

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 21 September 2017

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.41pm.

***14 Public speaking**

There were no questions from the public.

***15 Minutes**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 20 July 2017 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

It was reported that the Communities and Local Government Committee's inquiry into Local Authority Overview & Scrutiny had not proceeded as a consequence of the General Election. The Committee has now been reconstituted and Members of Parliament have agreed that the inquiry should now resume and will be considering evidence submitted in October 2017.

16 Phase 2 of Recycling and Waste Contract update

The Chairman welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Cllr Tom Wright, and his deputy Cllr Marcus Hartnell, alongside Gareth Bourton, Recycling and Waste Contract Manager.

The committee had received an update report covering the implementation of Phase 2 of the contract, which covered the remaining areas of the District under the new collection terms. Roll out commenced on the 12 June 2017 as planned, and overall the implementation is successful. Residents of the District have overall embraced the new service, which was reflected in the figures reported to the committee on the recycling rate – now at 57%, an increase of 15% from the previous collection service.

Significant changes have been made for the new contract implementation, including:

- In-cab and back office systems in place with approximately 150 staff trained in its use;
- Over 51,000 recycling sacks and bin hangers delivered; over 10,000 additional recycling containers delivered;
- New routes devised for collecting from over 51,000 properties.

The Portfolio Holder stressed that the team strived for continued improvement to the service, including a desire to add a green waste collection service in the future.

Questions and debate from the committee included:

- The new Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) at Greendale was anticipated to be online from January 2018. This improved facility was to cope with the high volumes of materials;
- Work to ensure that all methods of reporting missed collections were recorded to give clear data. Missed collections level had vastly improved from the initial weeks of implementing Phase 2 and the Streetscene team worked closely with Suez crews to ensure rounds were accurately updated accordingly;
- Good reports from Members on action taken with problems that had arisen, such as helping deal with residents that had difficulty in sorting their waste; and in taking a practical approach to small incidents of accidental mixed recycling waste;

- Suez have strong record on health and safety and work continues to ensure that crews are as safe as possible on what is, by nature, a risky job;
- Container return improvements now a focus for the service, looking at improving the quality of collections;
- Welcomed the recognition of the improvement to the service with the recent Green Apple environmental award;
- Driver retention approach by Suez was explained to the Committee, with a positive approach to training drivers with a two year retention package;
- In cab technology allowed each vehicle to be tracked, and crews updated on route with collection information for example logging each assisted collection;
- Size and number of collection containers would remain an issue for flats and small homes. This was an issue nationally, but a necessity in order to collect the volume of waste that was being produced;
- The cost of additional vehicles put in place to deal with demand was currently being absorbed by Suez. Any future negotiation on costs in the contract would have to be put to Cabinet for a decision;
- Market prices for recycled materials varied due to global influence. Contracts were in place with DCC and Suez for the sale of those materials and a best estimate on the return made for future budgets;
- “Avoided waste disposal savings”, where the County are benefitting from the reduction of waste disposal at the Energy from Waste (EfW) plant and could pass on their savings to Districts, were now agreed with DCC.

The committee were keen to have a report back in future months to ensure that any means of reporting missed collections were handled correctly and promptly, and that the East Devon App was also working correctly and consistently.

RESOLVED

1. that the committee receive a further report from the Portfolio Holder in March 2018 on the implementation of Phase 2 of the Recycling and Waste Contract, to specifically cover:
 - a. Health and safety data and progress
 - b. Reporting mechanisms for missed collections (via app, online, phone and other means), and clear associated data on reporting for performance monitoring
 - c. Staff turnover rate
 - d. Savings realised from the change in contract
 - e. Impact of installation of improved MRF at Greendale
2. That the officers and local communities be congratulated on their hard work and engagement to bring about the success in the implemented scheme;
3. That the committee welcomes the actual reduction in waste disposal at the Energy from Waste (EfW) plant; and
4. That the committee welcomes the actual increase in recycled materials.

