



Lewes District Council

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Scrutiny Panel – Clean and Green Service

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Panel – Clean and Green Service** held in **Room 8, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes** on **Wednesday 15 December 2010** at **2.00pm**

Present:

Councillors D M Gray (Chair), S T Bratchie and E E J Russell

Officers Attending:

T Albright, Environmental Health Manager
R Allan, Scrutiny and Committee Officer
A Bryce, Head of Waste and Recycling
O Clifford, Community Services Manager
R Fuller, Street Services Investigator
N Good, Litigation Lawyer
I Kedge, Head of Environmental Health
S Taylor, Client and Customer Services Manager

Minutes

1 Quorum

The meeting was inquorate and the resolutions and recommendations made were therefore those of the councillors who were present.

2 Election of Chair

Resolved:

2.1 That Councillor Gray be elected Chair for the duration of the meeting; and

Recommended:

2.2 That Councillor Gray be elected Chair of the Scrutiny Panel – Clean and Green Service.

3 Apologies for Absence/Declaration of Substitute Members

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor M A Cutress.

4 Clean and Green Service Scrutiny Review

The Panel received an oral presentation from the Community Services Manager, Client and Customer Services Manager and the Street Investigator concerning the Clean and Green Service at Lewes District Council.

The Clean and Green Service was established in 2006 following publication by Government of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. The new Act provided local authorities with a range of new powers to address certain types of environmental crime and anti-social behaviour. The Service began with a more visible presence in the District, but had since evolved into a more intelligence led approach.

The Community Services Manager took the Committee through the presentation, advising on certain aspects of the Service such as flytipping, abandoned vehicles, littering, graffiti and staffing levels. He informed the Committee that the current model was seen as an example of best practice and had been adopted by other local authorities.

The Committee highlighted the importance of partnership working and commented on the absence of the Police at the meeting. The Community Services Manager advised that the Clean and Green team worked with the Police in the Joint Action Team, but that many of the issues that the Clean and Green team dealt with would not be a high priority for the Police.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Community Services Manager informed the Committee that, although the Street Wardens no longer had a designated area to patrol, the Clean and Green Service was now based on intelligence work rather than a high visible presence. He advised that the wardens would continue to visit areas which received a high number of complaints but that the team was more proactive than reactive.

The Committee expressed concerns that the public had little knowledge of the Clean and Green Service, including how to report abandoned vehicles and flytipping. Councillors commented that engaging with the public on this, including Town and Parish Councils, was a priority.

The Client and Customer Services Manager advised the Committee that the Clean and Green team had visited many groups and associations at the launch of the Service in 2006 and that there were many avenues for the public to report incidents, such as the Council's website, by phone or through Operation Crackdown run by Sussex Police to report abandoned vehicles. The Committee held the view the public had little knowledge of this and that more work could be undertaken to promote the Clean and Green Service.

The Head of Environmental Health advised that the new devolution powers from the Localism Bill allowed the Council to devolve some of the enforcement powers from the Clean and Green Service to Town and Parish

Councils.

The Street Services Investigator circulated two newspaper articles relating to the investigation of flytipping in Lewes and in Brighton and Hove and commented that although the Brighton and Hove articles painted a negative picture they had been more visibly prominent. The Committee responded that more promotional work was necessary from the Council in order that the public understood the good work that this Service delivered.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Street Services Investigator advised that shared services may not work for the flytipping service because of the need to maintain local knowledge and that there was no spare capacity to take on increased investigations. He commented that the Council does Chair the Waste Crime Practitioners Group to share best practice across the County. The Committee commented that opportunities for budget savings through shared services should be examined throughout the Clean and Green Service. The Head of Environmental Health commented that the Panel could examine what other local authorities had in place in order to identify any areas where shared service provision was a possibility. The Client and Customer Service Manager suggested that the Council could investigate selling their expertise in this area to other Councils.

The Community Services Manager highlighted the graphs which detailed the levels of flytipping in different parts of the District. The Committee noted that the towns experienced the largest occurrences of flytipping and commented that front line workers, such as street sweepers, could be given training in order to assist the reporting and gathering of evidence for enforcement action as long as they were willing to follow through with potentially giving evidence in Court.

The Community Services Manager took the Committee through the Budget Statement for the Clean and Green Service which covered the overall budget costs for the Clean and Green Service for 2010/11 and the previous two year period. He commented that a vacant post meant some savings had occurred, but more was necessary in order to meet the budget cuts for the Council. The Head of Waste and Recycling commented that the recharged costs of the Clean Green Service did not appear in the identified cuts, the Community Services Manager advised that this element of the cost of service had not been included in the budget cuts.

The Committee commented that the Clean and Green Service was performing well and was an important service for Lewes District Council but that, due to budget constraints, all areas were under scrutiny for spending cuts and that the Clean and Green Service needed to consider all ways of making efficiencies.

In response to a Councillor's question, the Community Services Manager advised that he was already looking to combine the Clean and Green function with other service areas to achieve greater efficiencies. The Head

of Environment and Health added that other local authorities had all enforcement/regulatory action placed within the same team in order to reduce costs. The Community Services Manager suggested this be examined in more detail at a further meeting of the Panel to also include proposals from the Clean and Green Team for reducing costs. Councillors suggested that the next meeting should focus on a plan for rationalisation of services across council departments and a more imaginative use of existing staff to realise budgetary savings whilst protecting front line services. The Committee requested that there be a Police presence at the next meeting in addition to the officers present at this meeting.

The Committee thanked the team for the informative presentation and suggested that the presentation could be taken to Town and Parish Councils so that they were informed about the Clean and Green Service.

Recommended:

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| <p>4.1 That a further meeting of the Clean and Green Service Scrutiny Panel be held in January 2011 to agree the final recommendations of the Scrutiny Review;</p> | <p>S&CO</p> |
| <p>4.2 That the Community Services Manager be requested to return to a meeting of the Clean and Green Service Scrutiny Panel in January 2011 with proposals for reducing costs within the Service, taking into account the Committee's discussions minuted above; and</p> | <p>CSM</p> |
| <p>4.3 That the Community Services Manager be requested to invite Natalie Carron, District Commander of Sussex Police to the next meeting of the Clean and Green Service Scrutiny Panel in January 2011.</p> | <p>CSM</p> |

5 Date of Next Meeting

Resolved:

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| <p>5.1 That the Scrutiny and Committee Officer be requested to arrange the next meeting of the Scrutiny Panel – Clean and Green Service to be held on either the 12,18 or 19 January 2011, subject to Councillor Cutress' availability.</p> | <p>S&CO</p> |
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The meeting ended at 4.15pm

D M Gray
Chair