had shown that food hygiene when eating out and food poisoning were the main concerns that people had about food safety. The scheme provided local residents and visitors with important information about hygiene standards in local businesses and empowered them to make informed choices about where to eat out or shop for food. By telling people about the hygiene standards was an effective way of improving public health protection. Officers stated that all business could achieve the top rating they just needed to comply with all the criteria. Good food hygiene is good

for business, as well as profits. The feedback on the scheme from businesses had generally been positive.

The Sub-Committee noted that the Food Standards Agency's strategy for 2015 to 2020 included extending mandatory display of food hygiene ratings at food outlets in England (as it currently was in Wales). The FSA was gathering evidence to inform the case to present to the Government for consideration and developing an impact assessment setting out the costs and potential benefits of introducing the legislation that would be required for mandatory display of the ratings.

Examples were given to the Sub-Committee of the concerns that are raised both from the public and during inspections.

The Sub-Committee thanked the officer for the very informative presentation.

## **12 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Performance Indicators within its remit for Quarters 1 and 2 of 2015. It noted that each indicator was given a red, amber or green (RAG) rating. Of the eight indicators, six were rated green, 1 was rated amber and 1 was rated red.

The indicator which was rated red was "Number of fly tipping incidents". Officers explained that this was an area which was very difficult to enforce however the Council was continuing to use CCTV to attempt to identify offenders and would prosecute if an identity could be made.

The Sub-Committee noted that the current levels of performance needed to be interpreted in the context of increasing demands on services across the Council. It was noted that future performance reporting arrangements would change so that from April 2016, Cabinet had agreed that the quarterly and annual Corporate Performance Reports would be considered first by the individual Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees, then the Overview and Scrutiny Board and finally the Cabinet.

## **13 WASTE MINIMISATION TOPIC GROUP**

The Sub-Committee discussed and noted the report of the Waste Minimisation Topic Group. Officers explained that this would now be presented to Cabinet at its March meeting.

**14     INGREBOURNE HILL PUBLIC ENQUIRY**

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that information had been provided on this item by officers outside of the meeting. The member concerned was content for the item to be withdrawn from the agenda.

**15     FUTURE AGENDAS**

The Sub-Committee suggested the following areas for discussion at future meetings:

- Improving the safety of schools through robust enforcement.
- Vermin/ Pest Control.

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**Chairman**