
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 18 April 2018 from 7.00pm - 9.40pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Andy Booth (Chairman), Lloyd Bowen (Vice-Chairman), Derek Conway, Mike Dendor, Mick Galvin, Mike Henderson, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Ben Stokes and Roger Truelove.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Katherine Bescoby, Martyn Cassell, Bob Pullen and Kelly Upson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Cameron Beart, Alan Horton and David Simmons (Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs).

611 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the fire evacuation procedure.

612 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 March 2018 (Minute Nos. 561 – 571) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

613 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

614 PRESENTATION BY THE WASTE TEAM

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs, the Interim Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact, and the Senior Contracts Monitoring Officer to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member reminded Members that the collection of waste was the responsibility of Swale Borough Council (SBC) but the disposal of waste was a matter for Kent County Council (KCC). He spoke of the benefits of the Mid Kent Waste Partnership with Maidstone, Ashford and KCC, and the tremendous efforts that were made to provide the waste collection service although there was always room for improvement.

The Interim Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact gave a presentation on waste collection, focusing in particular on recycling as this was an area where Key Performance Indicators had been of concern to Members.

The presentation covered:

- national policy and focus, referring to the increasing importance and emphasis on recycling following the Blue Planet series; the recycling targets for 45% kerbside collection to be recycled by 2015 and 50% by 2020; and the success of national schemes such as the introduction of a charge for carrier bags.
- the arrangements in place across the county which gave opportunities for good practice to be shared; the areas that KCC were responsible for, namely Household Waste Recycling Centres and transfer stations. The presentation also identified the 'end destinations' for waste collected under the SBC service.
- The reasons why the recycling performance statistics were low in 2013 and the steady improvements that had been made since that time (except for a slight dip in 2015/16) with partnership arrangements and a new contract, as well as a new post of Environmental Projects Officer to focus on educational campaigns to promote recycling in a variety of ways and to different groups.
- Food waste recycling had been introduced in 2014 and the garden waste service, which subscribers paid an additional £37 a year for, had increased from approximately 7000 in 2013, to over 13,000 now.
- Statistics to compare SBC to other authorities in Kent which showed that the recycling rate for SBC was 43%, which was below the target for 2017/18. The target was to reach 50% by 2020.
- The issues and setbacks that had led to the current performance indicator being under-target which included closure of recycling sites; the days on which public holidays fell during the year (mainly Christmas); inclement weather and contamination of recycling.
- The measures that were being taken to address this, which included a waste and recycling communications plan; a focus on reducing contamination as well as encouraging recycling; the promotion of the garden waste service; consideration of changing collection methods in areas not currently on a wheeled bin system; and learning from other authorities.

Members were then invited to ask questions, the responses to which are summarised below.

Household waste and recycling sites – these were managed by KCC, and Swale was fortunate to have three sites in the Borough, although the goods taken there for recycling were not included in SBC's recycling statistics. Suggestions were made that the height barrier and restrictions on the type of vehicles had an impact on fly-tipping, and whether it would be possible for one of the three sites to be made accessible to businesses at a charge. The services provided at the sites were within the remit of KCC.

Parish Clean-ups – these were organised by and funded by the Parish Council. There had been some joint initiatives with the Community Safety Unit in areas such

as Minster and Kemsley, but Queenborough Town Council organised their own clean-up event.

Targets – there was discussion around the accuracy of the figures and the fact that Swale was not meeting the 45% recycling target, which would make it difficult to meet the 50% target by 2020, unless radical changes were made. It was confirmed that the collection figures were accurate as the amount collected was weighed on a weighbridge, and so this allowed for fair comparisons to be made. It was also confirmed that 43% went to recycling, 1.3% to landfill, and the remainder was burnt and turned into electricity at ‘energy from waste’ plants. Energy from waste was not considered recycling as the material was not re-used. The Interim Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact had recently visited the site, and encouraged Members to visit if possible.

Good practice – Members welcomed that there were opportunities to learn from others via the Kent Resource Partnership, but asked what had been learnt from other authorities and whether differences in areas, such as demographics, were considered. Ashford was cited as a good example, as the design of new developments allowed for properties to be accessible for collections. Swale had a number of non-standard properties (i.e. they could not have wheeled bins due to access arrangements and type of property such as flats which had less storage space). These properties currently had sacks instead of bins. Swale also had a higher rate of clinical collections than other authorities.

Non – Standard properties – Members suggested that there could be blue sacks and green sacks provided to non-standard properties, and that food caddies should be introduced where possible, but consideration had to be given to space for storage. The classification of the ‘exempt’ properties was being reviewed, for example some may have adequate space to store bins, but there would not be any requirement for wheeled bins to be taken through a house. Marine Town was the main area that had non-standard properties, but officers would provide further detail of the location of other areas where there were communal properties. The team were consulted on all new planning applications around accessibility for collections.

