

**Corporate Performance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny
Panel, Monday 31st January 2011**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS DRAFT COMMENTS AND
RESOLUTIONS ON SERVICE ACTION PLANS 2011**

Corporate Performance and Resources – 17th January 2011

Panel members asked questions on the details of some of the service plans presented in the report.

FINANCE – SERVICE ACTION PLAN

Tim Richens – Divisional Director Finance introduced his service plan explaining the two phases of restructuring. He also explained that the service had increased demands on it at this time.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Barrett warned against constant restructuring as he explained that stability promotes more productivity. Councillor Macrae stated that he hoped the service would not get caught up with the 'centralise, standardise and simplify' as one size does not fit all, he hoped the staff would be part of delivery teams.

The Divisional Director explained that some areas of finance lend themselves to being centralised such as processing invoices. He acknowledged the point about staff working with front line teams. He explained that some restructuring was taking place in phase one but that some services were being left as they are until the shape of the new Council is known.

The Strategic Director explained that there was some re-organisation in the finance department and that this was in line with other restructuring within the Council. He reassured members that there was a constancy of direction.

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES SERVICE ACTION PLAN

Vernon Hitchman – Divisional Director Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report and explained some of the savings he proposed. He explained that overall 2011/12 he would be trying to keep the service much as it is but after elections in May 2011 there would be discussions with the new Council about support requirements. He explained that his major concern was the elections and getting the new Council running.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Macrae warned against the cost of giving all members IPADS. The Strategic Director explained that no conclusions had been formed from the IPAD trial yet. The objective had been to give members something more portable. He explained that if members did have IPADS, they would not also

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be provided with a laptop and printing facilities. He stated that there is a question over whether it would work for all Councillors and a good business case would have to be made in any case.

Councillor Barrett thanked the Division Director for the clear structure chart in the report.

Councillor Dixon noted the potential savings around members allowances and agreed that member must make savings too.

POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS SERVICE ACTION PLAN

David Trethewey – Divisional Director Policy and Partnerships introduced an update report on his service (*a copy of this presentation can be viewed on the Councils minute book for this panel held with Democratic Services, Guildhall, Bath*)

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Barrett asked about the terms ‘total place’ and ‘think family’. The Divisional Director explained that this was when a locality or number of families are targeted for extra support. In response to a question from Councillor Barrett on how the changes in the NHS would affect Policy and Partnerships, the Divisional Director explained that the role would be a key question for the new Council. He also explained the proposal around ‘Health Watch’. The Strategic Director explained that there were going to be huge changes in public health and there would be money set aside so that changes could be properly managed.

Councillor Macrae stated that he felt there was a concentration on savings, he felt some savings could be made through investment. He stated that there should be a full review of what the community could expect support with. He said that ward members know their community and there was a role for advocacy. He further explained that he would rather not enforce fiscal savings if the impact on the community is not known. The Strategic Director acknowledged the point about member’s community knowledge. He explained that this authority’s approach was to try and work with the voluntary sector through this time.

Councillor Clarke stated that he felt this service was run well and commended its approach.

Councillor Dixon mentioned the work of ‘regenerate’, he explained that the authority had made large savings through their work and their money was about to run out. He stated he would like to see them do the same kind of work in other areas. Councillor Inker added that he had worked with ‘regenerate’ in Keynsham and that they needed a longer period to make the work sustainable. The Divisional Director explained that it was ultimately up to the Council setting the budget in February as to whether this type of work is funded. Andy Thomas, Policy and Partnerships explained that the

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organisation had always been aware that their funding was for a set period. He further explained that 'regenerate' had been encouraged to seek external funding. Councillor Dixon stated that 'regenerate' often advise the Council as well as the work they have done and that there is a danger the Council is asked too much of them.

PROPERTY SERVICE ACTION PLAN

Andrew Pate – Strategic Director Resources and Support Services updated the panel that the Traded Services Review was scheduled for March 2011.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Macrae pointed out that paragraph 4 of the High Level Action Plan concentrated on Bath, the Strategic Director said he took the point but that primarily, the commercial estate in the city.

