

Minutes of a meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 29 September 2020 in To be held remotely

Commenced 5.30 pm
Concluded 7.47 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	GREEN
Kamran Hussain (Chair) Dodds Berry Mohammed Kamran Hussain Lintern	Heseltine Herd	Stubbs	Love

NON VOTING CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Nicola Hoggart

Environment Agency

Observers: Councillor Ferriby, Portfolio Holder Healthy People and Places and Councillor Johnson

Councillor Kamran Hussain in the Chair

7. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

Apologies were received from Councillor Riaz Ahmed. Councillor Stubbs in attendance as Alternate.

8. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency the following declaration was made:

Councillor Joanne Dodds declared that a member of her immediate family was a Neighbourhood Warden (minute no. 12)

9. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no declarations of interest in matters under consideration.

10. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals to the Committee.

11. WASTE SERVICES - RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC TO DATE

The report of the Interim Strategic Director, Place was submitted to brief Members on the Service's response to date in relation to additional demands and operational difficulties encountered due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects within the District. Along with colleagues seconded from Leisure and Theatres, services had been maintained throughout the crisis using innovative methods to ensure social distancing was maintained by crews. Bulky waste collections were also maintained and were undertaken by a council contractor. Planning was already underway to maintain provision of services and protect staff going forward. There was an increase in the tonnage of waste collected during the lockdown period but although this had decreased by August, it was still higher than average. It was noted in the Officers briefing to Members that waste collection teams were supported by other council departments.

Four household waste and recycling centres had been re-opened in May with the phased opening of the remainder shortly afterwards. Officers wished to note that staff were working to ensure that systems were safe with only essential personnel working from offices, and that recognized trade unions had been involved throughout. Risk assessments had been carried out to ensure that COVID-19 guidance was followed. A vehicle sanitisation scheme was put in place, and whilst there had been staffing issues, the utilisation of agency staff had been minimal.

The number of garden waste subscription customers had risen to 42,000 residents paying in but the recyclables market remained volatile. The contamination of recyclable materials was an on-going problem. Senior Officers wished to emphasise the massive efforts made by staff during such an unprecedented situation.

Members commented on the following:

- A Member wished to thank staff for their efforts and asked whether the issue with contaminated recyclables was due to less separation of items and had it affected how much material had been recycled? Officers advised that dropping off of recyclables was still possible at the start of lockdown and whilst sites had been rearranged, the options for separating was still available – they also acknowledged the significant support given by highways and Traffic Management, which had not been evident in other local authorities. Senior Officers were keen to recognise the efforts of staff and had already passed on their gratitude by means of notices.
- Another Member also stated that staff had worked well in adverse circumstances. The question of vehicle sanitisation was raised and

Officers were asked if it would continue. In response, Officers confirmed that decontamination of vehicles would continue.

- In relation to trade waste collections – as the demand was not so great, could the frequency of collections be reduced? In response, Officers advised that tonnages were increasing and there was a new trade waste payment system being introduced. Collection routes would be managed to be efficient and collections would be halted if payment was not received. Payments would be based on weight collected using an onboard weighing system as per agreed contracts with the business being serviced. It was also pointed out that businesses also needed a good recycling offer to allow them to recycle as well as collecting trade waste. The decision for approval needed to go to The Executive. A Commercial Manager needed to be recruited to manage the system
- The Chair requested an overview of the new system – due to go to Executive November/December 2020 for implementation on 1st April 2021.
- Another Member wished to congratulate all staff involved in keeping the waste collection service going throughout the pandemic. In relation to the upgrade on the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) there is much more material going out to a third party. Could an update be provided as it represents a minimum £3 million investment? In response, Officers advised that income from recycling had been much higher and 3 shifts had been run which disguised the cost of doing so. Due to the reduction in income from recycling it was now costing £1.2million. However the upgrade would bring a saving of £1million or more each year.
- Another Member wished to show their appreciation to the staff in waste collection and wished it to be extended to all Council staff who had worked throughout such challenging times. The subject of opening recycling centres and the issue of permits was raised. Did the difficulties encountered result in a rise in unauthorised tipping elsewhere in the district? The permit system used by Bradford was not observed at all sites and residents had been refused. In response, Officers advised that sites throughout West Yorkshire re-opened on 11 May using a variety of systems and Bradford had stipulated that proof of residency was needed when presenting at a site so that a permit could be issued.
- A Member queried the next steps with the ongoing model of staffing and delivery. How was it going to re-shape the service and consequential costs? In response, Officers advised that the district was entering a difficult period with the need to keep staff safe alongside possible adverse weather and the implications of Brexit. The tipping point for reintroducing measures employed was being looked at in detail as the challenge was not over. The adverse weather plan had also been discussed at the recent Flood Resilience and Recovery meeting.
- A Member raised the issue of mental wellbeing and the pressure on staff who faced additional challenges at work and who had been unable to take annual leave. He also stated that residents were appreciative of the effort and hard work by staff.

