

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.00 PM

### **Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Pauline Helliard-Symons (Chairman), Alison Swaddle (Vice-Chairman), Andy Croy, Paul Fishwick, Jim Frewin, Guy Grandison, Emma Hobbs, Abdul Loyes, Ken Miall, Andrew Mickleburgh and Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey

### **Other Councillors Present**

Councillors: Prue Bray and Parry Batth

### **Officers Present**

Peter Baveystock, Consultant Specialist, Place Clienting  
Richard Bisset, Lead Specialist, Place Clienting  
Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist  
Louise Griffin, Performance and Programme Management Specialist  
Irum Gulzar, Waste Collection and Disposal Contract Manager  
Clare Lawrence, Assistant Director, Place Services  
Emma Pilgrim, Project Management Officer, Place Clienting  
Chris Traill, Director of Place and Growth

### **50. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Sarah Kerr.

Prue Bray attended the meeting as a substitute.

### **51. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a future date.

### **52. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **53. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

### **54. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

There were no Member questions.

### **55. GRASS CUTTING DELIVERY REVIEW 2020**

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 15 to 20, which gave details of a review of the 2020/21 Grounds Maintenance service/contract.

Emma Pilgrim, Project Management Officer, Place Clienting, attended the meeting to introduce the report and answer Member questions.

The report reminded Members that the current contract had commenced in 2016 with a new contractor, ISS Facility Services. The contract was subsequently bought out by Tivoli Group Ltd in June 2018.

The Committee had carried out a Scrutiny review of the contract in 2018 following a significant number of issues in 2016 and 2018. Following the review, a number of improvements had been introduced in 2019. The Committee asked for further a progress report relating to the operation of the contract in 2020.

The report stated that Covid-19 had had an impact on frontline service delivery. However, Tivoli had continued to deliver grounds maintenance services whilst ensuring the safety of staff. As a result of staff shortages at Tivoli, grass cutting ran up to four weeks behind schedule at times. Tivoli agreed additional overtime working for staff and focussed resources to ensure that the larger public open spaces were not affected.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

What lessons had been learned in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff to support the grass cutting service? It was confirmed that the nature of the industry led to a number of experienced staff supplemented by seasonal staff during the summer months. The Council was supporting Tivoli in a bid to use the Government Kickstart scheme to attract young people. Officers were also exploring the potential for apprenticeships.

What sort of mitigation measures were used to support the delivery of the service during 2020? An example was given relating to the use of equipment from the Countryside Service to provide additional capacity during busy periods.

The scheduled grass cutting programme did run into problems during the 2020 season. Dry weather during May helped to curtail grass growth which helped the contractor.

The weekly Member Update was helpful, but was not produced on a regular basis in 2020. It was confirmed that the update would be circulated on a more consistent basis in 2021.

Would there be improved communications about the wildflower/meadow areas which were developed as part of the contract? It was confirmed that the potential for putting information on the WBC website would be explored. The wildflower/meadow areas were situated in the larger areas of open space, such as Cantley Park.

How effective was the online complaints process relating to grass cutting? It was confirmed that the system was working well. It was important to produce effective communications to ensure that residents were using the system correctly. Work was ongoing to improve online access and publicity.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Emma Pilgrim be thanked for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions;
- 2) the update report on grass cutting for 2020/21 be noted.

## **56. FOOD WASTE SERVICE REVIEW 2019-20**

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 21 to 26, which gave details of a review of the food waste collection service in 2019/20.

Irum Gulzar, Waste Collection and Disposal Contract Manager, attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The report stated that the Council had extended its waste collection contract with Veolia in April 2019. The extension included the addition of a weekly food waste collection service across the Borough. The new arrangements aimed to divert 5,000 tonnes of food waste from the blue bags and contribute 7% towards the recycling target of 50% by 2020.

The food waste collection service had now been operating for 19 months. To date, the service had received a positive response from residents. By April 2020 the Council achieved a 50% recycling rate. In 2019/20 the Council diverted 5,154 tonnes of food waste from blue bags, exceeding the target of 5,000 tonnes. This tonnage also delivered a reduction of 52k tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e which supported the Council's climate emergency work.

