

BUDGET SCRUTINY TASK GROUP PUBLIC REALM

19th September 2011

Members in attendance: Cllr Bell (Chair), Cllr Stops, Cllr Steinberger, Cllr Kennedy, Cllr Demirci (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods)

Officers in attendance: Tom McCourt (Assistant Director – Public Realm), James Palmer (Head of Projects and Programmes), Carol Hinvest (lead Programme and Project Manager), Imran Waheed (Project Manager), Pete Tonge (Head of Environmental Enforcement & Pollution Control), Seamus Adams (Head of Service – Parking, Markets & Street Trading), Mark Griffin (Head of Waste Strategy), Inga Hutton (Streetscene Strategy Team Manager), Deborah Ennis (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

(Requests for information from this meeting have been collated at the end of this document)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Assistant Director for Public Realm provided a brief introduction to the work of the Public Realm division.
- 1.2. The approach being taken to ‘fast track service reviews’ was outlined, and it was explained that they were at the mid-point in terms of gathering information and emerging issues.
- 1.3. For each service area, headline information from the report was introduced, followed by comments and questions from Members.
- 1.4. Members agreed that commercial waste would be included in the remit for this task group and asked for information on this service to be provided for the next meeting.

2. Street Scene

- 2.1. Members noted there have been budget reductions in this service through previous reviews and benchmarking to compare the service with other local authorities. They asked how realistic and achievable the 25% savings target is for this service.

- 2.2. Members noted that it will be extremely challenging but they are looking at reducing the management structure to maintain frontline services. There has been extensive benchmarking of services across London and this will be shared with the task group.
- 2.3. Members commented that sometimes consultations can take months to carry out, but no action is taken at the end of them.
- 2.4. Members suggested there is some synergy between Street Scene and highways enforcement and environmental enforcement as these all involve inspection and enforcement elements and suggested these areas should work closer together. Members noted that in all three areas (Street Scene, Parking and Environmental Enforcement) the Council is employing people to walk the streets to inspect and monitor many different areas and suggested it would be helpful if they could share information more and be able to share tasks.
- 2.5. There was a discussion about the usage of road humps and the 20mph zone programme, and the contractors used for work such as these. Further information was requested (see below).

3. Parking

- 3.1 Members noted that there have been three reviews of this service in the last two and a half years and these reviews have delivered approximately £1.7 million in savings. The focus on savings has been driven through increasing the recovery rate from Parking Control Notices (PCNs). This team will be reduced from currently approximately 80 staff to approximately 66 staff in the next financial year. The biggest area is the parking appeals service and they receive over 200 appeals a day. Cuts to this service would have implications on the quality of appeals and if the first response is not right then it will cost more if the appeal is pursued further.
- 3.2 Members noted that there have been significant savings through sharing the cash collection service with Camden. Members asked that all officers should think more about joint working, especially with neighbouring boroughs, to achieve savings.
- 3.3 Members asked when the policy for introducing a supplementary resident's permit for second and third cars will be introduced. Officers explained that they are currently developing the necessary software for this and the new system will be in place by 1st April 2012.
- 3.4 There was a discussion about the three year reviews of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) and the consultation costs involved. These reviews are now only carried out where there is a need for change, but the service still tries to carry out a review every five years. Members

suggested that the introduction of CPZs across the east of the borough should be explored.

- 3.5 Members asked if the Parking Service offers its outsourced services to RSLs to purchase. This has not been explored but they are talking to Hackney Homes about this and about how the two different permit systems could be combined. Members asked for further information about this. Officers suggested they could carry out a trial and approach the biggest RSLs to see if offering parking services to them could be an option.

4. Environmental Enforcement & Pollution Control

- 4.1 Members noted that much of the work of this service is statutory and the choice is about the level of service we provide. There is currently a restructure proposal for this service that is out for consultation. The Pollution Control team, including noise and asbestos, will move to Safer Communities. The Environmental Enforcement team will move to Waste Strategy.
- 4.2 There was a discussion about maintaining the links between the noise control team and the licensing service. Members noted that there has been a significant realignment of the noise service in the last year and it now covers 98% of hours when noise complaints are received.
- 4.3 Members suggested there needs to be more enforcement in commercial waste as businesses are using black bags instead of red bags and therefore the Council is losing potential income. They requested more information about commercial waste (see below).
- 4.4 Members asked if there is scope to share smaller services with other boroughs, such as the asbestos service. There is some scope to share these services with neighbouring boroughs and this is being explored.
- 4.5 There was a discussion about sharing services such as street cleansing with Hackney Homes. Members heard that officers are currently working with Hackney Homes to look at potential savings and synergies in work and they are currently sharing productivity findings with Hackney Homes about the Council's service. Members asked for further details about this work and potential savings.

5. Any Other Business

- 5.1 Cllr Steinberger resigned from the task group.
- 5.2 The next meeting of this task group was agreed for Monday 10th October.

The following requests for further information were received from Members during this meeting:

Street Scene

1. Further information about the highways team taking on highways enforcement
2. Further information on the pilots of the Ambassadorial scheme and the EQUIS system and how these will be implemented in different services
3. Breakdown of - how 20mph zone is funded, Council/agency staff working on this, revenue/Capital funding used
4. How much funding has been received from TfL for Street Scene work and how much has been returned to TfL?
5. Further details on how contractors are chosen, how they are paid for the work they do, and if planned schemes are altered how the funding for contractors is altered
6. Further information about all the statutory undertakers, e.g. Thames Water, working on our roads and the Council's role in monitoring them (including number of fines issued when 'urgent work' is challenged and income raised through these)
7. Further information about the usage of road humps compared to other boroughs, as well as information about road safety and deaths compared with other boroughs

Parking Services

8. Further information about how far we can legally increase fees, as well as benchmarking statistics around fees in other boroughs.
9. Further benchmarking information about consultation costs for introduction of CPZ's here and in other boroughs
10. What additional income would derive from introducing controlled parking zones covering the areas roughly described as:
 - a. East and south of Manor Road
 - b. the A10
 - c. Clapton Common Road
 - d. Mount Pleasant Lane.
11. Further information about the integration of parking services with Hackney Homes' service - including costs and savings involved
12. Further information about offering/integrating parking services with the RSL's in the borough showing possible savings – trial to approach the major RSL's to discuss this

Environmental Enforcement and Pollution Control

13. Further information following analysis of the consultation responses about the decision to move the noise team to the community safety service and the outcome of the staff consultation

14. Further information about the review of the Enforcement Strategy and the implementation plan for this area, and the progress to date.
15. Investigate possibility for sharing some functions with neighbouring boroughs

Commercial waste

16. To provide a paper on the Commercial Waste service – similar to the papers produced on the other 3 service areas
17. To include: how many businesses the service works with and the number of visits/inspections each officer carries out
18. To also include the following questions from Cllr Stops:
 - Can you ask for the graphs of waste income over the past 5 years, certainly since the red bag system was rolled out?
 - What assessment has the commercial waste team made as to the proportion of waste that is being paid for?
 - Can you ask for the details of environmental enforcement action that happens out-of-hours (mornings, evenings and weekends) to support the commercial waste system?

Other points

19. Further information about sharing street cleansing services with Hackney Homes – including details about costs, savings and any barriers