Recovery Plan - lessons had been learnt from the recent experience of snow, and different options would need to be considered regarding this and communication methods. The recovery arrangements had been more difficult, due to the way in which the service was operated with ‘Week 1’ and ‘Week 2’ collections, rather than all properties being all recycling or all waste collection, as they were in Ashford.

Education about what can be recycled – Members asked questions regarding whether the following items were recyclable: shredded paper, bubble wrap, polystyrene, plastic wrap, plastic bags, paint tins, food trays, yoghurt pots, and the need to wash them up before putting in the blue bin. They agreed that further education was needed on this area. Electrical goods could also be recycled, and this would be a key area of the communications plan. It was recognised that different areas had different rules, and so the announcement by Michael Gove MP that the Government were looking at a national standard was to be welcomed. Members welcomed the ‘Waste Wizard’ on the website, but asked that it was made more prominent and was searchable.

Cost – the waste collection service cost £2.4m each year, and £1.1m of that was for recycling collection. The end destinations were commercial concerns, but they did give recycling credits to KCC. There was no financial consequence of not meeting the national performance targets as they were for guidance only.

Collection points - The collections taken to Ridham Docks were turned to compost which was used by local farmers. In respect of Church Marshes, officers were asked to put pressure on KCC to ensure that lorries leaving the site had adequate netting to avoid rubbish falling out of the lorry along the journey (in particular along the A249). It was confirmed that in 2016/17 over 79% of recycled materials stayed in Kent, 14.1% stayed in the UK and only 6.9% was sent abroad.

Suggestions were made for officers to consider such as:

- Changing the frequency of collection of refuse, and to add more recycling collections, to encourage recycling;
- A promotional campaign to stop recycling being contaminated, and designating areas as 'clean areas';
- Improving availability of bags for caddies for food recycling, or providing them periodically to encourage take-up;
- Making the 'waste wizard' more prominent on the website;
- Changing the size of the standard 'normal' bin to encourage people to recycle more;
- Putting pressure on supermarkets and the food packaging industry to reduce unnecessary packaging;
- Looking at introducing 'communal areas' for recycling for areas with non-standard properties.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member, the Interim Head of Commissioning and Customer Contact and the Senior Contracts Monitoring Officer for attending the meeting.

Resolved:

(1) That officers be asked to organise a visit to a recycling site for Committee Members.

(2) That officers be invited to report back to the Committee in six months to give an update on progress; at that time, consideration be given to inviting the contractors (Biffa) and KCC officers to give their views.

615 REVIEWS AT FOLLOW-UP STAGE AND LOG OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report, and suggested that recommendation 3 of the Sittingbourne Town Centre (STC) Regeneration review could be marked as implemented, given that regular updates were being provided.

In respect of the Housing Services review, the Policy and Performance Officer advised that there were no updates, but there were several new strategies due to be considered by the Cabinet (as set out on the Forward Plan). The notes on the Leisure and Tourism review had been updated, following the discussion at the last meeting of the Committee.

Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration Review

There was some discussion as to whether the updates given were comprehensive enough, and the Chairman reminded Members that they had the opportunity to ask questions of the Cabinet Member, officers and representatives from the Spirit of Sittingbourne when they attended meetings.

Members also referred to the information requested at the last Committee meeting, in particular the critical path analysis/timetable of the scheme, the GANTT chart and how would SBC manage the assets? As the information had not been provided, it was agreed that this would be followed up.

Leisure and Tourism Review

Members asked for the relevant Cabinet Member and officers to be invited to the next meeting, to give an update regarding progress of the implementation of the recommendations, in particular which of the recommendations were being incorporated into the Leisure and Tourism Plan.

Housing Services Review

Members asked for the relevant Cabinet Member and officers to be invited to the next meeting, to give a further update with progress on the implementation of the recommendations, in particular recommendation 7 as Members had not been provided with a copy of the letter referred to.

616 OTHER REVIEW PROGRESS REPORTS**Development Management**

The Chairman reminded Members that this was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 30 May 2018, and the Cabinet would give their response at a subsequent Cabinet Meeting.

Other Regeneration Projects

The Task and Finish Group was due to meet on 26 April 2018. During discussion on this item, the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager agreed to seek

clarification regarding the advice for Members on use of swale.gov.uk email addresses and personal email addresses.

617 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

In response to a question, Members were advised that the report on Shellness Local Council Tax Discount would be removed from the Forward Plan. It was also confirmed that the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy had been discussed by the Policy Development and Review Committee on 10 April 2018.

618 URGENT BUSINESS REQUESTS

There were no urgent business requests.

619 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman sought views from Members regarding the proposed review of infrastructure for public utilities.

It was agreed that the review should start with water, given the problems experienced earlier in the year, and the review should look at how services could be safeguarded for the future and how they responded to emergencies.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel