

REPORT: Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 29th June 2016

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Community & Resources

SUBJECT: Policy & Performance Board Work Programme 2016/2017

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider possible topics for scrutiny as part of the 2016/17 work programme.

2.0 RECOMMENDED THAT:

- (1) Members of the Policy and Performance Board indicate target topic areas for potential scrutiny in 2016- 2017.**
- (2) Details of topic briefs be agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the PPB in conjunction with the Lead Officer for the Board.**
- (3) Members confirm their support for the continuation of the Waste Management Working Party with nominations to sit on it being invited.**
- (4) Members confirm that there is no longer a need for the Tree Working Group to meet but that a report should be brought to the September meeting of this Board to report on progress with implementing recommendations a, b and d of the Tree Working Group (as outlined in para. 3.24 of this report).**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Each year the PPB has the opportunity to identify topics or work areas that it would like to scrutinise in detail as part of its work programme for the year.
- 3.2. Good practice, based on experience, suggests that 1 or 2 Topics are manageable, however the choice lies with the Board depending on its priorities and commitments. The process for scrutiny is that, following their adoption by this Board, the topics selected are worked up as detailed topic briefs and agreed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the PPB in conjunction with the Lead Officer for this Board.
- 3.3 In considering which are good topics to include in the work programme, Members will need to keep in mind the Overview and Scrutiny Guide/Toolkit.

Guidance on Topic Selection is attached as an aide-memoire. In particular, the Board's attention is drawn to paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 which relate to added value, capacity and resources.

3.4 It should be remembered that much of the work of this PPB will be cross-cutting and will impact on or be of relevance to other PPBs.

3.5 It should also be noted that Performance Monitoring of the Reporting Departments (Policy, Planning & Transportation; Economy, Enterprise and Property; Prevention and Commissioning Services (Housing Strategy); and Community and Environment), will in any case be received by this PPB.

3.6 2015/16 Work Programme

3.7 At the meeting of this Board on 24th June 2015, due consideration was given to the time and resource commitments of establishing Topic Groups and it was resolved that Members support:

- The continuation of the Waste Management Working Party as its work was likely to be ongoing; and
- The establishment of a Trees Working Party.

3.8 Waste Working Party 2015/16

3.9 In confirming its support for the continuation of the Waste Management Working Party on 24th June 2015, Councillors Sinnott, Zygadlo, Gareth Stockton and Chris Loftus were nominated as members of it. It was also agreed that Jimmy Unsworth, Divisional Manager for Waste and Environmental Improvement, would be the Lead Officer for this Working Party.

3.10 The two key areas of focus identified for Members of the Working Party for 2015/16 were;

- Scrutiny of the Council's Garden Waste Collection Service (following the introduction of a charge for the service from 1st June 2015), and;
- The introduction of a Food Waste collection Service in Halton.

In considering the above two matters, Members of the Working Party met on two occasions and undertook a visit to St Helens Council.

3.11 Garden Waste Collections

3.12 In scrutinising the chargeable garden waste collection service and its impacts, Members considered issues and queries that had previously been raised by Members of the Board at their meeting of 25th March 2015. These included matters such as the risks of potential increases in fly-tipping and garden waste being placed in black bins, service take-up rates and whether income generated would be sufficient to cover operating costs. Information on these and other pertinent matters relating to the scheme were presented to

Members. With the support of Members of the Working party, a report was subsequently produced and presented to the Board on 25th November 2015. Key highlights from the report were that;

- Over 36% of eligible households had subscribed to the service
- Over 15,700 subscriptions were paid which resulted in income of £405k.
- The income received from subscriptions was sufficient to cover the operational, management and administrative costs associated with providing the service; meaning that the objective of making the service self-financing had been achieved.
- There was no evidence of an increase in fly-tipping
- There was no evidence of significant incidents of garden waste being placed in black bins.

3.13 Members of the Working Party concluded that the Council has successfully developed and introduced a new chargeable scheme which had made a positive financial contribution to the Council's budgetary position. It also helped maintain a valued front line service which was reflected in the public response and take-up rate. After considering the aforementioned report and its contents, Members of the Board shared these conclusions.