REVENUES, BENEFITS AND COUNCIL CONNECT SERVICE ACTION PLAN

Ian Savigar – Divisional Director Revenues, Benefits and Council Connect introduced his report to the panel and made a presentation on his service (*a copy of this presentation can be viewed on the Councils minute book for this panel held with Democratic Services, Guildhall, Bath*). *This presentation will be sent to members of the panel.*

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Macrae stated that he could see that this was very complicated. He asked what would happen to Council staff if the new universal credit was being dealt with by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The Divisional Director explained that the DWP was advertising for local authority staff to help them set up systems etc. He explained that there were still a lot of unknowns and he had concerns. Councillor Macrae stated that it was frustrating that this would be lost as a function of the Council especially as it has such a good reputation. The Strategic Director explained that there would be a fundamental change, this authority had worked hard on the one stop shop approach and the DWP approach was self service on the internet so he had concerns about vulnerable groups.

Councillor Dixon stated that this service is flexible and adaptable and he appreciated that these fundamental changes were being presented as business as usual, he stated that it would be a great shame to lose staff here. Councillor Macrae added that he had concerns about losing the one stop shop facility.

The Chair asked if there were any other significant changes in any of the other services. The Strategic Director explained that there was no change in direction but progress continued.

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Councillor Dixon thanked the officers for their input. He explained that the panel would receive comments from all other panels on their service plans along with the Budget report at their next meeting (31st January 2010). He stated that this was a good system of scrutiny on the budget and that the panel valued the process.

It was **RESOLVED** that the panel note the Service Action Plans.

Children and Young People – 17th January 2011

SERVICE ACTION PLAN - CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Children's Services Director introduced this item to the Panel. He handed out to them the Equality Impact Assessment that was written alongside the Service Action Plan.

He informed the Panel that he had met recently with Councillor's Bull and Speirs and that he was due to meet with Councillor Hartley later in the week to discuss the Service Action Plan and overall Budget position.

He reminded the Panel that in June 2010 the Service suffered a substantial reduction in their Area Based Grant. 24% of the grant was removed which equated to £798,000 (non-ring fenced) and £532,000 (ring fenced).

He spoke of how other previous grants that the Service had come to rely on had also come to an end stating that the Service would have £1.5m less this April than it did in April 2010. The Service has also had to make a 5% reduction to its overall budget alongside all the other Council services – this figure is £984,000.

He added that the Service had planned well for this scenario, but said that the future would be challenging.

He spoke of how a number of staff had left the Service on December 31st 2010 and that unfortunately more redundancies were expected to take place on March 31st.

Councillor John Bull wished to congratulate the Children's Services Director and his staff for their continuing hard work. He also stated how shocked he was at the huge reduction in funding by the Coalition Government to Connexions that was introduced halfway through the financial year. A decision which resulted in careers advice being removed from numerous Year 9 & 10 pupils.

He added that he felt that the reduction in funding to both Shout Out and Bath Contact would be a big loss.

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The Children's Services Director replied that he believed a Careers Advice Information Service could be in line to replace the work done previously by Connexions, but that he was unsure of the timescales involved.

Councillor Marie Longstaff commented that the company she works for, Future Publishing, used to allow staff to take part in a career guidance scheme to help young people and give something back to the community. She wondered if local companies could be asked to become more involved in helping young people with their careers.

The Children's Services Director replied that he felt that most Secondary Schools at some point invited local businesses in to address the school or specific classes.

Councillor Chris Watt, Cabinet Member for Children's Services added that maybe Future could offer to print / distribute the In Care Council newsletter.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the Children's Services - Service Action Plan as printed.

Healthier Communities and Older People – 18th January 2011

SERVICE ACTION PLAN 2011-2012 ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING

The Chairman invited Janet Rowse and Jane Shayler to introduce the report.

Janet Rowse went through the report and highlighted for the Panel the areas of consistency and the areas of change since the medium term financial and service plan was presented in November 2010. It was confirmed that the headline finances remain constant, but that the subsidy for Community Meals was not longer included as a proposal within the Service Plan.