***17 Quarterly monitoring of performance quarter 1 2017/2018**

The committee raised issues on the following performance indicators:

- Delivery of Manor Pavilion car park as a pay and display car park. The Chairman expressed his annoyance at the officer remarks to this indicator, which as set out in the report, suggested that the delay to delivery was due to the involvement of the Scrutiny Committee. He reiterated to the committee that had the pending change to pay and display

been consulted upon at the outset with local interested parties, Ward Members and the Town Council, the committee would not have been requested to review the decision and terms of the change of use. He also commented that it was disappointing that Cabinet had not chosen to agree with the committee's recommendation on the charging hours;

- Return empty homes to beneficial use. This is "on track" but with no narrative. The previous shared post of a dedicated officer with Exeter City Council has not been replaced when that individual retired; Exeter City did not have any appetite to continue with a shared arrangement on that post. Therefore the work has been absorbed back into the Housing Team to continue with. The committee decided to refer the issue to the Housing Review Board, with future monitoring reports being updated accordingly;
- Beach Safety Officer – post now filled;
- Fly tipping – many committee members had concerns about the continuing changes in charges at Devon County Council (DCC), and how that directly impacted on the scale of fly tipping. Whilst the charges were the responsibility of the County Council, Members wished to pursue some form of action and agreed to ask the Portfolio Holder for Environment to pursue this issue; roadside litter was also an issue that needed addressing, which had been researched by a member of the committee. Dangerous stretches of road were difficult to clean because of safety issues for Streetscene operatives, but the committee hoped that the Portfolio Holder may be able to work with the team to reach a safe solution;
- Percentage of planning appeals decisions allowed against authority's decision. This has been discussed at both Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) on 11 July and Development Management Committee in August. Members noted the minutes from SPC on the issue;
- Improvement in processing housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims and change events was welcomed;
- Younghayes centre transfer – this was currently awaiting response from the Town Council solicitors, so no solid completion date could be provided at this time;
- District design guide – being monitored by the Overview Committee;
- Member development programme – Lead Councillor for Member Development sought views on how to ensure good attendance by Councillors to arranged information events and training sessions. Previous events had been poorly attended, despite trying a mix of both daytime and evening events. Scrutiny training had been arranged for November and confirmed numbers were being sought, but a program of events needed to be developed. The Lead Councillor agreed to reconvene her Member Development working Group to look at developing a programme and seek views of Councillors on ensuring attendance;
- More detail was requested on the Business rate relief policy in operation;
- If the business plans for the both Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnerships were available online yet;
- More information requested on the location of sites for monitoring air pollution, levels of pollution and how that related to new or expanding development;
- Congratulate officers on the current work in refurbishment of Exmouth Town Hall and the start of the build of Blackdown House at Honiton.

RECOMMENDED to the Housing Review Board that work allocated to return empty homes to beneficial use be reviewed to establish if a dedicated officer, shared with other authorities, could be established again to deliver a higher number of homes returned to use.

RESOLVED to ask the Portfolio Holder for Environment to approach the County Council on the issue of increasing costs to residents for using their recycling facilities and the impact that has on the District with increasing fly tipping; and to look into what safe practices could be adopted to deal with roadside litter

***18 Scrutiny Forward Plan**

Work continued to pursue agreement from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Services of Devon County Council (DCC) to attend the committee to discuss mental health services in the District. There had also been no response from the Chairman of the DCC Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee to the letter sent on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee on 26 June 2017.

RESOLVED that local County Councillors be asked to assist in requesting attendance by the DCC Cabinet Member.

Attendance list (present for all or part of the meeting):

Scrutiny Members present:

Roger Giles
Bruce de Saram
Simon Grundy
Maddy Chapman
Alan Dent
Dean Barrow
Bill Nash
Val Ranger
Marianne Rixson
Eleanor Rylance

Other Members

Marcus Hartnell
Tom Wright
David Barratt
Pauline Stott
Brian Bailey

Officers present:

Gareth Bourton, Recycling and Waste Contract Manager
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies:

Cathy Gardner
Cherry Nicholas
John O'Leary
Jill Elson
Darryl Nicholas
Iain Chubb
Dawn Manley

Andrew Hancock, Service Lead Streetscene
John Golding

Chairman Date.....