

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2018 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.00 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Parry Batth (Chairman), Philip Houldsworth (Vice-Chairman), Andy Croy, Mike Haines, Ken Miall, Ian Pittock, Malcolm Richards, Shahid Younis and Clive Jones

Officers Present

Peter Baveystock, Service Manager, Cleaner, Greener and Reactive Highway Services
Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist

46. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Lindsay Ferris, Kate Haines and Bill Soane.

Clive Jones attended the meeting as a substitute.

47. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 September 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

49. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedures the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions.

49.1 Gillian Elward asked the Chairman the following question:

Most flexible plastic can be recycled. There are facilities in the UK for recycling polyethylene-based plastic (i.e. carrier bags, bread bags, cling film, bubble wrap, magazine wrappers etc. etc.). This makes up a significant proportion of consumer plastic packaging.

- I. Can the re3 partnership consider collecting and recycling this type of plastic? (ref Oxford City Council);
- II. Most large supermarkets collect carrier bags (so other PE-based plastics can be collected and recycled via this waste stream), but this is not widely known. Can re3/the Marketing and Communications Office include this information in their communications campaign?"

Answer

- I. In February this year we significantly extended the amounts of plastic materials we collect from the kerbside which included pots, tubs and trays. The additions made in February were introduced, taking into account sustainable recycling markets and the practicalities and cost of sorting. The Oxford City scheme has been extended to include a number of non-rigid plastics and at some stage in the future, other materials could be added to WBC's scheme if the criteria is met.
- II. The Council currently promotes the fact that most large supermarkets collect carrier bags but will look at our current programme and re-evaluate if necessary.

Supplementary Question

A small quick win would be to educate the public more about the recycling of polyethylene-based plastics via local supermarkets. Can this be pursued?

Supplementary Answer

Your suggestion is noted and will be investigated.

50. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

50.1 Gary Cowan asked the Chairman the following question:

Can you ensure that Ward Members are informed as to the grass cutting schedule in their wards and the actual areas scheduled to be cut in advance of the actual scheduled cut?

Answer

The new Contract was not built around schedules but was based on outcomes in that designated frequent cut areas would never be longer than 125mm. Whilst there is no specific schedule, our contractors follow a set grass cutting route which enables us to tell how they are progressing within different wards. With this information, last year we started a weekly update for Ward Members, during the growing period, in which we gave them grass cutting activities across the borough so they could see how this was progressing and relate it to their particular area.

Supplementary Question

Whoever carries out the grass cutting has to develop a programme supported by a schedule to ensure that the work is carried out in the correct locations. Can that schedule be made available to Members? This would provide greater clarity and transparency and reduce the level of contact between Members and the Cleaner and Greener team. Can the circulation of this information be looked at?

Supplementary Answer

The contractor does follow set routes. This information was made available on line last year and we will endeavour to do the same in 2019.

Peter Fry (Tivoli Area Manager) commented that the contractor was reviewing the routes, rounds and schedules for next year. The company was introducing a new electronic system into the Wokingham service which would provide updated information on the progress made by grass-cutting teams along their set routes. It was hoped to link this system with the Council's IT system thereby making it possible to provide more accurate information which, in turn, would reduce the number of calls to the contractor and WBC seeking updates on progress.

50.2 Ian Pittock asked the Chairman the following question:

The Parliamentary Committee on local government scrutiny recommended, in December 2017, that the annual Council budget is scrutinised throughout its development. Why has scrutiny of the Council Budget 2019/20 not been included in the Forward Programme for O&SMC?

Answer

The Council's Constitution already empowers the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to scrutinise the Council's Budget. Paragraph 6.2.3.1 states that the Community and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising, reviewing and assisting with the policy development of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

At its meeting on 1 October 2018 the Committee considered how it would carry out its Budget Scrutiny role. The Committee resolved (inter alia) as follows:

"The January 2019 Committee item on monitoring of the Council's Revenue and Capital expenditure include a review of the quarterly revenue and capital monitoring reports, with a view to completing a review of the Budget setting process during the next municipal year".

Supplementary Question

When you say "Budget setting process" do you mean the administrative process or the actual development of the Budget itself?

Supplementary Answer

The Committee will decide on its work programme but my understanding is that it will be seeking to scrutinise the key issues, themes and Budget pressures facing the Council. This will be a more rigorous review looking backwards and forwards to the development of the Budget for 2020/21.

51. REVIEW OF THE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 11 to 16, which gave details of the Committee's ongoing review of the Council's Grounds Maintenance contract.

The report reminded Members that the review was considered at its 1 August and 19 September 2018 meetings. Following the Committee's Call for Evidence a number of residents, community groups and Town and Parish Councils had submitted written feedback on the operation of the service. The report set out the key themes arising from the evidence submitted to date relating to consultation, frequency of grass cutting, flexibility in the contract, communication with stakeholders, long grass and wildflower areas.

