

# **GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2010**

**Councillors Present:** Peter Argyle, Howard Bairstow, Tim Metcalfe, Tony Vickers (Vice-Chairman) and Emma Webster (Chairman)

**Also Present:** John Ashworth (Corporate Director - Environment) and Andrew Deacon (Waste Manager), David Cook and Martha Vickers

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Roger Hunneman

### **PART I**

#### **11. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2010 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **12. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **13. Use of Local Resources - Local Food**

Representatives from Newbury Town Council attended the meeting to inform the Greener Select Committee's review into local food production by providing information on allotments.

Members were informed that Newbury Town Council was undertaking a project called Sustainable Newbury that contained elements looking at local food production. As well as this project the Town Council also ran a number of allotments.

The Town Council had produced an allotment strategy and were committed to promoting healthy living through the development and management of six allotment sites in Newbury. The Town Council worked to improve the allotment sites and their management.

Members were informed that there used to be a large waiting list for allotments but this had dropped over the past few months, although the waiting list had begun to rise again. There were two main factors that could have been the cause of the fall in the waiting list: a number of the allotment plots had been reduced in size that resulted in more plots being available and there had been an increase in the cost of renting a plot.

The Town Council felt that allotment owners got good value for money from the rent and there had recently been improvements to the security of sites. The recent increase in the rent had not prevented people getting an allotment and although payments could be spread over a year most people paid their annual rent in full in one go.

As well as renting allotments to residents the Town Council also worked with local schools, people with mental health conditions and people on drug rehabilitation courses.

Members were also informed how the South Newbury Allotments Tenants Association was the largest in the area and worked together to bulk-buy materials and share produce. Newbury Town Council had also established the Growing in the Community initiative to alleviate concern that some of the allotments were becoming run down. The initiative allowed local tenant associations to take over the management and maintenance of allotments if it was felt that the Town Council was not meeting its obligations; to date no association had taken up this offer.

## GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER 2010 - MINUTES

Members were informed that not all surrounding parish councils had allotments and thus some allotment tenants come from outside the ward area. Members felt that other town and parish councils should be encouraged to introduce allotments. It was acknowledged that the cost in purchasing land was a hindrance.

As the produce from allotments could not be sold tenants usually traded excess produce or gave food away.

Whilst discussing the presentation the following points were raised:

- The current waiting list had 73 people from within the parish and about 98 people including people from outside the parish. It was acknowledged that there might be a number of people on both lists.
- Some people had more than one plot and that over the six sites there were 560 plots.
- The Town Council helped people make better use of their allotments and if a tenant was finding it difficult to manage a full plot other tenants would either help or the site may be split into a number of smaller plots.
- Sustainable Newbury was a mixture of people who were interested in sustainability. They organised a competition on how to be more sustainable; the winner suggested planting fruit trees on public land to be harvested by the community. The Town Council were considering a pilot in Victoria Park.
- Members asked if it was known how many allotments there were in West Berkshire. It was suggested that the 2001 census might contain this information or parish / town councils might know.
- Historically houses had large gardens to allow residents to grow their own food.
- It was suggested that Newbury Town Council could look at having a charitable stall at the market where people could donate surplus produce to be sold with the proceeds going to local charities. It was noted that current market stall holders would need to be consulted and a side benefit might be that it attracted more customers to the market.
- It was recommended that West Berkshire Council should produce guidance for parish / town councils on how to introduce allotments.
- It was recommended that a District Parish Conference should discuss sustainability which would also include a discussion on allotments.
- It was noted that if 6 people petitioned for an allotment the local council would have to provide one.

Members considered the draft findings of the review into local food and recommended that the report progress to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee with the addition of the recommendations from the presentation on allotments being added.

John Ashworth informed that following the Greener Select Committees meeting with Kelvin Hughes, West Berkshire Local Strategic Partnership Greener Sub-Committee Chair, it had been recommended that the cost of the local food base survey be scaled

## GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER 2010 - MINUTES

back to a more affordable option with the funding coming from West Berkshire Council and the Atomic Weapons Establishment.

**RESOLVED** that the draft recommendations be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

### 14. **Waste Collection and Fly Tipping**

Andrew Deacon, Waste Manager, attended the meeting to update Members on statistics regarding assisted collections, wheeled recycling boxes and fly tipping.

Members were informed that the Council provided an assisted collection service. There were approximately 64,000 weekly waste collections and approximately 32,000 fortnightly green waste collections and approximately 32,000 fortnightly recyclable waste collections.

At the start of the new waste contract in 2008 there were about 641 assisted collections; in January 2010 this had increased to about 888.

Members were informed that the majority of people who had assisted waste collection had contacted streetcare enquiring about help. The service was there to help residents who were unable to get their recycling boxes to the street for collection.

With regards to wheeled boxes for recycling containers Members were informed that a number of different types of wheeled containers were available to assist residents in placing waste containers at the curb side for collection. The Council had highlighted a particular type of wheeled box through its waste newsletter; so far the supplier had sold 30 units. Through a future waste news letter further boxes would be highlighted.

Members were also shown a graph highlighting the level of fly tipping since the start of the integrated waste management contract. The graph highlighted the amount of fly tipping and the number of incidents that were collected by Veolia under the contract. Not all incidents of fly tipping were collected as they might have occurred on private land, in these instances the owner would be contacted and advised on the best course of action.

The committee were informed that if private data was found in material fly tipped then action would be taken against those concerned. In certain instances the Environment Agency would be called in to take action and prosecute offenders. Members were informed that incidents had occurred where households had hired house clearing companies who had then flytipped belongings, when evidence was available legal action would be undertaken.

Members questioned how many households put out the green recycling bins and what percentage used the green recycling boxes. Andrew Deacon said he would see if it was possible to produce more detailed recycling statistics.

Concern was raised about landowners having to be responsible for removing waste that had been dumped on their land. Members also discussed how in the USA local authorities were more proactive when the owner of land could not be identified and legal action was undertaken to acquire and sell the land.

### 15. **Work Programme**

Members noted the Greener Select Committee's work programme.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.45 pm)*

**GREENER SELECT COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER 2010 - MINUTES**

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....