The report stated that, overall, the performance of the food waste collection service had improved significantly, with engagement from an increasing number of residents. There was a commitment to increase participation further, but also to focus on waste minimisation in 2021/22 to further increase recycling and reduce the costs of disposal.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

What was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the service? It was confirmed that, as a result of the pandemic, more people had spent more time at home. This had resulted in increased tonnages of waste, including food waste. There were further issues around the closure of WBC outlets for bags and the closure of the waste and recycling sites. An updated list of outlets was maintained on the WBC website. In the meantime, as a temporary measure, ABC cars were being used to deliver to people who were unable to leave home.

Some Councils had started food waste collection well then seen a fall-off in numbers. It was confirmed that the aim was to achieve 75% participation in the scheme in 2021/22. Focussed communications would be aimed at areas of the Borough with lower participation rates.

The table on Page 26 of the Agenda indicated that food waste had made a contribution of 7% to the overall recycling target.

For families who did not use the food waste caddies (e.g. home composters) did WBC aim to retrieve the unused caddies? It was confirmed that this suggestion would be investigated.

On a related issue, what was the timeframe for the delivery of the new recycling sacks? It was confirmed that the sacks were being produced overseas and that the pandemic had impacted on delivery dates. It was hoped that the new sacks would be delivered to residents early in 2021. Members would be notified of the timeframe for delivery of the new sacks and the plans to deal with the current black boxes.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Irum Gulzar be thanked for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions;
- 2) The update on the food waste collection service be noted.

## **57. STREET CLEANSING REVIEW 2020-21**

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 27 to 44, which gave details of a review of the work of the newly appointed street cleansing contractor (Urbasser) for 2020/21 to date.

Peter Baveystock, Consultant Specialist, Place and Clienting, attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The report set out details of the overall performance of the contract which delivered street sweeping, litter picking, fly-tip removal, herbicide treatments, graffiti removal and litter bin emptying. The report included details of the key performance indicators for the service and performance levels for the period April – October 2020. Two of the KPIs, sweeping and litter picking on schedule and removal of fly tipping, had not met the target, largely as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impacts included the closure of the household waste and recycling sites, increased usage/littering on public open spaces and an increase in glass taken to recycling sites (due to the closure of pubs).

The report stated that, in order to drive efficiencies discussions would be held with the contractor about moving to an output-based service, allowing resources to be concentrated on areas of greatest need. A partnership approach was also being developed to tackle areas of footway encroachment.

In the ensuing discussion, Members made the following points:

The report referred to sweeping and litter picking to Grade 'A' – what was the definition of Grade 'A'? It was confirmed that Grade A resulted in a situation with no remaining litter or detritus. If residents were dissatisfied with the sweeping and litter picking standards being achieved, it was important to report any issues to WBC. This would enable remedial action to be taken in line with the contract. Similarly, if the contractors did not appear in line with the published schedules, this should be reported using the HIMs system.

In relation to bins, was there a process for redeploying under-utilised bins to areas with greater demand? It was confirmed that there were currently 1,250 litter bins in use across the Borough. Any concerns about bin placement would be reviewed. The first issue to be considered in these cases was: Is there a litter problem in the vicinity?

In relation to fly-tipping, was it possible to report fly-tipping on areas away from roads, for example on bridleways and public footpaths? It was confirmed that this would be investigated and confirmed. Paul Fishwick confirmed that he had used the HIMS system to identify fly-tipping away from the road network.

Whilst there was data on the number of fly-tips and fixed penalty notices (45 since April 2020) was there data on the number of prosecutions and the outcomes? Parry Batth confirmed that there was a cross-party working group which was currently looking at a range of issues around fly-tipping. This included the scope for the use of bigger fines – the maximum penalty stood at a £50k fine or two years in prison.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Peter Baveystock be thanked for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions;

- 2) the update report on the performance of the street cleansing contract during 2020/21, be noted.

## **58. QUARTER 2 2020/21 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 45 to 80, which provided the Quarter 2 2020/21 Performance Monitoring Report (July – September 2020).

Louise Griffin, Performance and Programme Management Specialist, attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The report stated that 39 (63%) of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were on track for delivery and were reported Green; 11 KPIs (18%) were off-target and were reported as Amber; 10 KPIs (16%) were reported as Red as the target was not achieved in Q2.

The report stated that, despite the significant impact of Covid-19, performance at the end of Q2 had remained positive across the majority of KPIs. However, the impact of the pandemic had resulted in fewer KPIs, overall, being on track compared with Q1.

