

Cllr Alan Mitchell

Executive Member

Highways and Environment.

Cllr John Reilly

Chairman, Scrutiny Topic Group B.

24th November 2013.

Re : Executive Decision E/24.06.13/9. Environment Enforcement Team.

Dear Alan,

At the Special meeting of Scrutiny Committee on 17th July following the Call-In of the above Executive decision, it was suggested and agreed that the Call-In would not be determined, and the decision not implemented, pending a further Scrutiny review. It was agreed that I would convene and chair a Scrutiny Topic group to undertake this work, and the group were requested to bring forward suggestions to inform the Executive's subsequent reconsideration of the decision.

As there are clear "paper trails" throughout the process I will cross reference with previous correspondence and agenda papers for future meetings where possible.

The group met on a number of occasions between August and September to gather information from you, senior officers and members of the current enforcement team.

On 3rd October a final meeting was held and a series of queries and requests for clarification were referred formally to you on 7th October. The responses provided to these questions are noted in Appendix 1 of the agenda papers for the Executive meeting to be held on 3rd December 2013.

Notwithstanding the fullness of the responses received, which I understand from correspondence/conversations with fellow committee Members largely satisfy the reasons for the original Call-In, there remained areas of concern (beyond the reasons for Call-In) which relate to issues raised throughout the topic group meetings. In this regard it is pleasing to note that these concerns are specifically acknowledged within the Executive report (agenda item 5 – Exec' papers 3rd Dec – Pg26 – 4.3).

Three key areas of particular interest centred on;

a/ Consultation with partner organisations.

To date, there appears no evidence to support the involvement of, or willingness of outside organisations/agencies or community groups to support this project, and yet who are pivotal to the delivery of the proposals.

b/ The absence of a new Environmental Strategy.

The implications of the fact that the Environmental Strategy is not yet available cannot be overstated. 5.9 – Pg28 – Executive agenda – 3rd December states “will secure the Councils objectives as defined in the Environment Strategy”. It is generally felt that there exists no clearly documented route to what our objectives, in deliverable terms, are.

c/ The doubt that only one remaining Enforcement Officer will be sufficient to fulfil the objective of educating partners in enforcement activities whilst maintaining an effective service.

Whilst the retention of a further 1FTE is both acknowledged and welcome, our initial concerns (stated in point 3 of my correspondence 7th Oct) with regard to training arrangements etc, during the transitional period should again be noted.

In summary, whilst I believe a general consensus of opinion existed between topic group members that the change in approach and emphasis could, in the fullness of time be advantageous, there does remain concern with regard to timing and staffing levels.

Regards

John.

Cllr. J. Reilly.