

LICENSING AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MINUTES

6 SEPTEMBER 2012

Chairman: * Councillor Mano Dharmarajah

Councillors:

* Husain Akhtar	* Amir Moshenson
* Sue Anderson (5)	* John Nickolay
* Ramji Chauhan	* Varsha Parmar
* Mrinal Choudhury	* Bill Phillips (7)
* Susan Hall	* Anthony Seymour
* Manji Kara	* William Stoodley
* Kairul Kareema Marikar	Krishna Suresh

* Denotes Member present
(5) and (7) Denote category of Reserve Members

79. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance of the following duly constituted Reserve Members:

Ordinary Member

Councillor Ajay Maru
Councillor Phillip O'Dell

Reserve Member

Councillor Bill Phillips
Councillor Sue Anderson

80. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that the following interests were declared:

Agenda Item 7 – Commercial Safety Service Plan 2012/13

Councillor Sue Anderson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in that she was employed by the NHS in public health. She would remain in the room

whilst the matter was considered and voted upon but if public health was discussed at which point she would leave the room.

81. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2012 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

82. Public Questions

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were received.

83. Petitions

RESOLVED: To note that no petitions had been received.

84. Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no deputations were received at the meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rule 16.

RESOLVED ITEMS

85. Commercial Safety Service Plan 2012/13

The Committee received a report of the Divisional Director of Environmental Services which advised that by virtue of the Food Safety Act 1999, the Health and Safety Act 1974 and associated statutory guidance, the Council, as statutory enforcement authority, had a duty to budget, plan and deliver the inspection and enforcement of food safety and health and safety services within the borough. The Commercial Safety Service Plan satisfied these requirements. In accordance with the Constitution, the Health and Safety elements had to be considered and approved by the Licensing and General Purposes Committee.

The officer outlined the content of the report and advised that the Plan had been considered by Cabinet in relation to its food safety aspects. There was a further report due to be considered by Cabinet on 13 September 2012 that proposed the restructure of the Environmental Services Division. In addition, further work on the public health function that was to transfer from the Primary Care Trust was underway. In summarising, the officer advised that there had been significant progress in terms of commercial safety, he was proud of the partnership working with the Home Group and that Harrow was also a Home Authority.

Members expressed their concern at the reduction of staff in the Council's Food Safety and Health and Safety team and therefore meeting statutory obligations. The officer reassured Members that although the team was small it was effective and advised that there was a focus on high risk inspections. It had been decided to hold the current level of vacancies partly due to budgets and also because of the Directorate work with Prism. Whilst the Food

Standards Agency (FSA) had assessed the Council to be understaffed in this area, Harrow was exceeding their requirements. The staffing level had to be balanced with the Council's financial position in mind.

In terms of staffing, the officer reported that the problem with recruiting staff to the grade of Senior Professional had eased and that health and safety was the area that had experienced the most difficulty. Another Member stated that he would have expected Cabinet to have raised the issue in terms of staffing levels and that he was concerned that it might not be possible to implement the plan in full without additional resource. The officer responded that whilst it was a heavy workload, the inspection programme was managed by risk and in excess of 90% of high risk categories were inspected annually. He was confident that risk was being managed reasonably well and, following the major restructure that was underway, he expected that front line enforcement services would be staffed at a higher level. In addition, the service had participated in the Council's Xcite programme and as a result had employed two interns on an agency basis.

In response to a Member's question as to how the team checked food stalls for large events such as Under One Sky and Pinner Fair, the officer advised that there was involvement of his team at an early stage in the planning of such events. There had been no issues with these events but there had been with a one-off party serviced by an out of borough caterer.

In terms of food and hygiene in care homes, the officer advised that his understanding was that this would be the responsibility of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as his team only dealt with commercial food premises. He undertook to provide the Member with a written response.

The officer reported, in response to a Member's comments about the attribution of costs to individual areas, that historically Community Safety Services had been accounted for in a cost centre but that this would probably change with the Public Realm Integrated Service Model (PRISM). He acknowledged the Member's comment that it did not provide a service by service split in terms of costs.

The officer advised that the main issues related to the food aspect of the service and that only 78 premises had been inspected with a view to prosecution in the previous year. This was mainly due to the approach taken by officers through the use of low level documentation at an early stage. He confirmed that he was comfortable with the figures.

In response to a Member's question, the officer advised that the administration system was being streamlined and that there was a move to enable staff in the service to work mobile or flexibly. His officers currently had to undertake administration work and this was a detriment to the service. PRISM would introduce a GIS driven real time IT system and he expected that within 12 months his team would be in the same position as the Refuse service in terms of real time information.

The officer reported that education was an aspect of the service and that officers did look at the way premises handled their food waste as this could be

an indication of issues. Harrow had a large number of service roads that were not public highway which may result in problems arising. The team did issue fixed penalty notices for litter in conjunction with the police.

Members thanked the officer for his attendance and responses. Whilst concern was expressed at the level of staffing Members stated their support for the team and the work it did.

RESOLVED: That the Commercial Safety Service Plan for 2012/13, in relation to the health and safety aspects, be approved.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.45 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MANO DHARMARAJAH
Chairman