Jane Shayler said that the funding for the services from the third/voluntary sector supported 160 contracts (but not necessary 160 providers). So far the savings had been identified and agreed with the providers without the impact on delivered services.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following points:

Councillor Brinkhurst asked if there was any Member input into the third/voluntary sector grant.

Jane Shayler responded that the Council delegated to the officers to make decisions on voluntary grant programme. Councillor Pritchard does sit on the commissioning body, which is multi agency group, but he had no input in the decision.

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Councillor Brinkhurst commented that Members of the Council should be informed on the decision making process for contracts with the third/voluntary sector. The Panel agreed with that comment.

Jane Shayler informed the Panel that the spending on the Community Learning Service had been reduced to the level of specific grant funding. The capacity of the Community Development workers would be reduced as an outcome of the reduced funding. Jane Shayler explained that Community Development workers supported community groups by giving them advice finances and similar issues and act as a link between different community groups.

Councillor Allen said that the reduced capacity of the Community Development workers would not fit within Big Society idea.

Jane Shayler said that 3 individuals would be affected but that there was ongoing discussion with the Policy and Partnerships on that issue.

The Chairman said that the service didn't seem to be particularly placed well within the Council structure and that they seemed more to be within Policy and Partnerships service. He felt that it would be wrong to lose very valuable service as they would fit within the Big Society idea.

Councillor Pritchard said that it would not be the end of the service. £370k of the grant could be put into the Bath College who would take on community learning, but some jobs would be lost.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the Service Action Plan; and
- 2) Send the following comments to the Corporate Performance and Resources O&S Panel:
 - a. Members of the Council should be informed on the decision making process for contracts with the third/voluntary sector;
 - b. The Healthier Communities and Older people O&S Panel felt that it would be wrong to lose Community Learning as a valuable service that fit well within the Big Society idea and that although there was not request to amend the service action plans for Adult Services, the Council should look into other ways to keep that service running.

Safer and Stronger Communities – 20th January 2011

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ACTION PLAN

Matthew Smith introduced the report.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following points:

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The Chair asked about the effect that the new crematorium built in Shepton Mallet would have on Bath and North East Somerset area.

Matthew Smith replied that the catchment area for Bath crematorium was up to Shepton Mallet, and that might change soon.

Councillor Hedges asked about the staff views on these cuts.

Matthew Smith responded that although the moral was not on its highest level, the staff's job satisfaction was very good considering that they were given more freedom to do their work.

Councillor Wood asked about the vacant position for Parking manager and the future structure of the Parking Enforcement team.

Matthew Smith replied that the intention was to change the structure of Parking Services and also to recruit more staff for that service.

Councillor Symonds asked if there would be a reduction in waste trucks in near future.

Matthew Smith responded that the anticipated savings would be from reduced mileage in terms of the domestic refuse. The service also anticipated an increase in food waste collection.

The Chair asked about the intention to charge for toilet usage in the Avon Street car park.

Matthew Smith responded that the facilities would need to be improved first and that it would be carried out together with the Property Services. If all goes with the plan toilets should be open by March-April.

The Chair said that she didn't think that the Panel engaged enough with the Cleansing Task and Finish Group and she didn't think that the public was involved as planned.

Matthew Smith responded that the work on public involvement was in progress and that the Cleansing Task and Finish Group need to be long term campaign.

The Chair suggested that an update on the Cleansing Task and Finish Group be on the agenda for March meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the Environmental Service Action Plan and pass the comments to the Corporate Performance and Resources O&S Panel; and
- 2) Have an update on the Cleansing Task and Finish Group for March meeting (to be confirmed).

TOURISM, LEISURE AND CULTURE SERVICE ACTION PLAN

David Lawrence introduced the report and also the statement of purpose for Tourism, Leisure and Culture Service.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following comments:

David Lawrence said that there would be no intention to close any of the libraries due to the Council's responsibility to provide those services.

Councillor Wood asked about the volunteers participations in library services. David Lawrence replied that the volunteers would be involved in library services but not to replace professionals.

