
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods
Date	23 May 2016
Present	Councillor Carr

41. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Member was asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interests he may have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

42. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Sessions of the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods held on 21 March 2016 and 4 April 2016 be approved and signed as correct records by the Executive Member.

43. Public Participation

It was reported that there were two registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Mr Rogers, a local resident, was in attendance to express his views on agenda item 5 Holgate Dock - Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) Consultation Outcome. He felt that option 3, to authorise the introduction of the PSPO to ensure that all dog fouling was picked up, should be introduced as the land was enjoyed by all users and he felt option 1, to authorise the introduction of the PSPO to ban dogs from Holgate Dock at all times, was criminalising responsible dog owners who were doing no harm. He stated that toxocariasis was extremely rare and to use this as a health scare was irresponsible and disproportionate. He stated that, following publicity and unreasonable public harassment, some local dog owners had already stopped using the area. He felt that option 3 would generate increased revenue and allow public awareness and social responsibility.

Cllr Cannon was in attendance as the Ward Member to express her own and local residents' views on agenda item 5. She confirmed that this area of land was a valuable space in the community and was used by many local residents, families and St Pauls Primary School including the after school club. She felt that option 1 should be enforced as this was the only green space accessible to the Primary School which they used often for play and sport games. She had received many complaints regarding the amount of dog faeces found and when visiting the site she witnessed aggressive behaviour from some dog owners. Although she acknowledged that some dog owners were responsible, she felt there were other large green spaces nearby that were more suitable for dog walking. She confirmed a petition supporting option 1 had received 209 signatories.

44. Target Rent Policy

The Executive Member considered a report that proposed to change the current Target Rent Policy and to increase the rent on a property when it becomes void.

Officers gave an update and confirmed that no existing tenancies would be affected by the change.

The Executive Member noted that the government had given social housing landlords the freedom to increase the rent on empty homes and, as part of the 2015 Summer Budget, rents in social housing would be reduced by 1% a year for four years resulting in a real term reduction of 12% in rental income. It was confirmed that the average distance to target rent was £1.05 per week with more than 90% of properties being less than £1.50 per week below target rent.

Resolved: That Option 1, to increase the rent payable to Target Rent on a property when it becomes void, be approved.

Reason: To maximise the council's income.

45. Holgate Dock - Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) Consultation Outcome

The Executive Member considered the responses from the recent consultation process to determine whether to introduce a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for the area of land known as Holgate Dock.

Officers gave an update and confirmed that the decision to undertake consultation was in response to complaints received from St Paul's Primary School and residents who had highlighted issues with dog fouling within Holgate Dock.

The Executive Member noted that as part of the process the Council sought views from local residents to determine whether they supported the PSPO and of the 182 survey responses received 57% said they would support a PSPO with 56% supporting an outright ban for dogs.

Officers stated that it was a small minority of individuals who did not clean up after their dogs and that the ban was not intended to criminalise dog owners.

The Executive Member confirmed he had considered all the consultation responses including residents' and ward councillors' concerns and the options available in the report. After much consideration he felt option 2 and 3 were unworkable and, due to the land being primarily used by St Pauls Primary School, option 1 should be introduced. He agreed that most dog walkers were responsible owners so he did not want his decision to stigmatise them or be seen as a precedent for any up and coming PSPO bans. He also felt that the problems related to toxocariasis should not be over stated.

Resolved: That option 1 be approved:

To introduce a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) within Holgate Dock to ban dogs from the area and to set the amount of any Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) at £100, which would be reduced to £75 if paid within the first 14 days.

Reason: To ensure that the council actively addresses the issue of anti-social behaviour in our communities.

Cllr Carr, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 3.20 pm].