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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford  
11 March 2014 (7.30 - 9.45 pm)**

**Present:**

Councillors Jeffrey Brace (Chairman), John Mylod (Vice-Chair), Barbara Matthews and Keith Wells

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Durant and Councillor Barry Oddy

**26 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and the minutes of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**27 COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee noted its Annual Report and agreed to refer it to Full Council.

**28 PARKS AND PARKS ENFORCEMENT**

The Committee received a presentation on how the parks and open spaces in Havering were managed and maintained. It was informed that this was through Resources, Consultation and the Strategic Requirement. Officers stated that whilst there was a plan of works for all parks and open spaces in the borough, this was often weather dependent which could be unpredictable and difficult to control. The Committee was informed that there were eight parks with Green Flag Standards, which was the highest accolade for parks maintenance in the UK. There were also 10 parks which had won the London in Bloom last year.

The Committee was informed of future proposals, these included:

- High Level Stewardship – instead of using tractors to cut the grass, the introduction of cattle to graze would encourage the return of more biodiversity in the park. Officers stated that Redpole Cattle were the nearest to a historical Essex breed that they could find. English Nature would give Havering a grant for this venture, which had

proved very successful in both Hornchurch Country Park and Rainham Gateway.

- English Woodland Grant – In the large wooded areas of the borough if trees are felled, rather than using large machinery to move the logs, the introduction of heavy horses would be introduced, these were Suffolk Punch horses who were native horses and historically were used for this type of work.
- Biomass Production – Given that there are large wooded areas in the borough, and tied in with the above project, the wood could be sold off for biomass production which essentially would produce an income and allow the woodland to be better managed.

A member asked about the wild deer at the Manor and if there was a culling programme. Officers stated that this was not a policy that they would wish to implicate. The deer at the Manor were wild deer and added to the diversity of the area. The Red Deer who resided at Bedfords Park were captive deer. Often these were removed and taken to Scotland and set free. No deer was ever killed.

Members asked if there was an apprenticeship scheme in the department. Officers stated that they had four young people on a 20 month apprenticeship scheme. They spend 12 months learning about the team, and then the following 6-8 months they had the option of the area they wish to pursue. There were two in conservation, one in plants and equipment and one who wishes to be a plantswoman at Langtons. Management was an option, however it was the apprentices choice of what they wish to do in the 6-8 months. There was no guarantee of a job at the end of the scheme, however one apprentice has been taken on full time.

Members asked if there was any scope for employing with people with learning disabilities. Officers stated they have not been approached by organisations or partners to deliver this, however they would if they had this partnership in place. They had worked closely with SEETEC in employing people through the probation service.

## 29 **AIR QUALITY IN HAVERING**

The Committee received a presentation on Air Quality in Havering. The Committee was informed that Havering had cleaner air than many other boroughs, however due to statutory duty; London is in breach of EU pollution limits, which could lead to prosecution of approximately £50 million spread across all London Boroughs. There was evidence of effects on public health and the local economy. Officers explained the pollutants of concern which included Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sup>2</sup>) and other dangerous airborne particles (PM10), both of which contribute/ exacerbate existing respiratory conditions.

The Committee was shown models of air quality for the whole of the borough, Romford Town Centre, Upminster and Rainham. The data was for 2011 and 2015 (predicted). The main areas which contributed to air quality were the major road in the borough. Officers explained that there were a number of London Wide Improvement Measures that were being put in place and Havering had a number of improvement measures which were already in place. Over the next 2 years, using a grant from the Mayor, Havering would be implementing further measure to improve local air quality.

**30 BLUE BADGE RENEWALS UPDATE**

The Committee received an update report on the Blue Badge Renewal scheme. Officers reported that the process was carried out by Northgate, but the administration was carried out by the council before instructing Northgate to issue the badge. There were no backlogs in applications.

The Blue Badge criterion was explained to the Committee. If an applicant qualified for the higher level of disability allowance, they were an “automatic” qualification for the scheme. All other applications were subject to assessment, where the application and relevant supporting documents were assessed. If the customer meets the criteria then the badge is awarded, if not then the customer was invited to attend a Mobility Assessment with an Occupational Therapist to assess their eligibility.

The Committee was informed that there were very few cases of fraud as often letters were written anonymously which were very difficult to trace or prove.

**31 CARBON FOOTPRINT/ LED LIGHTING**

The Committee received a presentation on the Council's Carbon Footprint and the new LED streetlighting project. The Climate Change Action Plan had been updated for 2014-2018. The targets in the plan included

- To reduce Havering Council's own CO2 emissions by 1% year on year
- To reduce the borough's CO2 emissions by 3% year on year, focusing efforts on reducing emissions in domestic and transport sectors.
- To improve the borough's ability to deal with the impacts of climate change.

Since 2009 the Council had reduced its energy consumption by 5%, generating £1,059,000 cumulative savings from energy efficiency projects. Since 2010, £4.5 million in grants for Havering residents had been brought in and the replacement of all office lighting, road signs and bollards to LEDs, had reduced energy use by 60-70%.

The Council had made investments in biofuels mix, electric and hybrid vehicles and machinery, there was a consultation with staff about introducing pool cars. A number of the council owned buildings were also more sustainable including the new Rainham library, the Central Depot and MyPlace, which had won Most Sustainable Public Organisation in December 2012.

The Committee were shown photographs of where streetlights had been replaced with LED lanterns, the members of the committee agreed that this was much better and had received good feedback. Officer informed the committee that LED lights used 60% less energy, and the lifetime was three times the life of current lights use, usually 10-15 years.

The Committee discussed feasibility options for further street lighting energy saving measures being carried out and other savings options that could be considered. It was felt this was something that the scrutiny committee may wish to consider in the future.

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**Chairman**