

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Committee Room 3A - Town Hall
29 August 2017 (7.30 - 9.40 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Keith Darvill, Nic Dodin, Darren Wise (Chairman), Carol Smith (Vice-Chair) and +Phil Martin

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Garry Pain and Councillor Patricia Rumble

+Substitute members: Councillor Phil Martin (for Patricia Rumble).

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The Council's Parks Development Manager gave the Sub-Committee a presentation on the Council's parks and open spaces.

The presentation showed that the Council managed 100 parks and open spaces including 4 country parks and also detailed the works carried out managing the parks including the management of maintenance, parks ranger service and parks management and a formal inspection system.

Officers were also tasked with capital project management and external funding applications which formed part of the Parks and Open Spaces strategy.

In total the Council maintained and managed 41 play areas including 26 recreation/fitness areas.

The Council also managed 27 allotments including liaising with allotment societies, management of Public Right of Ways including liaising with ramblers and liaison with 18 friends of parks groups.

Members noted that the team also dealt with the management of Green Flag applications and that the Council currently had 13 parks that held Green Flag status.

Officers advised that dealt with event and activities management, management of leases and licences and management of sports pitch hire.

Marketing of the parks and open spaces was carried out using social media, website, brochures and press releases.

Going forward officers announced that a further Green Flag application had been made for Langtons Gardens and the retention of existing sites.

Applications would continue for London in Bloom for contribution in Best Borough category.

Officers would continue to work with private companies that wanted to invest in the parks and help generate income.

Officers continued to research through the London Parks Benchmarking Group and Parks for London to collate ideas for additional income generation.

Improved publicity of the parks and open spaces would continue with new brochures, web pages and the use of the events management website “Filmmapp” which allowed filmmakers to book to use parks or open spaces when filming.

Improved parks condition and safety inspections would be carried out using the “Commontime” software that was currently used by Housing Services.

Members noted that parks maintenance was carried by an in-house team which made more financial sense than using outside contractors.

Arrangements were in place to carry out bio diversity surveys in the country parks to ascertain exact numbers of wildlife and insects.

In response to questions from Members, officers replied that plans were in place to increase the number of weekend litter bin collections particularly in larger well-used parks like Upminster and Raphael parks. Officers also advised that they would be trialling larger bins particularly in Upminster Park that compacted rubbish down until the bin was eventually full and then it would be emptied rather than operatives emptying half full bins as they sometimes did at present.

Legal and property Services were currently looking at land ownership in Dagnam Park following the recent query relating to boundaries that had arisen when proposals for the solar park were considered.

Officers advised that the recent vandalism in Central Park had been carried out overnight by people who had hidden within the park when it was locked up. There had been a strong level of public outcry amongst the community which had led to the perpetrators being caught and action taken against them and their parents.

In response to a question relating to the provision of public conveniences in parks, officers advised that it was not sustainable to provide toilets in parks that were unmanned or that did not have catering provision within them.

Members noted the contents of the presentation and thanked officers for their time.

3 FOOD AND FEED SERVICE AND PLAN 2017/18

The Council's Food Safety Division Manager presented to the Sub-Committee regarding the Food and Feed Service and Plan 2017/18.

The presentation contained facts and figures from the Council's interventions when visiting premises that sold or provided food for consumption by the public.

Officers advised that the Food Standards Agency had audited the service in December 2015 and found that the Council needed to clarify its interventions due against its capacity and to clarify the intervention strategy for food standards. At the time 1200 premises were overdue for inspection.

Following the audit, changes had been made to procedures that placed a less onerous amount of data input work on professional staff allowing them more time for interventions.

Members were advised that in 2016/17 99% of the inspection programme had been achieved with only 18 premises carried over into the following year's programme. In total over 1800 inspections, both hygiene and food standards, had been carried out.

Members also noted the reactive work of the service which included complaints about food purchased in the borough, hygiene of premises, labelling of food, food poisonings and service requests for information.

Officers also updated Members on staffing levels for the service.

Members noted that the service had tendered in the private sector for 500 lower risk broadly compliant premises inspections using funds from vacant posts. This freed up officer time to concentrate on high risk and non-compliant premises and any revisits from the outsourced work. Non-compliant premises took up most of officer's time and prosecution was very time consuming.

Going forward there would be a review of high risk and non-compliant work procedure to see if improvements and efficiencies could be found.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland helped consumers choose where to eat out or shop for food by giving them information about the hygiene standards in restaurants,

takeaways and food shops. The rating was out of 6 with zero lowest and 5 highest. Premises only had to voluntarily display their rating for customers to see although it was planned to introduce mandatory display after Brexit.

Over 1800 premises in the borough had to be inspected over a three year period. In Havering 87% were rated 3 and above (broadly compliant) 13% were not. Members also noted examples of non-compliance and the fines/costs that had been paid.

Members noted the contents of the presentation and thanked officers for their time.

Chairman