3.14 Food Waste Collections

3.15 As part of the 2016/17 budget savings proposals, it was agreed to introduce a pilot Food Waste Collection service.

3.16 Members of the Working Party were provided with information on the potential financial benefits of separate food waste collections and the differing collection options open to local authorities when considering the introduction of such schemes. In helping to support the development of the pilot scheme in Halton, Members of the Working Party visited St. Helens Council in November 2015. The purpose of the visit was to understand how the scheme worked in St Helens, to learn any lessons or best practice and gauge both the public and political reaction to the service. The information gathered was used to help determine how the scheme would be delivered in Halton.

3.17 Members agreed that the areas chosen for the inclusion in the pilot scheme should be those that were included in the initial alternate bin collection scheme pilot. The food waste collection pilot was subsequently introduced to approximately 1,300 properties within the Hale and Heath wards at the beginning of June 2016.

3.18 It is recommended that Members of the Waste Working Party be asked to scrutinise the results of the pilot scheme with a view to helping inform recommendations in respect of the possible extension of the scheme to other areas of the borough in the future.

3.19 With this in mind, it is recommended that the Waste Management Working Party continue during 2016/17 and that Members of the Board be nominated to sit on the Group.

3.20 Tree Working Group 2015/16

3.21 The Tree Working Group was set up at the June 2015 meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal PPB. The Group was chaired by Cllr C. Loftus and included Councillors P. Hignett, A. MacManus and Zvgadllo. Paul Wright (Divisional Manager – Open Space Service) was the Lead Officer. In 2015, Internal Audit issued a report on its audit of the tree inspection and management service. It identified that a number of the recommendations made by the previous Tree Working Group (2013) had not been fully implemented.

3.22 The 2015/16 working group held six meetings, three of which were with Open Spaces Service managers and technical officers. In doing so, it considered amongst other things, the recommendations from the 2013 working group that had not been implemented.

3.23 The recommendations of the 2013 Working Group that had not been implemented were:

Rec. 1 - *The Council develop a new tree strategy that clearly articulated how the Council managed its tree Stock.*

Rec. 5 - *Officers identify a suitable tree management system (database) that allowed mobile working and resources be made available to procure such a system or develop one in-house. The system being able to speak with other Council IT systems be investigated, Members recognised budgets were tight at this time but the potential risk of more accidents and claims could be avoided by investment.*

Rec. 6 - *The Operational Tree maintenance Team be strengthened so that more proactive maintenance work can be carried out.*

Rec. 7 - *Officers explore all opportunities to derive income from the Council's tree stock through the sale of logs or arisings. In particular opportunities relating to biomass energy production should be explored.*

3.24 The Tree Working Group (2015/16) looked at the reasons why some of the recommendations had not been implemented and also examined the work of the Open Space Service in relation to trees and woodland. A report was then taken to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board (E&UR PPB) on 23rd March 2016, with the following recommendations:

- a. **The Council should review the policy on trees to make it serve the needs of residents better while preserving the green environment.**
- b. **When a new area of open space land is adopted by the Council, inappropriate trees should be removed by the owner at its expense.**
- c. **When a resident complains about a tree, the officer inspecting it may, quite rightly, decide no action is needed. The resident should have a right to appeal to the Divisional Manager of the Open Space Services and then, if not satisfied, appeal the decision to the E&UR PPB. A member from the Ward would present the case for the resident at the E&UR PPB.**
- d. **Use additional resources for non-planned work, e.g., diseased tree removal, storm damage clearing. The cost of this would be met from the proposed earmarked reserve.**
- e. **TPOs should have a neighbour consultation as with other planning matters. If requested, a resident who wants the matter referred to the Development Committee should be able to request this.**

3.25 At the E&UR PPB meeting in March, Members heard the officer response to the recommendations:

- a. The officer response was that an Urban Tree Strategy is in the final draft stages and it is proposed that this recommendation would be contained within it. The Strategy is anticipated to go before the Executive Board before the end of June.
- b. Officers explained that this is already the current practice and that it will be enshrined within the Urban Tree Strategy.
- c. The officer response was that existing practice includes a referral process (operational inspection decisions can be referred to the Open Space Officer - Trees & Woodlands). All decisions are supported with a clear response to callers (which can be made in written form when requested). A complainant is then able to appeal to the Divisional Manager and, if still not satisfied, he/she would then be able to make a Corporate Complaint through the established process. If there were to be an appeal panel of members, care would have to be taken to apply the same principles as the officers currently apply, so that the Council could defend itself, if challenged, about the decision made. It was agreed that the current process was appropriate and that there would not be an appeals panel.
- d. The officer response was that this would be possible through the use of additional hours (overtime) and/or employing contractors.

