MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2019 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.45 PM

Committee Members Present
Councillors: Pauline Helliar-Symons (Chairman), Chris Bowring, Alison Swaddle (Vice-Chairman), Jenny Cheng, Andy Croy, Paul Fishwick, Jim Frewin, Guy Grandison, Sarah Kerr and Abdul Loyes

Other Councillors Present
Councillors: Lindsay Ferris, Parry Batth, John Halsall and Malcolm Richards

Officers Present
Peter Baveystock, Lead Specialist, Place Clienting
Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Irum Gulzar, Specialist, Waste Management and Education
Clare Lawrence, Assistant Director, Place
Emma Pilgrim, Specialist, Place Clienting

50. APOLOGIES
Apologies for absence were submitted from Ken Miall, Ian Pittock and Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey.

Lindsay Ferris attended the meeting as a substitute.

51. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

Jim Frewin referred to Minute 44: Quarter 1 2019/20 Performance Monitoring Report. Jim stated that, in relation to the new KPI: Overall satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support, he had commented that satisfaction measures should also relate to the people delivering services as well as service recipients.

Paul Fishwick referred to Minute 46: Managing the Scrutiny Workload. Paul stated that the final paragraph should be amended as follows:

“Having considered the five options, the Committee concluded **(after a vote – six in favour, five against)** that a combination of options 3, 4 and 5 would be the most effective solution and that the matter should be reviewed again in 2020/21.”

Andy Croy referred to Minute 43: Declaring a Climate Emergency. Andy stated that during the question and answer session he had requested details of the Climate Emergency suggestion/s which would have the most impact in reducing carbon emissions across the Borough.

Also in relation to Minute 43, Andy Croy requested that the Minute refer to the fact that a Member left the meeting during the discussion of this item.

Lindsay Ferris made the following statement in relation to the previous meeting:

"Whilst I was not present at the last Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (O&SC) meeting, the feedback I received from my (Lib Dem) team was that the meeting was a shambles. This unfortunately was not the first occasion.

As a result I wrote to all Group Leaders and Democratic Services at WBC to advise that the Lib Dem Group would boycott the meeting whilst the current Chair was in post. However, due to the importance of the O&SC function and that the greatest impact has been from the Opposition Councillors of all Parties, we have decided to continue attending the meetings.

This evening I am attending with two roles, one to contribute to the meeting, whilst the other is to assess how well the meeting progresses.

If we feel that there has been little, or no improvement we will lobby for a change in Chair of the O&SC meeting."

52. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

53. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

53.1 Mel Davies asked the Chairman the following question:

Question

I attended the September Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Many questions were directed at the Executive Member for the Climate Emergency in order to monitor progress in the development of a plan for tackling the emergency. The Member refused to provide any information at all. It seemed to this resident that this Committee is therefore unable to fulfil its stated purpose. Does the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have any power at all to ensure that they can see the progress on the development of the Plan to combat the Climate Emergency and therefore fulfil its commitment to the Borough residents, and will the Executive Member for the Climate Emergency this time provide a progress report?

Answer

At its meeting on 18 September 2019, the Committee received an initial briefing from the Executive Member for Climate Emergency. As Item 59 on tonight's Agenda confirms, the Executive Member will also attend the Committee's meeting in January 2020. This meeting will take place after the publication of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan. The Action Plan will provide much more detail on the Council's approach to Climate Emergency and the specific initiatives being considered. This will enable the Committee to scrutinise the Council's plans in greater detail. The Executive Member will then be invited to provide further updates as the Action Plan is implemented. As a result, I am confident that the Committee will be able to carry out its role, providing high challenge and support to the Executive Member for Climate Emergency.

Supplementary Question

The January meeting is after the publication of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and, therefore, is a bit late. Do you agree that there should be oversight during the creation of this plan?

Supplementary Answer
Yes. There is oversight of the Action Plan through a Working Group made up of Members from each of the Groups on the Council. The Working Group will follow the development of the Action Plan step by step to see how it is progressing and how it is succeeding.

You have to remember that this is quite a new initiative with a lot of research still to be done. Part of the research is a public consultation which includes an on-line survey. If you are serious about climate change, and I assume that you are as you have asked this question, you may wish to take part in the survey. The survey is on the WBC website, if you haven't already taken part.

Note:
Andy Croy referred to the Minutes of the Committee's meeting on 18 September and stated that the Committee had requested to see emerging drafts of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Jim Frewin stated that two members of the Committee were also members of the Climate Emergency Working Group. As such they would endeavour to ensure that the development of the Action Plan was as transparent as possible.

54. MEMBER QUESTION TIME
There were no Member questions.

55. GRASS CUTTING DELIVERY REVIEW 2019
The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 15 to 22, which gave details of the delivery of the grass cutting service in 2019. This related to the recommendations made by the Committee following the Scrutiny Review of the Grounds Maintenance service in 2018.

Peter Baveystock (Lead Specialist, Place Clienting) and Emma Pilgrim (Specialist, Place Clienting) attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions. Spencer Rock (Chief Operating Officer at Tivoli Group – the Council's contractor) was also in attendance.

