

**A MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT BOARD
WAS HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2011**

Subject to Approval

The Mayor (Councillor Allen) (ex-officio); Chairman of the Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Hook) (P), Councillors Mrs Bailey, Burgess (Chairman) (P) Edgar (P), Mrs Forder, Henshaw (P), Mrs Hook (P), Kimber (P), Murphy, Ronayne (P) and Mrs Searle (P).

It was reported that, in accordance with Standing Orders, notice had been received that Councillor Hook would replace Councillor Murphy for this meeting.

35. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from the Mayor and Councillors Murphy and Mrs Forder.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Edgar declared that any decision he made at this meeting would not affect any decision made as a Hampshire County Councillor.

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 1 November 2010 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

38. DEPUTATIONS

No deputations had been received.

39. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

PART II

40. ABANDONED SHOPPING TROLLEY POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Environmental Services Manager recommending that the Council conduct a full consultation exercise on the draft policy annexed in the report, as required by legislation.

RESOLVED: That approval be given to the Council conducting a full consultation exercise on the draft policy annexed to the report, as required by legislation, with relevant comments being taken into account in formulating the full policy, which will then be the subject of a further report to this Board and to full Council.

41. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP INTO NURSERY OPERATIONS AT GRANGE FARM

Consideration was given to a report of the Nursery Working Group cross referenced from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Board were advised that the Working Group had been undertaking the scrutiny of the Nursery for some time, exploring the options for the facility. The aim of the Working Group was to produce a fully comprehensive report and this was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 January 2011.

Members were advised that the options for the future of the Nursery were presented in the report.

The Leader of the Council thanked Councillor Kimber and the Nursery Working Group for their report. The Board were advised that previous efforts had been made to ensure the Nursery ran cost neutral, but unfortunately this had not been achieved and the cost of running the Nursery had risen.

In light of these financial losses, it was felt that option two of the report should be approved and that the Nursery be closed, with plants being bought in as necessary. It was hoped that Option 4, the use of more perennial and sustainable planting would be introduced as a matter of course.

It was acknowledged that the 'buying in of plants' was more cost efficient than producing them in house and that in the current financial climate, the closure of the facility would generate significant savings.

Members acknowledged that the facility was running at a financial loss and recognised that it was situated in a historically sensitive area of Gosport at the entrance to the Alver Valley. It was recognised that the existing facility was old fashioned but it was hoped that any future use of the site would reflect and recapture rural Gosport with a modern and sensitive facility.

Concerns were expressed that when services were privatised the cost of the services increased year after year and the quality of the service provided deteriorated. Gosport was recognised for the quality of its flowers and concern was expressed that this would not continue.

In answer to a Member's question the Chairman confirmed that hanging baskets would be provided and that plastic flowers would not be used as a replacement.

The Chairman concluded by advising the Board that there was a clear need for substantial capital investment into the Nursery if it were to remain open. These costs could not be afforded within limited resources available to the Council and there was no justification for keeping the facility open in its current state.

It was expected that, following closure, approximately £100,000 p.a would be saved, but

the initial closure costs and timescales remained to be assessed. There would certainly be worthwhile savings achieved by 2012/13 when Government grant support to the Council was to be reducing further, and any savings accrued in 2011/12 would be a useful contribution towards the savings target set for the coming year.

It was proposed that option two of the report, the closure of the facility be approved, with investigations being made into the implementation of perennial and sustainable planting; and that investigations be made into alternative uses for the site.

RESOLVED: That:

- a) option two of the report, the closure of the facility be approved with investigations being made into the implementation of perennial and sustainable planting; and
- b) investigations be made into alternative uses for the site.

42. BOARD BUDGET 2011/12

Consideration was given to a report of the Financial Services Manager requesting consideration of the Board's revised 2010/11 and 2011/12 budgets including the capital programme, and recommendation thereon to the Policy and Organisation Board for inclusion in the Council's overall budget proposals.

RESOLVED: That the Board recommend to the Policy and Organisation Board that the revised 2010/11 and 2011/12 budgets be approved subject to amendment to the 2011/12 budget to reflect the decision to close the Nursery.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 6.15 pm.

CHAIRMAN