- e. Officers believed that this was already part of the planning process. TPOs are administered by Halton as a Local Planning Authorities (LPA) and are made to protect trees that bring significant amenity benefit to the local area. This protection is particularly important where trees are under threat. If a LPA makes an Order, it will serve notice on people with an interest in the land, inviting representations about any of the trees covered by the Order. A copy of the Order will also be made available for public inspection. Following consideration of any objections and comments received, the LPA can decide whether or not to confirm the Order.

3.26 The E&UR PPB agreed that recommendations a, b and d should be implemented.

3.27 It is therefore felt that there is no longer a need for the Tree Working Group to meet but it is recommended that a report be brought to the September meeting of this Board to report on progress on implementing recommendations a, b and d. Members are asked to agree to this proposal

3.28 2016/17 Work Programme

3.29 Members are now asked to consider whether they would like the Waste Management Topic Group to continue and to confirm that the Tree Working Group should no longer meet.

3.30 It is also asked to consider whether it would like to suggest other suitable areas for scrutiny during 2016/17 and the Board is, in turn, asked to discuss these in the context of existing workloads.

3.31 In the case of any Topic Groups that are agreed, Members are asked to nominate Members to Chair and sit on such Groups.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None at this stage.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None at this stage.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

There are none arising from this particular report.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are none arising from this particular report.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

There are none arising from this particular report.

6.4 A Safer Halton

There are none arising from this particular report.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

There are none arising from this particular report.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are none arising from this particular report.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER
SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

9.2 Reports to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on 28th January 2015 and 25th March 2015.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Topic Selection Checklist

This checklist leads the user through a reasoning process to identify a) why a topic should be explored and b) whether it makes sense to examine it through the overview and scrutiny process. More “yeses” indicate a stronger case for selecting the Topic.

#	CRITERION	Yes/No
Why? Evidence for why a topic should be explored and included in the work programme		
1	Is the Topic directly aligned with and have significant implications for at least 1 of Halton’s 5 strategic priorities & related objectives/PIs, and/or a key central government priority?	
2	Does the Topic address an identified need or issue?	
3	Is there a high level of public interest or concern about the Topic e.g. apparent from consultation, complaints or the local press	
4	Has the Topic been identified through performance monitoring e.g. PIs indicating an area of poor performance with scope for improvement?	
5	Has the Topic been raised as an issue requiring further examination through a review, inspection or assessment, or by the auditor?	
6	Is the topic area likely to have a major impact on resources or be significantly affected by financial or other resource problems e.g. a pattern of major overspending or persisting staffing difficulties that could undermine performance?	
7	Has some recent development or change created a need to look at the Topic e.g. new Government guidance/legislation, or new research findings?	
8	Would there be significant risks to the organisation and the community as a result of <u>not</u> examining this topic.	
Whether? Reasons affecting whether it makes sense to examine an identified topic		
9	Scope for impact – is the Topic something the Council can actually influence, directly or via its partners? Can we make a difference?	
10	Outcomes – Are there clear improvement outcomes (not specific answers) in mind from examining the Topic and are they likely to be achievable?	
11	Cost: benefit – are the benefits of working on the Topic likely to outweigh the costs of doing so, making investment of time & effort worthwhile.	
12	Are PPBs the best way to add value in this Topic area? Can they make a distinctive contribution?	
13	Does the organisation have the capacity to progress this Topic? (e.g. is it related to other review or work peaks that would place an unacceptable load on a particular officer or team?)	
14	Can PPBs contribute meaningfully given the time available?	