
To
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

31st March 2010

Subject
Scrutiny Chairs' Progress Reports - Economy and Environment Scrutiny Board (3)

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the work of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Board during the period January 2010 to March 2010, together with the recommendations and other outcomes of this work.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the information contained in this briefing note and to consider any further action.

3 Information/Background

3.1 Activity

The Board held 3 meetings during this period:
13/01/2010; 10/02/2010; 10/03/2010.

Issues considered by the Board over the period were as follows:-

Street Lighting PFI
Asset Management – Development of a Performance Management Framework
Broadening the Scope and Application of the Fair Trade Policy
The Winter Blues – Gritting and Pot Holes
Progress of Coventry's Surface Water Management Plan
Ironmonger Square Update
Member Visit to the Greenstar Aldridge Recycling Facility

3.2 Recommendations

- 3.2.1 The Board made no formal recommendations during this period. However, there were a number of other outcomes from the Board's work, which are shown in the following section.

3.3 Outcomes

Street Lighting PFI

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note and received a presentation that provided an outline of the background to the Street Lighting PFI project, gave an overview of the progress to date and headlines from the Call for Final Evaluations.

The Board questioned the officer on a number of issues, and matters raised included potential crime and safety implications associated with the decision to dim street lights; the importance of consultation with Ward Councillors prior to works being undertaken in their area; the colour of the lighting columns; the potential to match existing lamp styles; responsibility for the payment of energy bills; financial implications associated with a decision to dim lights; the political approval process; the total timescale for the project; a suggestion that the project be raised at the Ward Forum meetings; the importance of consultation; and potential problems in light of the current financial climate.

Asset Management – Development of a Performance Management Framework

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note and received a presentation that provided an update on the process of establishing a property performance framework for collecting and reporting on property performance indicators.

The Board questioned the officer on a number of issues, matters raised included access for the disabled; community centres and the options to attract grants; the maintenance costs associated with the crematorium buildings and the cost implications for the new cremator; the significant maintenance costs associated with sports centres and swimming pools; the low costs for running Willenhall library; the costs for listed buildings; the percentage of buildings surveyed; and the role of the Board to assist in this area of work, particularly with regard to giving guidance on asset transfers.

The Board noted the intention of the Director of City Services and Development to report annually on property performance management.

Broadening the Scope and Application of the Fair Trade Policy

The Scrutiny Board considered a report and received a presentation by the Director of City Services and Development on a proposal that the City Council broaden the scope and application of the existing Fairtrade Resolution in order to enhance its effectiveness, especially in relation to activities within and under the control of the City Council.

The Board questioned the officers on the proposal, and raised issues relating to anti-competitiveness; the cost implications associated with fair-trade wine; the issue that the default wine at mayoral functions be Fairtrade; the procurement process; and further information about clothing and sports equipment.

The Winter Blues – Gritting and Pot Holes

The Scrutiny Board received two presentations by the Director of City Services and Development that provided an update on the current situation concerning the winter gritting arrangements and the problems of potholes.

The Board asked officers a number of questions and decided it should be involved in the future review of the gritting network and that the Director of City Services and Development be requested to give consideration to publicity to encourage the public to make use of the grit in the salt bins when it has snowed. The Board also asked that the Director of City Services and Development be requested to provide Members with the details of the numbers of potholes and complaints on a Ward basis and to convey the Board's thanks to all employees involved with the winter gritting and the pothole repair work.

Progress of Coventry's Surface Water Management Plan

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note that set out the latest position of the Council's preparation of the Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP). The briefing note detailed the background for the development of this Plan referring to the Pitt Review. One of the 92 recommendations was that 'local authorities should lead on the management of local flood risk' and that 'surface water management plans should provide the basis for managing local flood risk.

The Board noted that Coventry had been identified by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as one of the 77 authorities most at risk from surface water flooding and had awarded the City Council £150,000 to produce their Plan. It was agreed that a progress report would be submitted on the SWMP as work progresses.

Ironmonger Square Update

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note that provided an update on progress with the Ironmonger Square scheme and reported back on concerns raised at previous meetings of the Board.

The Board noted that the Square was opened to the public on 17th December, 2009, with only the benches and bins left to install and the repaving of Cross Cheaping to complete. It also noted that the works were completed within budget and that it had been agreed to enhance the specification for Cross Cheaping to that of Ironmonger Square as this could still be achieved within the original budget without using the contingency.

Attention was drawn to the pedestrian link previously suggested by Scrutiny Board, from the top of Cross Cheaping to West Orchard Shopping Centre – this is being considered for inclusion in the 2010/11 capital programme.

It was agreed that information be circulated to all Members of the Board on the budget details for the project and the financial implications associated with CCTV monitoring.

Member Visit to the Greenstar Aldridge Recycling Centre

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note informing the Board of the recent Member visit to the Greenstar Aldridge Recycling Facility in Walsall, where all Coventry's kerbside recycling is taken for processing. Concerns about the health and safety of the employees were raised and it was agreed that a letter would be written to the management at Greenstar expressing the Board's concerns.

Briefing Note Author / Contact for Further Information

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31st March 2010.