During the discussion on the report, Members made the following points:

- The Q2 report covered July – September 2020, but was being considered at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 25 November 2020. Was it possible to submit the report in a more timely manner to ensure that the data considered by Members was up to date?
- RA5a - Successful homeless preventions – the information stated that there were 12 households, whose prevention duty ended in Q2. Eight of these cases ended successfully with accommodation being secured for six plus months. What happened to the other four cases?
- PG26 - Air quality – Twyford data should be available for 2018 and the M4 was closed for some time period due to highways work, so this needed to be taken into account.
- PG16 - Greenways and cycleways - Members pointed out some errors in the narrative – Cantley work Section 1 route B – work commences in Dec 2020 (not 2021) and completion of Section 3 is June 2021, so out of the target date or included in the 3km target?
- AS9 - Permanent admissions to residential and nursing care homes:
  - How have admissions changed compared to pre-pandemic rates?
  - Does the target change based on the level of admissions?
  - What are the costs likely to be recoverable from the Government due to Covid-19?
  - Why has there been an increase? Members expected a decrease due to Covid-19? (The report in fact showed that there had been a fall in admissions).
  - What was the cost incurred and how do we measure this change in demand due to Covid-19 and its impact?
- RA7 - Revenue budget monitoring – Members were pleased to see that Covid-19 spend was incorporated into the reporting. What were the timescales for recovering costs from the Government?
- PG3 - Local Plan Update:

- How do we decide whether the Local Plan Update is on track - are we setting SMART targets/tolerances?
- What is the target completion date for the Local Plan Update and has this changed?
- KPIs in development – Members would like an update on timescales for finalising these indicators, particularly the indicator to measure staff satisfaction.
- CIC1 - Recorded crime – Members had received a presentation from Thames Valley Police (TVP) showing that crime levels had deteriorated during the first lockdown. The Performance Monitoring report showed a rise. Louise Griffin explained that it could be that we were reporting data up to September 2020 but TVP would be able to share up to October/November.
- PG12 - Average daily traffic flow – this PI was measured annually – did officers have an indication locally of the impact of Covid-19 on traffic flows across the Borough.
- Report Appendix – the order of the tables was confusing. In the Appendix, dates from top to bottom were listed in ascending order. In the cover report the tables listed Q2 at the top and Q1 below. A more consistent layout was requested.
- PG1 – S106 allocations – it was advised that allocations may have decreased due to developers holding onto CIL. Members asked what affect this was having.
- PG6 – affordable dwellings – how had this been affected by Covid-19? Louise Griffin stated that the majority of completions were usually planned in Q3 and Q4 and that much of the planned completions were in 2019/20 so we were expecting less this year. It was felt that construction work was ongoing but Members would like to know how this was affected by Covid-19.
- CIC13 – Percentage of calls answered - Members felt that this percentage KPI gave a misleading indication of how WBC was responding to calls. Members would like to see two additional measures reported in future:
  - Time it takes to answer calls (previously three rings);
  - Number of calls dropped/abandoned;
  - Member referred to the message on the phone about using the website as residents were calling because they could not complete the action online;
  - The indicator may be giving a misleading impression of calls and how WBC was responding and dealing with demand;
  - It was confirmed that a corporate review of call handling/customer service was ongoing;
  - Members requested an update on the future plans and progress with the review.
- PG13 – Proportion of highway schemes on track for delivery. Members questioned whether officers were reporting the RAG rating based on original timescales set or whether this is based on changing timescales. For example, some schemes were 6-10 years delayed (from original estimates). How have dates and targets been changed?

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) Louise Griffin be thanked for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions;
- 2) the Q2 2020/21 Performance Monitoring report be noted:

- 3) Members receive further information on the KPI queries raised (as set out above);
- 4) in relation to KPI CIC 13 – Percentage of calls answered – two additional indicators be recommended for inclusion in future reports:
  - Time taken to answer calls (previously three rings);
  - Number of calls dropped/abandoned.

## **59. WBC RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 81 to 106, which gave details of the outcome of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' review of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report stated that, at its meeting on 24 June 2020, the Committee had considered a report from the Chief Executive which gave details of the Council's initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report stated that the Council played a key role in tackling the pandemic in areas such as health and social care (for example by supporting vulnerable people and local care homes), Children's Services (by safeguarding vulnerable children and supporting home learning) and the provision of advice and support for local businesses.

