

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
1 October 2013 (7.30 - 9.00 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Jeffrey Brace (Chairman), John Mylod (Vice-Chair), David Durant, Lynden Thorpe, Keith Wells and June Alexander (In place of Barbara Matthews)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barbara Matthews

7 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that since the last meeting membership had been reduced from seven members to six. As a result Councillor Peter Gardner was no longer a member of the committee.

9 RIVER INGREBOURNE UPDATE

Officers provide the Committee with details of the environmental improvement works which had been completed last year. This had included the stretch of the river Ingrebourne from Hacton Lane to Squadrons Approach and involved the installation of flow deflectors to protect banks, introduction of wetland shelves to encourage ecology and improve flow. Also, back waters had been installed to assist ecology and flood storage.

The next stage is similar works from Squadrons Approach to the River Thames. This would be a very large project and requires much discussion with the Environment Agency and Natural England as it has been agreed in principal that silt removal would be necessary to alleviate flooding upstream at Squadrons Approach and Hacton lane. This was a very sensitive area of river and included Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which required many approvals prior to commencement of work.

The Committee welcomed the work being undertaken and drew officers' attention to issues on over rivers in the borough.

10 ROMFORD MARKET

As requested at the last meeting officers provided an update on:

- The demise of the Farmer's Market,
- Other specialist markets arranged by the Regeneration Team, and
- an update on the proposed Food Court.

The Committee were reminded that Upminster Farmers market had originally begun life in Romford, trading on a Sunday along South Street, approximately eight years ago. The market operator had then asked to move location to Upminster to trade on a Thursday which the Council agreed to. Later the trading day reverted to Sunday. As trader numbers decreased and the difficult economic climate took hold the Farmers Market decided to cease trading in December 2012.

Since the beginning of the year there had been 5 specialist markets. The three of the four Italian markets had been held in South Street, Romford, with the fourth being held in Corbets Tey Road, Upminster. All had been held on Sundays. The Regeneration team were looking to arrange four to five further Italian markets in the future, two in Upminster and two/three in Romford.

The one-off European Market had been held over two days in June, Sunday the 2nd and Monday the 3rd. This had proved very successful and the Economic Development Team were looking to book one/two further markets for 2014.

The Committee were pleased these had been successful but felt that if they had been held on a market day the traders would have benefitted from the additional footfall.

The Food Court had opened in June 2013 with the aim of bringing greater retail activity and footfall to the northern end of the Market Place. It had opened with 6 hot food traders but lost three of the traders fairly quickly. A replacement had been found for one of the traders but this trader had left due to poor sales.

At present two of the trader's trade on all three days, one just on Saturday and a new Dry and Wet Fresh Coffee stall trades just on Friday. Officers were continuing to work to attract new traders and five potential traders were sorting out food registration certificates before they commenced trading. Unfortunately the timing of establishing the food court clashed with the festival season and this had broken momentum.

Officers informed the Committee that they were looking at another initiative which had worked elsewhere, i.e. the introduction of a teenager market.

In discussions the Committee identified what they believed were the main problems:

- Competition from local stores like Primark, Matalan,
- No stalls for teenagers,
- Failure of stall holders to give monetary refunds.
- Location of the market, the Chairman believed relocating the market closer to the railway station would revitalise the market.

The report was noted.

11 **FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

Officers provided a brief overview of the current financial position for those services which fall under the committee's remit. By period four Trading Standards and Environmental Health were looking at an over spend of £40k. The position for StreetCare in period four was an under spend of £100k. However, by the beginning of period six this had been reduced.

Officers explained that winter was the most difficult time for StreetCare. Not only is it likely that expenditure will increase for gritting, call-out fees and overtime, but excessive snow also reduces parking income as people stay at home, rather than go out shopping. Also from November onwards it is not possible to carry out yellow lining or road repairs, unless emergencies.

Details of the extra monies which had been made available for specific works were provided, these included improvements to bus stops funded by London Transport.

The Committee **noted** the report.

12 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

The Committee were provided with details of the Annual Corporate Performance Indicators for 2012/13. The Committee agreed that any questions should be e-mailed to the Head of StreetCare.

13 **FUTURE AGENDAS**

The Committee decided they did not wish to change anything in the work plan at this time.

14 **URGENT BUSINESS**

The Committee's attention was drawn to work being under taken by PETRA to reduce the carbon footprint. Officers advised that a report would be submitted to Cabinet seeking approval for expenditure to replace existing sodium street lights with LED street lights as part of the Council's commitment to reducing its Carbon Footprint.

Chairman