The report stated that the Scrutiny review had highlighted a number of useful issues which had been helpful in reviewing and strengthening the operation of the contract. The following lessons had been learned as a result:

- The importance of early preparations with a full staffing/machinery resource;
- Despite the output based contract it was helpful in managing expectations to set a guideline of a four weekly cut;
- Early communication with stakeholders was essential in highlighting issues and preventing complaints;
- More collaborative working with the contractor had led to more effective monitoring and creative solutions;
- IT systems should be fit for purpose for the benefit of the Council and the contractor.

Building on the improved performance in 2019, the service aimed to adopt a similar approach with early preparation and a clear action plan in place. Furthermore, the lessons learned from this review would be used to assess the effectiveness of other contracts within Place Services.

Spencer Rock gave details of a number of initiatives being pursued by Tivoli, including the implementation of a new hand held operating system (TOPS), extra machines, annualised hours, greater use of social media and quarterly review meetings with WBC.

In the ensuing discussion, Members made the following points:

What was the distribution of work between the high season and low season? It was confirmed that the distribution was around 65% in spring/summer and 35% during the rest of the year. The contractor aimed to match the available resources to the client's needs.

In relation to the clearance of footpaths, what was the protocol in situations where brambles, weeds, etc. were left behind? It was confirmed that brambles and weeds should be blown to the side of the footpath. Any specific issues would be addressed if reported.

In relation to wildflower areas, what was the process for ensuing that newly planted areas continued to flourish in subsequent years? It was agreed that this was an important issue. Work was ongoing to address this including an article in the upcoming Wokingham Borough News. It was important to have up-to-date intelligence on local needs.

Despite a number of requests, the central reservation of the A4 between Sonning and Charvil had not been cut. It was confirmed that the work would be carried out before the end of October 2019.

Which service was responsible for dealing with weeds/brambles in alleyways? It was confirmed that weeds/brambles on hard surfaces in alleyways were addressed through the street cleansing contract. Members felt that improved communications on this issue would help to reassure local residents.

In relation to the cutting of hedges, could more care be taken to avoid damage to tress growing out of the hedges? It was confirmed that discussions had been held with the Wokingham Veteran Trees Association to gain a better understanding of this issue. Tivoli would be using local knowledge and taking a more cautious approach in future years.

There were many examples of grass/brambles encroaching onto footpaths across the Borough. What action could be taken? It was confirmed that these issues were challenging. However, if reported they would be investigated and addressed.

In relation to the KPIs on complaints, did the data include complaints from sources outside the Dynamics system, such as the WBC complaints process? It was confirmed that details of complaints received from all sources would be collated and circulated to the Committee.

In relation to the inspections underpinning the KPI results, were there enough objective measures in association with subjective findings? It was confirmed that the new Locality Officers were now involved in the inspection process. These Officers had been briefed on the contract specification which would help to generate more objective reporting.

A number of the KPI results had not yet been reported. Would Members be updated on these KPIs? It was confirmed that further KPI data would be reported to Members as and when it was confirmed.

Did the contract contain any penalty clauses in relation to under performance? It was confirmed that the contract had moved to an incentive approach involving payments for the attainment of specific targets. £40k was available within the contract for incentive payments. Contract payments were divided into 12ths which reduced the amount of administration involved.

RESOLVED That:

1) Peter Baveystock, Emma Pilgrim and Spencer Rock be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions;

2) the service improvements delivered as part of the 2019 grass cutting programme be noted;

3) the Committee receive a further update at its meeting in March 2020, at the start of the 2020 grass cutting season.

56. WBC FOOD WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE

The Committee considered a presentation, set out on Agenda pages 23 to 34, which gave an update of the operation of the Council's food waste collection service.

Irum Gulzar (Specialist – Waste Management and Education) attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The presentation informed Members that the food waste collection service had been introduced in April 2019. It supported the Council's aim to achieve the 50% national recycling target by 2020 and the Council's aim to reduce waste as part of the declaration of a Climate Emergency.

The new service reduced the amount of greenhouse gas produced by rotting food and saved up to £100 per tonne by diverting waste from landfill. Food waste was collected as part of the weekly blue bag and black box collection. A new fleet of waste collection vehicles had been deployed which allowed residual, mixed recycling and food waste to be collected in the same vehicle.

The Committee was also informed that the EU Circular Economy targets had been incorporated into UK legislation. The targets were 55% recycling by 2025, 60% recycling by 2030 and 65% recycling by 2035. The Committee considered further potential initiatives aimed at meeting these stretching targets.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

The food waste collection service did not, currently, apply to flats. What impact would there be once flats were included in the scheme? It was confirmed that collection from flats would start at the end of the year and would increase the overall level of collection. However, it was likely to be more difficult to encourage residents in flats to engage with the scheme. It was suggested that Members be notified when food waste collection was expanded to flats in their areas. Members would then be able to assist with communications.

How did WBC plan to encourage more residents to join in the scheme? This tied in with the Council's work on tackling the Climate Emergency. It was important to communicate with residents and, especially, with young people on these issues.

