

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January 2016 at 7.00 pm**

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**Present:** Councillors Roy Jones (Chair), Robert Ray, Michael Stone and Pauline Tolson

**Apologies:** Councillors Garry Hague

**In attendance:**

Gavin Dennett, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager  
Mike Jones, Management Accountant  
Richard Parkin, Head of Environment  
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **21. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 12 November 2015, were approved as a correct record.

### **22. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **23. Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

### **24. Fees and Charges 2016/2017**

The Finance Officer introduced the report to the Committee explaining that the fee and charges for the Council were received on an annual basis and were broken down to be presented at the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

He continued to notify Members that the report highlighted the proposed new fees and charges for the Public Protection and Environment directorates. It was mentioned that when reviewing the fees and charges for 2016/2017 benchmarking against neighbouring authorities was undertaken.

The Finance Officer explained the difference between statutory and discretionary charges; in that statutory charges were predetermined by the government and discretionary charges meant that the Council had a say in

the amount that was charged. Members were advised that given the nature of some public protection fees such as licences, such fees would be agreed by the Licensing Committee.

Members commented they felt that certain fees had not been increased adequately such as the flyposting and dog fouling. Clarification was sought as to the fee setting for abandoned vehicles; Members further commented that vehicles were left in laybys and on roundabouts seeking sales.

The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager explained with vehicles which were left to be sold on the highway, unfortunately there was a weakness within the legislation; as councils would have to prove that a seller had sold two vehicles. He continued to advise the committee that officers undertook a lot of work in relation to abandoned vehicles. Members were further advised that if a vehicle was to be reclaimed the council could charge a storage fee.

It was commented that the discretionary fees allowed the Council to make a profit as these were set by the Council; however Members were informed that the Council could be open for challenge if it was deemed the Council was over charging.

Members were advised court cases had been taken against Local Authorities and fees had been paid back.

The Committee enquired as to fees being part of a comparison with other Local Authorities within the area. The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager confirmed that the fees and charges were subject to a benchmarking exercise with other authorities in the area, he explained that this kept the fees in check and sought that the Council received the best income.

Councillor Jones, Chair of the Committee stated he felt the charges for Burial grounds was a steep raise, he queried if the Council was on target with other Local Authorities.

The Finance Officer clarified the Council's fees had been significantly lower than other authorities in the local area; he confirmed the Council was now in the same boundary as its neighbours.

It was queried as to how many officers the Public Protection department had to deal with the fineable offences such as dog fouling. Officers informed the committee that there were 2 full time officers; however this would shortly become one. It was commented that it was hoped the post would be refilled accordingly; however budget savings over the last 3 years had affected staffing levels.

The Chair of the Committee commented upon the filming sponsorship, the Finance Officer explained that if an area was deemed to be available then the

Council could charge for filming to take place an example of this was Coal House Fort.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the committee consider the proposed charges as detailed in Appendix 1.**

**25. Fly Tipping & Fly Posting within the Borough (including an update on Cory Wharf)**

The report was presented to Members by the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager who informed them of the following:

- The Committee requested an update in relation to fly tipping at their October meeting;
- The number of fly tips in the borough so far this financial year was 1785, this was a 22.5% increase on the comparable period for last year;
- The cost to the Council for clearing the site at Cory's Wharf in Purfleet was in the region of £110,000;
- To date this year 9 prosecutions for fly tipping related offences had been concluded. Of these 7 relate to the previous large scale fly tip at Cory's Wharf.
- 3 further fly tipping prosecutions were due to be heard in court in early 2016, with 2 of them recently being concluded and £4,000 of charges being sought.

It was commented by Councillor Ray that Thurrock was a bigger target for fly tipping due to its open areas. The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager disagreed and informed the Committee Officers were working together with the Environment Agency, Riverside Crime Group, other Local Authorities and the Police who all shared intelligence.

Members enquired if the Council gained from use of cameras or whether it could cover the cost of prosecutions. It was explained that the Legal department do try to recover the costs to the Council by putting in an 'award of costs' however it was not guaranteed. It was further explained by officers that if the Fraud and Trading Standards teams work is proven at Court they could recover 1/6 of the costs.

Councillor Stone commented that this company shared a copy of their CCTV with the police and the Council and there is now a warrant out for the suspects. He continued to praise the team as they followed through with the intelligence.

Councillor Jones, Chair of the Committee enquired as to the limit of mobile cameras that could be used. The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager notified Members that the Council had to work in line with RIPA guidelines, so used signage as a form of a deterrent.

It was discussed that the smaller cameras were cheaper so could be located in bushes and other areas where as the larger cameras were more expensive however were robust enough to be positioned in higher places such as street lights.

**RESOLVED:**

**The committee are asked to note the update on the number of fly tips reported in the borough and the action taken to deal with this issue.**

**26. Work Programme**

Members discussed the work programme for the municipal year and the following reports were agreed:

- Fire Authority Consultation Update
- TCSP Prevent Strategy
- Anti-Social Behaviour & Working with the Police
- Investigate the use of External Contractors

**The meeting finished at 7.50 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**