

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Scrutiny Work Programme 2014/15

Date: 29 September 2014

Author: Senior Members' Services Officer

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To consider the Portfolio of Councillor P. Barnes, Portfolio Holder for Environment, as part of the rolling programme of Portfolio Holder holding to account.

To receive updates on Quarter 1 2014/15 Council performance and on progress of the 2014/15 Scrutiny Work Programme.

2. BACKGROUND

At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in August 2013 Members agreed a programme of attendance by Portfolio Holders and relevant Corporate Directors at committee and also identified which areas of performance within each Portfolio they would like to examine. It was further agreed that questions for Portfolio Holders should be submitted in advance of each meeting, however 'ad hoc' questions may be put forward at the meeting itself.

This committee has elected to consider the following elements of the Environment Portfolio:

Maintenance and Development of the public realm, including parks, open spaces, cemeteries and allotments, with specific reference to the Gedling Country Park.

A customised 'Covalent' report detailing the performance outcomes of the Environment Portfolio is **attached at Appendix 1 and 1.1.**

2.1 Questions in advance from Members

The following questions have been submitted in advance by Members:

Councillor Andrews

1. Councillor Patricia Andrews requested an overview and update on the Gedling Country Park.

Councillor Parr

My question is tabled on the back of immediate neighbourhood concerns with regard to the Gedling Country Park:

2. What protection/bye laws are to be established to curb such things as: Scrambles and Quad Bikes?
3. Environmentally, what plans are in place to foster and protect the future development of wild life?

Councillor Miller

4. Re: Ley St Field in Netherfield: I understand that the land originally belonged to Notts County Council Education Department however Gedling BC had installed a football pitch and changing facility. There has been a notice on the site stating that, under an agreement, Gedling Borough Council is taking over responsibility for the field. The area is deteriorating and the changing facility is locked and unavailable for general use – could the Portfolio Holder provide an update on future plans for this site?
5. Re: Conway Road Pavilion, tennis courts and golf facility: The tennis courts and golf course are deteriorating and under used – could the Portfolio Holder give details of future intentions for the site?

Councillor Ellwood

6. What criteria are used to determine whether grass is cut or left to grow in parks and open spaces? There has been some concern that grass has been left to grow near to children's play areas thereby encouraging misuse by irresponsible dog owners.
7. Is any consultation undertaken with nearby local residents before grassed areas are left to grow?
8. Have any other options been considered by the Council with regard to saving money on maintaining small pieces of open land in residential areas such as selling of land; offering 'licences to occupy' or undertaking 'informal agreements to cultivate' (as used in recent years by the County Council's Highway Authority)?

3. COUNCIL PLAN 2014/15: OVERVIEW OF QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE

3.1 At the last meeting, Members requested further information on two areas of Q4 2013/14 performance.

Requests and responses are attached at appendix 2

3.2 Stephen Bray, Corporate Director will provide an overview of Quarter 1 2014/15 performance and take questions from Members.

4. 2014/15 PROGRAMME OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER ATTENDANCE

Members are reminded of the ongoing programme of Portfolio Holder attendance and are asked to submit questions in advance of each attendance.

Committee	Portfolio Holder	Subject areas
Monday 15 December 2014 Reception room	Councillor Payne Portfolio Holder Public Protection and Communications Dave Wakelin, Corporate Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crime reduction and community safety - with specific reference to PCC Policing Plan and the proposed closure of Carlton Police Station.• Customer services, information and communications technology - with specific reference to Customer Satisfaction.
Wednesday 11 February Committee room (please note change of date and venue)	Councillor Pulk Portfolio Holder Leisure and Development Paula Darlington, Corporate Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sports development – with specific reference to health, youth engagement in sport and links to Leisure Centres Strategy.• Review of performance in processing planning applications
Monday 13 April Reception Room	Councillor Wheeler Portfolio Holder, Health and Housing Mark Kimberley, Corporate Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing and council tax benefits – with specific references to changes in the benefit system and the impacts experienced in Gedling

5. IN DEPTH SCRUTINY

5.1 Reducing unemployment in the Borough

Working Group Members: Councillors Bailey (chair), Wheeler, R. Ellis, R. Allan, Gregory P. Andrews, B Andrews, Hewson, Hughes, Parr.

No further meetings held; final report and recommendations pending.

5.2 Homelessness and hardship in the Borough

Working Group members: Councillors Lawrence (Chair), Weisz, Blair, Paling, Hope, P. Allan, Bexon, Hewson, Hughes, Parr.

Two meetings were held in September as follows:

- a) Meeting on 2nd September with County Councillor Weisz, Chair, Adult Social Care and Health Committee and Lynn Farrow, Nottinghamshire County Council Commissioning Manager to consider the impact of the Supporting People budget reductions upon services in Gedling.
- b) Meeting on 11th September with Jenny Kirkwood of Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire and David Price, Head of Income Management at Gedling Homes, to examine the roles of both organisations in addressing issues relating to hardship and homelessness.

5.3 Transport links to, and within Gedling Borough

Working Group Members: Feeney, Paling, Pearson, Truscott, D. Ellis, P. Andrews and G. Clarke.

This group met on 22nd July with Stephen Bray, Corporate Director and received an overview of strategic transport initiatives, which has informed the draft scope.

A second meeting was held on 4th September, at which young people of the Transport sub group of the Gedling Youth Council presented their views on young peoples' transport needs. Colin West, project coordinator and Gary Smerdon – White, Executive Director of the Sustainable Travel Collective LTD also attended and presented the action plan of the TravelRight sustainable travel initiative.

5.5 Follow up on completed reviews

Six month follow up requests were recently issued to relevant Portfolio Holders on the **accepted** recommendations of the following completed reviews:

- i. Taxi Licensing

- ii. The Council's engagement with the Voluntary Sector
- iii. Inclusion and Equality

Responses to the first two have been received and are attached at **appendices 3 and 4**. (Inclusion and Equality response to follow.)

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- put forward relevant questions to the Portfolio Holder for Environment
- note first quarter performance against the Council Plan 2014/15, and the further information provided on year end performance 2013/14 and;
- note the progress of in depth Scrutiny working groups, and the follow up responses received in respect of completed reviews.