The following witnesses attended the meeting to provide information and answer Member questions:

- Peter Baveystock – WBC Service Manager, Cleaner and Greener Services;
- Emma Pilgrim – WBC Performance Officer, Cleaner and Greener Services;
- Peter Fry – Area Manager, Tivoli Group Ltd.

During the ensuing discussion Members raised the following issues.

What steps were Tivoli taking to improve the quality of service provided and learn lessons from the 2018 grass cutting season.

Peter Fry stated that a number of improvements had been implemented to improve standards and tackle issues arising earlier in the year. As an example, Tivoli would not be reducing staffing levels during the winter which meant that the service would be fully resourced in terms of personnel and skill sets for the start of the 2019 grass cutting season in March/April. Tivoli were also looking at the routes used by grass cutting teams and the machinery available as well as measures to improve supervision and productivity.

Would Tivoli be addressing issues relating to grass/weed growth in road gutters and drains?

Peter Baveystock confirmed that this issue was covered by the street cleansing contract. Specific issues could be addressed if Members provided location details.

Tivoli had taken over the grounds maintenance contract from ISS. What added skills/resources/investment would Tivoli be able to deliver?

Peter Fry stated that Tivoli was a new business and would bring a more local focus than ISS which was a large multinational organisation. This meant that Tivoli would be more responsive and agile and able to make investment decisions more effectively.

Tivoli was introducing new mobile systems for staff. Was there any resistance from staff in using these new systems and hand-held devices?

Peter Fry gave examples of the new systems in relation to staff bulletins, electronic forms and payslips. Staff were supportive of the new systems as they reduced the time previously spent on paperwork.

How did the Tivoli contract differ between Wokingham and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM)?

Peter Fry commented that the Wokingham contract allowed more flexibility as it was more output focussed. RBWM officers spent more time on inspection and contract management activities. The Wokingham contract allowed more room for innovation and flexible solutions. Peter Baveystock commented that the new Localities team would be involved in the monitoring of the service and would be involved in quarterly contract meetings from 2109.

Were there any plans to develop greater feedback from local community groups and Town and Parish Councils?

Peter Baveystock commented that there were plans to improve local intelligence and feedback on service delivery linked to new Localities service. Officers would also be exploring options for mutual support with the three Town Councils.

How would Tivoli address the problems caused by grass "clumps" which were unsightly, blocked drains and prevented the casual use of informal green spaces?

Peter Baveystock stated that aim was to carry out regular cuts (every 4-5 weeks) which would keep the grass at a reasonable length and prevent "clumping". Peter Fry commented on Tivoli's investment in new machinery which would make it more difficult for clumping when the grass was cut.

What level of savings had been delivered to WBC when the new contract was let?

Peter Baveystock confirmed that the Council would make ongoing savings of £140k per annum compared to the previous base Budget. The joint procurement process with RBWM had delivered a saving of £40k.

How was the contract monitored by WBC staff?

Emma Pilgrim stated that the WBC client team carried out regular inspections and monitored the suite of Key Performance Indicators and Key Management Indicators. The Council's Dynamics system also generated information on complaints and customer satisfaction. Peter Fry commented that data from the Dynamics system was used by Tivoli to respond to complaints. The Localities team would be using hand held devices which linked in to the Dynamics system. Members were invited to view the operation of the Dynamics system from the client and contractor perspective.

The Chairman thanked the witnesses for their contributions and explained the next steps in the Scrutiny review process. A draft report would be produced and circulated to Members for comment before the November meeting of the Committee. The final draft would then be submitted to that meeting for final sign off by the Committee.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Peter Fry, Peter Baveystock and Emma Pilgrim be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions;
- 2) a draft Scrutiny report and recommendations on the Grounds Maintenance contract be circulated to members of the Committee for discussion and comment;
- 3) a final draft of the Scrutiny report be submitted to the 21 November 2018 meeting for sign off by the Committee.

52. WASTE AND RECYCLING UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 17 to 54, which gave details of the Council's plans to achieve the 50% waste and reuse target included in the 2008 EU Waste Framework Directive. The 50% target had been introduced into UK law and would remain in place following Brexit. The report stated that, at its meeting on 23 May 2018, the Committee had set out a number of questions relating to the corporate waste and recycling indicators and requested a more in-depth report on waste and recycling.

Peter Baveystock (Service Manager, Cleaner and Greener Services) and Irum Gulzar (Waste Reduction Officer) gave a presentation with responses to the earlier questions from the Committee. The report also included the re3 Strategy for 2018/20 which had been approved by the Council's Executive at its meeting on 27 September 2018.

In relation to the earlier questions raised by the Committee the following points were raised.

What was the breakdown between residual waste sent to landfill and waste to energy?