Councillor Symonds said that David Lawrence's services had been fantastic income generator and that he would not support any cuts in services. He expressed his concern about the events and festivals in Bath.

David Lawrence replied that the city had the highest volume of visitors for the past two years. The aim of the Council was that the visitors leave Bath with the feeling to come back again and also to encourage them to spend. Councillor Jackson asked about the improvements of the Midsomer Norton and Radstock libraries.

David Lawrence replied that there were severe damages due to flooding on those buildings. The buildings would soon be upgraded and the stock would be replenished. There were no plans to close those two libraries or to increase charges.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the report and pass the comments to the Corporate Performance and Resources O&S Panel;
- 2) Recommend that no cuts or closures of libraries should take place; and
- 3) Recommend to build on use of volunteers for libraries.

POLICY AND PARTNERSHIPS SERVICE ACTION PLAN

David Trethewey introduced the report.

The Panel asked the following questions and made the following comments:

Councillor Symonds said that the Community Safety had been a success in Bath and North East Somerset area. He also said that the Anti Social Behaviour team had been a real leap forward and that he was glad that there were no severe cuts for this service.

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The Chair agreed with the comments from Councillor Symonds. She also said that the Council would want an increase in volunteering and asked how we would be able to co-ordinate it.

David Trethewey replied that the part of the solution was to use more intelligently the resources that we already have and also listen to what the community asks for.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report and to pass the comments to the Corporate Performance and Resources O&S Panel.

Enterprise and Economic Development – 25th January 2011

DEVELOPMENT & MAJOR PROJECTS - SERVICE ACTION PLAN

David Redgewell, South West Transport Network addressed the Panel. He asked if the access roads for the Bath Western Riverside project had provision for buses and cycles.

The Divisional Director for Project Management replied that a joint procurement exercise had now been completed with the developer Crest Nicholson and that the Homes and Community Association (HCA) had agreed to make an initial contribution to the infrastructure costs. He added that the procurement exercise included approving access roads up to and including Victoria Bridge.

The Divisional Director for Planning and Transport added that Mr. Redgewell may wish to view the Section 106 agreement that was signed in accordance with the decision of the Development Control Committee as that would have the answer to his question.

The Divisional Director for Project Management introduced the Service Action Plan to the Panel. He informed them that the Directorate had been asked to achieve their proposed stretch target of £250,000.

He added that the Directorate had organised its future workload into ten categories in order to meet the high level objectives set out at the beginning of the Service Plan. The Directorate is also in the process of developing an investment prospectus alongside some of its regular activities of Project & Programme Management, work within the Schools Programme, Keynsham Town Regeneration and the Bath Transport Package.

Councillor Nigel Roberts commented that he was still unsure that the current process for debating Service Action Plans was the right one and that he felt for the officers that had to complete the vast amount of forms. He added that he would not wish to see the remaining staff unduly stressed in attempting to carry out too many tasks.

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Councillor Colin Darracott commented that he was satisfied in the Directorates ability to produce what they have set out within their plan. He added that he would have liked a more explicit narrative to accompany the document and that the Council's access to capital must be addressed and be flexible.

Councillor Cherry Beath wished to congratulate the Directorate for their work on the Treasure and Transform exhibition.

Councillor Colin Darracott commented that the Council still required modern workspaces as it should not be losing its flagship businesses to other local areas. He also called upon the Council to not be shy in using its own property portfolio to retain businesses.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the Development & Major Projects - Service Action Plan as printed.

PLANNING & TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT - SERVICE ACTION PLAN

David Redgewell, South West Transport Network addressed the Panel.

Electrification Gains: The proposed electrification of the SW Main Railway line would be key to enabling the Greater Bristol Metro improvements taking place. This will include new stations at Saltford, Corsham and Wootton Bassett, plus rolling stock and capacity improvements across the entire travel to work area - which most importantly includes parts of the adjacent counties of Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. It is for this reason that it is imperative that all LTP3 and Strategy Documents across the wider Greater Bristol area are synchronised and all make provision for such improvements to take place in the period to 2026.

