



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

Minutes of a meeting of the Operational Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday 9th September 2019.

PRESENT

Cllr David Ambrose Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Victoria Charlesworth
Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Simon Harries (as a Substitute)
Cllr Julia Huffer
Cllr Mark Inskip
Cllr Amy Starkey
Cllr Paola Trimarco
Cllr Jo Webber

OFFICERS

Jo Brooks – Director Operations
Darren Hughes – Development Officer
James Khan – Head of Street Scene
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer
Hetty Thornton – Performance Management Officer
Anne Wareham – Senior Accountant

14. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

15. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence for Councillor Christine Whelan were made and Councillor Simon Harries substituted for her for this meeting.

16. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Amy Starkey declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item number 7.

17. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

18. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman would circulate an announcement to Members at a later date.

19. **NEIGHBOURHOOD RECYCLING CENTRE PROVISION UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report, U56 previously circulated, that reviewed neighbourhood recycling centres ('bring banks') and their future provision.

The Development Officer reminded the Committee that this was an update of a report produced last year.

It was asked what would be done to replace the bring banks if they were removed, for example, in Ely where the City Council did not want the banks removed. The sites at Tesco and Waitrose were well used and became overfilled. Was there any chance that recycling in Ely could be collected more often? Some people did not have a place to put their plastic bags, so they used the bring banks instead.

The Development Officer explained that there were no plans to replace the banks with alternatives. Residents did have an opportunity to buy an additional blue bin for recycling for a one-off fee of £25.

Then it was asked whether the overall impact on recycling rates of removing the banks had been looked at, as some had already been removed elsewhere. The banks accounted for 14.8 tons of recycling per month, which was 2.4% of the total and 1.5% annually. Last year there was only a 0.5% increase in recycling, so losing 1.5% would mean an overall loss of 1%. What modelling had been done to assess the impact on recycling rates? How would people know that they would have to recycle elsewhere?

The Development Officer revealed that a lot of the material collected from the banks was contaminated and this affected recycling rates. Overall recycling rates had increased from 56.2% to 56.7% this year.

Members were reminded that people could take extra recycling to Sainsbury or the site in Witchford. So the banks could be removed as these two sites could be used as an alternative.

It was acknowledged that there were many benefits to the adoption of the recommendations but where would the £36K savings would be used? This use should be specified. The Head of Street Scene stated that any efficiencies would be put back into the service. This could include providing additional vehicles or crews or on educational or promotional matters.

It was noted that at the last meeting it was stated that space was at a premium for a lot of places in Ely, so what about people that did not have the room for an additional bin? Clarification about the purpose of the proposal was also requested. There were three tiers of recycling: sacks, bring banks and the Witchford site. Cutting out the bring banks would only leave the kerbside collection and the Witchford site.

It was pointed out that the proposal would generate savings. A number of other bring banks had been removed previously and had little impact on residents.

One view suggested that this was also about changing people's habits. Not everybody had a car, so using the Witchford site would not be an option, so what could they do?

The Committee was reminded that black and clear sacks could be offered, as many as needed, for people who did not have space for bins, and extra recycling bins could be purchased.

The Committee was informed that removing the banks in Littleport had made a huge difference. Previously the contamination of the banks was awful but since removal people's habits had changed for the better.

It was queried how many times this Council had been fined for contamination. It was pointed out that all but one of the parish or city councils wanted to retain the current banks. Ely City, Soham Town and Chippenham Parish Councils had said their sites were well used, so closing these sites would send the wrong message. Closing them would save money but would hit recycling rates.

The recommendations were duly proposed and seconded and when put to the vote:

It was resolved:

- (i) The information and findings from the review of the 5 remaining bring bank sites over the previous twelve months be noted;
- (ii) The removal of the remaining 5 bring bank sites from the District be approved.

20. **WASTE COLLECTIONS FOR PRIVATE AND UNADOPTED ROADS**

The Committee considered a report, U57 previously circulated, that looked at future provision of refuse collections on private or unadopted roads, and reviewed the assisted collections register.

The Performance Management Officer advised the Committee that there was a slight amendment to recommendation 2.2 (iii) in that the Chairman of this Committee was recommended to be given delegated authority alongside the Director, Operations.

The report related to the provision of a waste collection service on private or unadopted roads and an assisted service for vulnerable people requesting the service. If private or unadopted roads were of a sub-standard condition then the collection service was only offered at the edge of the road. This was to avoid incurring the risk, from a health and safety point of view, for crew members and the public and which could also leave the Council vulnerable to claims. In 2017 a relevant Policy was endorsed which set the minimum standard for roads that crews should access and mitigated against any damages. Following the Policy endorsement, a mapping exercise was undertaken to identify properties located on such roads, resulting in over 2000 being found. East Cambs Street Scene

(ECSS) was legally obliged to ensure the safety of its crews and the public and pay for any damage sustained by its vehicles when using these roads.

Appendix A set out the Project Plan to confirm the minimum standard of roads that the vehicles and crews could access and offered alternative collection arrangements where the minimum was not met. Property owners would be asked to sign an indemnity agreement, but unless all owners on the road signed then roadside collections would be required.

ECSS carry out assisted collections reviews annually. It was suggested that evidence may be required to ensure that the most vulnerable residents continued to receive assistance. This could mean a member of ECSS staff paying a visit to residents to make an assessment.