Whilst the Council's response to the pandemic continued throughout the summer, with a significant workload for officers, the reduction in community transmission and loosening of some lockdown measures provided an opportunity to take stock, assess the scale of the challenge and the way in which the Council had worked with a range of partners.

The report summarised the Council's emergency planning arrangements and detailed the way the Council mobilised resources in conjunction with other key players such as health, police, community and voluntary sector and the Town and Parish Councils.

The Committee asked each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to look at key themes relating to the Council's response and to report back on their findings. The report brought those findings together in a draft composite report for discussion and amendment by the Committee, to be followed by submission of the report to the Council's Executive in January 2021.

The key themes under review comprised the impact of the pandemic on:

- Care homes;
- Effectiveness of health partnerships;
- Schools and Children's Services;
- Impact on mental health;
- Finance and business;
- Community response;
- Community safety/localities;
- Communication and engagement;
- Recovery;
- Test and Trace;
- Poverty – impact on the poorest, the unemployed and the homeless;
- Maintaining democracy.

The composite report stated that the Scrutiny reviews indicated that the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to date, had been very positive. The Council's emergency planning systems were effective, enabling decisive and speedy action on specific issues such as PPE, the risks to residents of local care homes and the establishment of the One Front Door community response. The Council's willingness to work in partnership had also been outstanding, as was the response from community and voluntary organisations across the Borough, along with hundreds of community volunteers. This strengthened partnership approach provided a strong base upon which to build relationships and respond to future challenges, during and after the pandemic. Members also commended the dedication and flexibility of Council staff, many of whom had been redeployed into different roles in order to support the community response.

The recommendations in the composite report reflected the decisions already taken by the Committee as part of its consideration of a number of themes relating to the pandemic. Members considered the composite report and made amendments to the original recommendations in addition to new recommendations.

**RESOLVED** That:

- 1) the Executive notes the outstanding response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the Borough to date and commends the efforts of staff, Members, partners and community volunteers;
- 2) the Executive advise local care homes to review risk assessments and ensure, for the duration of the pandemic, that:
  - staff do not work in more than one setting, with the exception of workers with specific skill sets, such as prescribing or issuing medication;
  - appropriate social distancing applies for people who work in or visit their homes;
- 3) the Executive highlight the importance of supporting all aspects of WBC staff welfare as the Council enters into the next phase of the pandemic;
- 4) the Executive address the relative sparsity of data on domestic violence and abuse and emphasise the need for explicit recognition and action in response to reported rising levels during the pandemic;
- 5) the Council, in view of the multi-dimensional nature of "poverty", in all discussions, data, policy and action, focus on all who are suffering different types of rising and significant levels of hardship;
- 6) the Executive urgently re-examines the issue of 21 to 25 year old care leavers paying Council Tax, for the remainder of this financial year;
- 7) the Council commits to co-produce an anti-poverty strategy;
- 8) the Council limit the use of comparative data and benchmarking narrative, such as being ranked the least deprived upper tier authority, when talking about poverty, to avoid minimising the difficulties faced by residents;

- 9) the Council continues to focus on the specific impacts of Covid-19 on different community groups and to tailor its communication and engagement activities accordingly;
- 10) the Executive notes the results of the Covid-19 Residents' Survey which indicated that 96% of respondents were either very satisfied, satisfied or had no opinion on the Council's response and set out residents' views on future priorities for the Council:
  - supporting local businesses and employment;
  - supporting mental health;
  - reducing social isolation and loneliness in vulnerable people.

#### **60. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE FORWARD PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a copy of the Executive Forward Programme as set out on Agenda pages 107 to 110. Members considered any potential issues for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes.

**RESOLVED:** That the Executive Forward Programme be noted.

#### **61. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMMES**

The Committee considered its forward Work Programme and that of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as set out on Agenda pages 111 to 120.

Alison Swaddle gave updates on the Children's services Work Programme. This included a report to the January 2021 meeting from Public Health England on mental health.

Guy Grandison reported that the December meeting of Community and Corporate O&S would consider items on the 2021 elections and proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Neil Carr reported that two items would be added to the Management Committee's Work Programme following the review of the Council's response to the pandemic:

- development of the WBC co-produced anti-poverty strategy;
- partnership working with charities and other organisations tackling poverty.

**RESOLVED:** That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes, as amended, be noted.

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