Peter Baveystock provided the following performance data:

	2015/16 Tonnes	2016/17 Tonnes	2017/18 Tonnes
Energy from Waste	28, 138 (72%)	29,917 (77%)	32,657 (86%)
Landfill	11,053 (28%)	9,240 (23%)	5,378 (14%)

What were the cost implications of the measures proposed to move the Council to the 50% recycling target by 2020?

Peter Baveystock confirmed that the introduction of food waste recycling (April 2019) would add approximately 7% to WBC's overall recycling figure (currently around 40%). In addition, the collection of pots, tubs, trays, foil and cartons (from February 2018) was expected to add 1.5% to 2%. It was also estimated that 0.5% to 1% would be generated by increasing the number of glass banks to 50 across the Borough by 2020. Finally, a further 1.5% to 2% would be generated by reducing the level of contamination in our kerbside recycling.

In terms of the financial implications of these measures, the increased revenue costs to cover an extra crew member and new vehicles would be £500k. This would be offset by the savings from diverting approximately 5,000 tonnes from landfill/energy from waste to anaerobic digestion.

Was there a net cost for the green waste service or did the service break even?

Peter Baveystock confirmed that the chargeable green waste service was a break-even service taking into account collection costs, administration costs, containers and container distribution.

Some Welsh Councils achieved recycling levels of 70%. Was this due to a more innovative approach or a different reporting system?

Irum Gulzar gave details of the strategic approach to waste and recycling adopted by the Welsh Government. The Welsh Government's 2010 document Towards Zero Waste (TZW) was the overarching waste strategy document for Wales. Wales was the only administration in the UK to have introduced statutory local authority recovery targets for waste recycling. The Welsh Government adopted a "carrot and stick approach" with a combination of Capital funding support and penalties for non-achievement of statutory targets. It was also noted that, of the 22 Welsh local authorities, 16 had fortnightly collections, five had three weekly collections and one had a four-weekly collection.

What was the impact on recycling of the significant reduction in printed newspapers, magazines, etc.?

Peter Baveystock provided the following performance data:

Material	Mar-Aug 2017 Tonnes	Mar-Aug 2018 Tonnes	Movement
News/Pamphlets	1,847	2,193	+19%
Mixed Paper	4,985	3,882	-22%
Card	1,216	1,650	+36%

Could wet material, such as newspaper, card, etc. be recycled or was it sent to landfill?

Peter Baveystock confirmed that wet materials such as paper, card, etc. could not be recycled as the fibres started to decompose. Wet materials were rejected and sent to energy from waste.

What were the cost and service implications of adding lids to the recycling black boxes?

Peter Baveystock confirmed that the cost of introducing lids for the black boxes would be around £200k. The additional costs of removal and emptying were estimated at between £250k and £500k. A more cost effective approach was a communications programme encouraging residents to store recycling under cover until collection. It was also suggested that putting the blue bags on top of the recycling boxes helped to keep the recycle dry.

What was the current position in relation to charging for DIY waste at Longshot Lane and Smallmead?

Peter Baveystock confirmed that DIY waste was not classified as household waste and the Council's policy was to continue to levy a charge. It was felt that this was still a much cheaper option than hiring a skip or Hippo bag.

Were there any plans to introduce the kerbside collection of glass?

Peter Baveystock confirmed that achieving a 1% improvement in glass recycling, by introducing kerbside collection, would cost around £600k to £800k per annum. Consequently, the Council's focus was on improving performance by increasing the number of bottle banks across the Borough to 50 by 2020. Members were asked to consider potential sites for new bottle banks within their wards.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Peter Baveystock and Irum Gulzar be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions;
- 2) the re3 Waste Strategy for 2018/20 be noted;
- 3) the Committee receive a further update on progress towards the 50% recycling target in the autumn of 2019;
- 4) any suggestions for new bottle bank sites be forwarded to the Cleaner and Greener team.

53. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered its forward work programme and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out on Agenda pages 55 to 66.

In relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee meeting on 21 November 2018 – it was proposed that the item on 21st Century Council be deferred to the 17 January 2019 meeting due to the significant items which had to be considered at the November meeting. It was suggested that the Chairman give further consideration to the items to be considered at the 21 November meeting.

In relation to the Community and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5 November 2018 – it was confirmed that the Chairman had decided to defer the item on Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration to the 14 January 2019 meeting. This was due to the fact that key reports relating to lessons learnt from the Market Place project and the final safety audit would not be available until December 2018. It was felt that the public availability of these reports would be essential in order to facilitate an effective Scrutiny discussion. It was suggested that an update report on the Market Place Regeneration project be submitted to the 5 November meeting with a further detailed Scrutiny session to be held on Town Centre Regeneration at the 14 January 2019 meeting.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee future work programmes be noted;
- 2) the Chairman review the number and priority of items to be considered at the next meeting of the Management Committee;
- 3) the Community and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider an update report on the Market Place Regeneration Project at its meeting on 5 November 2018 followed by a detailed Scrutiny session on Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration at its meeting on 14 January 2019.