Members considered the proposed letter to residents concerning assisted collections, Appendix E, as harsh and could worry certain vulnerable residents. The letter needed to be re-worked to make it less insensitive and to provide a better explanation. ECSS crews knew about some of their vulnerable clients, so there was no need to react and complete a new assessment. It was then questioned whether any ECSS staff member had the qualifications to do an assessment.

The Performance Management Officer explained that the assessment would not be a medical judgement about the resident but about ensuring suitable people were supported. The assessment would only be where evidence could not be provided, so vulnerable residents were supported.

A Member stated that Ward Members did not know what was happening in each street, either currently nor in the future. This was information that they needed so they could answer residents' queries.

The Performance Management Officer declared that preliminary work had been completed. Excluding housing association or stud properties, it left only 96 properties which were on 12 sub-standard roads. So the status quo for collections would remain for most properties but the Council would need indemnity.

It was suggested that some people needed to be considered who found payment processes difficult, as receiving another letter could cause them anxiety or distress. There was sense in the exercise to obtain evidence, but concerns had been raised. If there were only 96 properties involved then additional information would be needed to gauge the potential impacts. More thought also should be given on how to deal with people appropriately.

The Head of Street Scene was concerned that some people were receiving assisted collections when there was no need for them to do so. Assisted collections had an adverse impact on service delivery to all residents. Annual reviews were undertaken to ensure this service was provided to those who needed it and were entitled to it. Some form of confirmation should be required to continue this service to the people who needed it.

Members acknowledged that this was a sensitive issue. This matter should be brought back to the November Committee giving details on the actual impact of providing this service so Members were well aware of the situation. There was also concern about the proposed timescales and it was advocated that this be brought back to Committee with revised timelines.

Councillor Lis Every proposed that the introduction of the Policy (as 2.2(i)) be agreed in principle subject to the matter returning to the Committee in November with additional information, as discussed. Councillor Mark Inskip endorsed this view and when put to the vote this was agreed.

Councillor Julia Huffer then suggested that the approach for the review relating to assisted collections be changed and proposed that the relevant letter be revised by officers in conjunction with the Chairman of the Committee, and asked that the revised letter be then circulated to the Committee Members. This was also agreed.

The Committee then agreed the revised recommendation 2.2(iii).

It was resolved:

- (i) That the “Introduction of the Policy for Providing Waste Collection Services to Private and Unadopted roads and project plan” (Appendix A) be approved in principle, subject to additional information being supplied at the Committee meeting in November;
- (ii) That officers be instructed to undertake an annual review of the assisted waste collections, subject to the relevant residents’ letter being revised by officers in conjunction with the Committee Chairman;
- (iii) That authority be delegated to the Director, Operations at ECDC and the Chairman of this Committee for all issues arising from the Project Plan and the corresponding assisted waste collection review.

21. **QUARTER 1, 2019 PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR WASTE AND STREET CLEANSING SERVICES**

The Committee considered a report, U58 previously circulated, detailing the first quarter performance of the waste and street cleansing services by East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS).

The Head of ECSS advised the Committee that a new Street Scene Manager had joined, with a wealth of knowledge and experience. The first quarter had seen increased performance of street cleansing performance, public engagement at the Aquafest event with children becoming involved in recycling activities and questions being answered, a high level of collections, all services delivered as expected, recycling rates high at just over 60% and with a new sickness policy to be introduced on 16th September.

It was noted that the street cleansing figures were getting better and it was asked when the 80% target would be achieved. The Head of ECSS disclosed that in July the figure was 82% with the latest figures showing 92%.

The strategy regarding trade waste was questioned and an explanation was asked for, including its aim. When would the Committee see the associated development plan? The Committee was informed that a lot of work had gone into setting up the brand new business. A preliminary look had taken place to understand the demand, service requirements, relevant market, the going rates and other providers to inform the Plan. Initially the Company was looking at a small scale trade waste service during this year. It was hoped this would lead to achieving a better value and higher performing service. The Director, Operations suggested the development plan could be provided with the quarterly performance report but it would have to go to the ECSS Board first.

It was resolved:

That the performance of service delivery for the first quarter be noted.

22. **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered a report, U59 previously circulated, that update Members on the financial position for services under the Operational Services Committee.

The Senior Accountant advised the Committee that there was a projected overspend of £50K due to the Planning Department having to employ two agency workers because of the volume of planning applications. There were a number of other variances relating to the trading companies that would be charged to them.

It was asked whether planning fees could be increased to cover the extra costs. The Director, Operations explained that planning fees were set by statute and could not be changed, unlike other fees which would be reviewed.

It was resolved:

- (i) That it be noted that this Committee is currently projected to end the year with an overspend, compared to its planned budget, of £50,000;
- (ii) That it be noted that the Committee has a projected capital programme outturn of £2,210,190, which is in line with its revised budget.

23. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Chairman reminded Members that a waste item, as discussed earlier at item 7, would be added to the November meeting. To make the November meeting viable it was suggested that the items scheduled for the October meeting be delayed until November.

The Director, Operations explained that some of the October items should be delayed to ensure that the right information was provided, to incorporate information up to the end of September.

It was resolved:

That an additional item, as agreed at agenda item 7, be added to the agenda for the November meeting and that all items scheduled for the October meeting be moved to the November meeting.

24. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining item no. 12 because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1, 2 and 3 Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as Amended).

25. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 5:34pm.