What progress had been made in reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill? It was confirmed that, in 2006, 60% of waste had been sent to landfill. By 2018 this had been reduced to 10%. In the current year it was estimated that 3% of waste would be sent to landfill. Members requested more information on the most recent impacts of the collection of food waste and data on the cost of energy from waste versus landfill.

What measures could be taken to reduce the amount of paper/card lost to recycling due to wet weather? It was confirmed that communications were ongoing to encourage residents to keep paper/card dry, for example by placing blue bags on top of the black boxes. The potential for putting lids on the black boxes had been considered, but it was felt that the cost would be prohibitive. Similarly, setting up a covered central collection point was not considered to be effective due to the risk of contamination with other items.

What percentage of households were taking part in the food waste collection service? It was estimated that 36,500 households were taking part, which was over 50%. The aspiration was to achieve a further increase in take up.

There was some confusion about the use of green bags with the food waste caddies. Were there plans for further communication? It was confirmed that a group was being set up to look at ways to improve communications on the scheme. There were also plans to improve communications with local schools.

When was the deadline for achieving 50% recycling? It was confirmed that the deadline was December 2020, but that WBC was already achieving 55% (including 6% from food waste collection).

There was some concern about bins being thrown around following collection, potentially leading to damage and replacement. It was confirmed that these issues were discussed with Veolia (the Council's contractor) and that operatives faced disciplinary action for mistreating bins.

What further measures would the Council have to take to achieve the further stretching recycling targets – 60% by 2030 and 65% by 2035? It was confirmed that this would be a step-by-step process with measures to reduce contamination, such as the issues around wet paper and card. It would also rely on behaviour change from residents and suppliers such as supermarkets reducing the amount of packaging on products. Longer-term proposals would be reported back to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED That:

1) Irum Gulzar be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions;

2) the update on the WBC food waste collection service be noted;

3) the additional information requested at the meeting be circulated to Members;

4) the Committee receive a further update on Waste and Recycling (including food waste collection) at the meeting in July 2020.

57. UPDATE ON STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 35 to 47, which gave details of the award of the WBC Street Cleansing contract to Volker Highways with a start date of 1 April 2020.

The report stated that the current contract had been let in 2011 on a five year term with an option for extensions up to four years. In recent years a perception had grown that the contract did not deliver good value for money. A preferred route was to include the service within the Highways Maintenance contract. Consequently, street cleansing was included as an option within the OJEU Notice for the Highways Maintenance contract.

The new service would include the following features:

- A new fleet of vehicles;
- An extension to the Highways IT system (HIMS);
- Maintenance of the current cleansing frequencies with negotiations on an output based approach;
- Guaranteed standards on all adopted roads, footways, traffic islands and cycleways;
- All litter bins emptied on time and flytipping removed within set timescales.

Appended to the report were the Project Initiation Document and Communications Plan.

In the ensuing discussion Members made the following points:

Would the new contract include the collection of dog waste? It was confirmed that the contract would include collection of waste from litter bins, including dog waste.

What impact would the new contract have on fly tipping? It was confirmed that the Localities team had taken over responsibility for tackling fly tipping. This would include continued development of the full range of sanctions including fixed penalties and prosecution in serious cases. The new contract also involved a more comprehensive performance management framework with five KPIs including the removal of fly tipping.

The report stated that the new contract would involve a new fleet of vehicles. Would these be low emission vehicles? It was confirmed that the new vehicles would be low emission, but not electric.

The new contractor would be delivering the street cleaning and gully emptying services. Was there potential for improved coordination between the two services? It was confirmed that the new service would include street cleansing on a six-weekly basis and gully emptying on a biannual frequency. The potential for more joined up working would be considered in the run up to the commencement of the new arrangements.

What was the definition for Grade A standard for street cleaning? It was confirmed that Grade A meant free of litter and detritus. From the time of reporting, the contractor had 24 hours to bring the location up to Grade A.

What guarantees were there to ensure that the outgoing contractor maintained current standards? It was confirmed that the outgoing contractor would wish to keep to current standards in order to maintain its reputation and seek positive references for future work.

Staff working for the current contractor would also be likely to transfer to the new contractor under the TUPE process.

RESOLVED That:

1) progress in re-letting the Street Cleansing Contract as part of the Highways Maintenance Contract be noted;

2) a further update report be submitted to the Committee in October 2020.

58. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE FORWARD PROGRAMME AND THE IEMD FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a copy of the Executive Forward Programme and the Individual Executive Member Decision Forward Programmes as set out on Agenda pages 49 to 56.

Members requested an update on Electric Vehicle charging provision across the Borough. It was confirmed that an Electric Vehicle Strategy would be developed in conjunction with the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Programmes be noted.

59. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered its forward work programme and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out on Agenda pages 57 to 70.

In relation to the next meeting of the Committee (27 November 2019), Members requested that social media be used to publicise the fact that the Committee would be considering a report on illegal traveller encampments.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes be noted.

60. UPDATE REPORTS FROM CHAIRMEN OR NOMINATED MEMBER OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Committee considered updates from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen.

RESOLVED: That the update reports be noted.