

Environment and Climate Change Meeting	
Meeting Date	16 July 2024
Report Title	Swale Waste and Street Cleansing Mobilisation – agreeing a scope for Scrutiny
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree that a scrutiny review be carried out that will be presented to the 3 October 2024 Environment Committee. 2. To agree the scope of the review. 3. To nominate five members of the Environment Committee (one from each political party) to form the Scrutiny Panel.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the mobilisation phase of the new Waste and Street Cleansing service for Swale. It recommends that a scrutiny review is undertaken that will be presented to 3 October 2024 Environment Committee. It details a scope for that review (Appendix I) and asks members to agree that scope along with nominating who will form the panel.

2 Background

- 2.1 The previous Waste and Street Cleansing contract expired on 23 March 2024. The Mid Kent Waste partners (Swale, Ashford and Maidstone Borough Councils) undertook a joint tender process to find a contractor for an 8 year contract.
- 2.2 There had been very little change in the service over the course of the 10 year contract between 2013 and 2023 (the first time the council entered the MKWP) and as we had the same contractor prior to that, little changed in 15 years. In recent years the contract struggled with unbalanced rounds and low satisfaction with street cleansing.
- 2.3 In June 2021 Cabinet agreed the following recommendations and Strategic objectives;
1. To remain within the Mid Kent Waste Partnership (MKWP).

2. To retain an Alternate Weekly Collection (AWC) for co-mingled kerbside recycling and residual waste. To collect food waste weekly and to provide separate chargeable garden waste and bulk waste collection services.
3. To agree to keep the collection services contracted out as the preferred service delivery model and develop a waste collection specification to meet coalition priorities on climate emergency and recycling rates.
4. To keep street cleansing contracted out but to adapt the future contract specification to improve flexibility of resource and improve service.

Objective
Delivering a reliable waste collection service that meets all aspects of the recycling objectives in partnership with KCC
Reducing the carbon footprint of service
Sufficient flexibility and control that should allow for responses to legislative changes
Reliable street cleaning regimes with improved traffic management arrangements/ schedules
Minimising future service costs (or maximising income generation opportunities from disposal arrangements with KCC or legislation changes e.g., Deposit Recycling Schemes/ plastic tax income).

- 2.4 In December 2022 following an extensive tender process, the Environment Committee agreed to award the contract to SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK Ltd for 8 years.
- 2.5 The new contract commenced 24 March 2024. Disruption was expected and it is common with any new contract for problems to occur, however it is only right that with any major project, a review of what went well, what went wrong and capturing the lessons learnt is undertaken.
- 2.6 A Recovery plan was developed to focus action and improvement which was agreed and monitored by the Member waste working group.
- 2.7 It is proposed that a formal Scrutiny Panel is formed to undertake this work over the summer period, reporting back to October's Environment committee. Members should pay attention to the recommendations and strategic objectives above when considering the service delivery to date.
- 2.8 The Policy team will provide support to Members to enable the process, which will likely involve talking to officers from the departments involved in the mobilisation of the contract, meeting with representatives of Suez, looking at data on performance of the contract and collating information from resident feedback (area committees / online surveys).
- 2.9 Members are asked to consider the following questions in creating the scope of the Scrutiny;

- a) Which five Members of the Environment committee will form the Scrutiny Panel. Consideration needs to be taken to the likely time requirement involved across the summer period? It is proposed not to allow substitutes during the process to ensure the panel are seeing all evidence and to keep consistency.
- b) What time period do you want to look at?
- from start of the project to now (June 2020 – September 2024),
 - from the point of tender award to now (January 2023 - September 2024),
 - or from service roll-out to now (24 March 2024 – September 2024)
- c) Will the scope include waste collections and street cleansing?

2.10 The proposed scope of the Scrutiny Review is found in Appendix I. This gives the key areas of focus but leaves flexibility for the Panel to weave in other areas should they arise during the process.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To agree that a scrutiny review be carried out that will be presented to the 3 October 2024 Environment Committee.
- 3.2 To agree the scope of the review.
- 3.3 To nominate five members (one from each political party) of the Environment Committee to form the Scrutiny Panel.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 To not undertake the review – this was not recommended as it is important given the issues the council has experienced, that Members have the opportunity to debate the mobilisation of the new service. All major projects should finish with an evaluation period. It helps record lessons learnt for the future.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Ahead of the tender process significant consultation was undertaken with residents, councillors and staff. Residents were asked to respond to a waste survey in 2021, and we received an excellent return with themes that fed into the specification for all three Partners (highlighted in more detail in the June 2021 Cabinet report).
- 5.2 As part of the scrutiny review, there will be consultation with residents.

- 5.3 There could be an online member session to allow all Cllrs to feedback to the Panel or alternatively Cllrs could be asked to submit their key points electronically for the Panel to consider.
- 5.4 There will an item on the Parish Councils Liaison Forum in September.
- 5.5 There will also be an item at each area committee in September to allow open public discussion. Consideration is made on the merits of an online resident survey around fixed questions to allow for accurate analysis.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Environment – to provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment, and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead.
Financial, Resource and Property	There are no financial implications in holding a Scrutiny Review, however considerable officer resources will be required to support and feed into the review.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The review may wish to scrutinise the procurement process which was completed in line with our Commissioning and Procurement Strategy and national legislation. The Panel may wish to look at the service Contract.
Crime and Disorder	Despite an understandable frustration from residents who have received disrupted collections, physical and verbal abuse to staff at SBC and contractor has been unacceptable.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	One of the key benefits of the contract and a strategic objective agreed at the start of the tender process was the environmental gains we will make on the service’s carbon footprint.
Health and Wellbeing	The delivery of a successful waste contract is imperative for public health reasons. It is acknowledged that through the mobilisation period there have been instances of vermin, detritus in the streets which is not good for public health and wellbeing.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	Some residents require additional services such as clinical and assisted collections. The Panel may wish to focus on whether the disruption impacted those residents.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Major contract failure risk is one of our corporate risks and has clear mitigating actions set against it. This action has been reviewed throughout the mobilisation period and reported to Audit committee.

Equality and Diversity	The disruption will have impacted some of our more vulnerable residents – assisted and clinical collections
Privacy and Data Protection	n/a

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Scope of the Scrutiny Review

8 Background Papers

[Cabinet 2021](#)

[Environment Committee Dec 2022](#)

[P+R January 2023](#)