Balance of Commuter Flows: In this connection, we would remind Members that the passenger flows tend to be at or near equilibrium. The long held view in the Wiltshire authority that increased employment provision would cut out commuting has not been born out in practice.

The Bath Package; Transport Hub: Showcase Bus Route; BRT; The new, but incomplete, transport interchange (Bus Station unheated; doors malfunctioning: lifts not in place: extension unbuilt) will have, radiating from the Interchange, nine showcase bus routes across the city, low floor, including real time information, bus lanes and new waiting shelters, eventually! This was the nub of the bid, along with a rapid transit route, envisaged with modern clean-fuel, hybrid vehicles such as used in French cities or Docklands light railway to serve the regeneration site of Western Riverside. (It is our view that vehicles suitable for the Showcase Bus Routes would not be the type required for a modern BRT system).

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Funding Unclaimed : Money was granted by DfT to purchase electric hybrid vehicles (nine double decker buses, eight for Ratala PLC and one for Banes). We are concerned that the funding for these vehicles has not been claimed. Therefore, any review of the rapid transit link from Bathford to Newbridge, including looking at new technologies and different routing, will be difficult to sustain. Arguments for clean fuel vehicles, ultralight rail, electric buses, trolley buses, etc. would be scuppered if funding offered is not claimed in time (March 31st 2011).

Newbridge Interchange; For both bus and rail access (as first recommended by Avon CC) together with an evaluation of Saltford Station and re-evaluation of the route of the Rapid Transit system along the Lower Bristol Road from Newbridge to Windsor Bridge. The scheme must serve and thread through the regeneration zone of Western Riverside from Southern and Northern Quay, ending at Bath Spa Interchange.

Rail as Economic Driver: Rail has always been the spine of the public transport network in the Greater Bristol Travel to Work Area. However, a glance at the "pteg" website and their Report "Rail in the City Regions" provides evidence of the enormous increase in the percentage of commuter travel which can result from an electrification of a line - 75% of daily commuter traffic. Just imagine the percentage of commuters and car traffic reductions which could result from the Greater Bristol Metro electrification across our City Region.

The Divisional Director of Planning and Transport introduced the Service Action Plan to the Panel. He reminded them that the Directorate had made considerable reductions last year due to the recession, this included a 20% reduction in staff. This reduction coincided with a reduction in work volume, however this has now increased and an assessment will need to be made as to whether this is to continue.

He added that the Transport team have experienced in year cuts following decisions made by the new Government and that therefore the Capital Programme has been greatly affected.

He spoke of the extensive planning legislation changes that were due and how the Government was now leaning towards favouring developers in the proposed changes.

He thanked the Members for their debate on the Core Strategy at Full Council and spoke of the need to maintain its current momentum.

Councillor Peter Edwards commented that he had been made aware of a proposal to reduce the 376 bus service to Bristol and asked how this was possible if one of the Council's Priorities is to 'Improve Transport and the Public Realm'.

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Councillor Charles Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Service Delivery replied that the reduction in that particular service had been initiated by Somerset County Council. He added that both Councils were in talks to find a way forward.

Councillor Nigel Roberts proposed that the Council utilises its own vehicle fleet.

Councillor Charles Gerrish replied that he was prepared to look at that possibility.

Councillor Colin Darracott commented that the preparation of the Core Strategy and its supporting planning documents was now of paramount importance. He asked if the Council had a tendency to over engineer its transport schemes on occasions

The Divisional Director of Planning and Transport replied that safety audits have to be carried out on all transport schemes.

Councillor Cherry Beath asked if the Council still had funding available to purchase an electric hybrid vehicle following funding from the Department for Transport.

The Divisional Director of Planning and Transport replied that he would need to clarify the detail of the allocation and offered to respond in writing to the Panel.

The Chairman requested it to be an open response that could be published alongside the minutes of this meeting.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the Planning and Transport Development - Service Action Plan as printed.

TOURISM, LEISURE & CULTURE - SERVICE ACTION PLAN

The Divisional Director for Tourism, Leisure & Culture introduced the Service Action Plan to the Panel. He explained to them how the Plan would help the Directorate improve its 'Business as usual' activities. These include the following:

- Deliver the operational plan and the development programme for Heritage Services.
- Deliver the operational plan for the Sport & Active Lifestyles Team.
- Deliver the operational plan and the development programme for the Library Service.

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- Create the environment in which international and domestic film companies choose Bath and the surrounding areas for TV Dramas and Feature Films.
- Ensure the cultural, creative and performing arts are fostered in the 'not for profit' and 'voluntary' sector. Ensure events and public art projects are developed alongside Future Bath Plus.
- Secure the optimum commercial benefit for local business from the effective promotion of the Tourism & Retail potential of Bath and North East Somerset.

He asked that the Panel look at the proposals within the Plan in the context of what the Property and Transport directorates have proposed as these underpin the aspirations of the Tourism, Leisure & Culture directorate.

The Chairman asked what he felt could be done to improve the first view of the City to visitors.

The Divisional Director for Tourism, Leisure & Culture replied that there is a proposal to have more street staff available to welcome visitors to the City. The Council and the Business Improvement District (BID) must work together on having the right people on the ground.

The Chairman asked if the volunteers working within the library service would be able to gain a qualification from their time in the post.

The Divisional Director for Tourism, Leisure & Culture replied that they working towards that, but for now the roles were mainly about retraining people prior to returning to work and having an interaction with the public.

Councillor Peter Edwards asked if services such as Kindle are having or will have an adverse effect on our library service.

The Divisional Director for Tourism, Leisure & Culture replied that it simply means the way the service is provided changes. The Council currently has 3,000 books available to download for free.

Councillor Cherry Beath commented that she was pleased to see the library service moving with the times.

Councillor Colin Darracott wished to congratulate the Directorate on how the plan had been written.

The Chairman reminded the Panel that they still had an open invitation to visit and be given a tour of the Roman Baths.

The Divisional Director for Tourism, Leisure & Culture replied that either he or a colleague would gladly take them on the tour.

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The Chairman asked for a date for the tour to be arranged following consultation with all Panel members.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the Tourism, Leisure & Culture - Service Action Plan as printed.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - SERVICE ACTION PLAN

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services introduced the Service Action Plan to the Panel. He explained to them that the Plan had already been debated by the Safer and Stronger Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel and he wished to highlight the services and connections between his Directorate and those of Planning & Transport Development and Tourism, Culture and Leisure.

He said that the intention of the Directorate was to achieve its savings by working smarter and better procurement whilst maintaining frontline services.

Some of the key objectives for the Directorate are as follows:

The work of Environmental Services directly supports the Council's vision by making Bath & North East Somerset:

- **Cleaner** through delivering cleansing and waste and recycling services
- **Enjoyable and pleasurable** through delivering attractive Parks and Public Spaces, providing access to the countryside and by controlling noise and nuisance
- **Fairer** through delivering Trading Standards services
- **Better connected** through providing and maintaining highways, public rights of way and transport
- **Safer** through carrying out Health & Safety inspections, dealing with contaminated land, providing street lighting and through community liaison work, event safety, product safety, food safety and unintentional injury reduction

He added that income is well generated within the service and that the intention was to improve on that through further enforcement.

The Chairman asked how the revised enforcement activity will be delivered.

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The Divisional Director for Environmental Services replied that they had already consulted informally with the City Centre Environment Group on the proposals for having a permit for the use of 'A' boards on the public highway.

The Chairman commented that any enforcement should be acted upon an almost zero tolerance level.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services agreed.

Councillor Cherry Beath wished to congratulate the team responsible for keeping the main traffic routes open during the recent snow and ice. She also asked if the food waste collections had been as successful as they had hoped for and when flats could begin to use the service.

The Divisional Director for Environmental Services replied that they were very pleased with how the service was running so far and that the plan was to incorporate flats into the service over the summer of 2011.

Councillor Colin Darracott wished to congratulate the Directorate on their work as they had suffered quite a lot financially in recent years.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to approve the Environmental Services - Service Action Plan as printed.