- It was queried whether the Environment Agency (EA) had provided support on waste management during this period. In response, it was reported: that support had been received from other outside agencies but support on waste management would be discussed directly with EA outside of the meeting.
- Due to the volatility of the recyclables market, would it be better to incinerate recyclable waste? It was reported that: incineration costs were higher and recycle and re-use was the best option as it was more sustainable and less costly.
- One Member was keen on the option of engagement with communities in the event that waste could not be collected. Officers reported that the continued delivery of services was a concern and agreed with the need to engage with communities.
- What would happen in the event of a major flood incident whilst restrictions around COVID-19 were still in place. Had a plan been developed and how would the situation be managed? It was reported that this had been discussed at the Flood R&R meeting and preparation was underway should this occur.
- Was there a contingency in place for winter and could staff be re-purposed? Was the MRF coming back to the Committee for consideration and discussion? Officers responded that normal contingency would not be adequate in view of COVID-19 and a meeting was already scheduled for the following day to address this. In relation to the upgrade to the MRF, final proposals would be reported to the Committee prior to going to the Executive.

Resolved –

- (1) That the obstacles that staff have had to overcome during the Covid-19 pandemic be noted and the deep gratitude of Members be expressed to them for all their hard, and continued, work during the current pandemic.**
- (2) That it be noted that Members expressed their support for a reward for staff across Waste Services in recognition of their efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

ACTION: Strategic Director, Place

12. FLY TIPPING IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT.

The Environmental Enforcement Manager and the Senior Technical Officer both attended the meeting and presented the report of the Strategic Director, Place (Document G) which provided an update on Environmental Enforcement and information on the number of fly tips reported to the Council plus an analysis of relevant waste data.

Whilst fly tipping had increased in June, July and August, it was now reducing again and Officers were waiting for the annual statistics from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to compare with national figures. Local statistics suggested that the majority of residents were disposing of waste appropriately but the composition of waste had changed since the previous year. The number of enforcement staff had been affected as they were deployed elsewhere during the COVID-19 pandemic including the set up of local support hubs. Additional details were provided to the Committee around the work undertaken and the impact on enforcements and prosecutions due to staffing and reduced capacity in the court system. Interviews had also ceased until risk assessments could be completed. Officers advised that fly tipping was difficult to prevent and cameras which monitored the issue had been removed.

Members commented on the following:

- Were risk assessments complete in view of further lockdowns as there were no details of these in the report? In response, Officers advised that the principle was similar to that in waste management and risk assessments were carried out at each site. Due to the backlog in the courts system, only the most serious cases were being heard so processes had been adapted accordingly. Additional wardens were recruited with staff working from home or in COVID-19 safe buildings giving the flexibility needed to respond.
- A Member stated that this was another service which had adapted with staff working to keep it going and wished to thank the staff involved.
- In relation to previous years' figures, it was felt that it would be useful to have information to show performance and to see the outcomes of warning notices and details of the outcomes of actions taken in relation to illegal waster traders. In response, Officers advised that previous performance figures could be included going forward and explained a dip in performance in the prevailing year was due to new staff and the impact of the need to train and gain knowledge and experience. Explanations were also given around the scope of available actions which were taken which had produced significantly positive outcomes.
- Would enforcement around fly tipping of domestic waste in bin bags be rolled out and what was the outcome if the offence was not admitted? In response, Officers advised that some work by wardens using bodycams had been undertaken with Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) interviews held on doorsteps. Work of this nature could be carried out once additional training had been completed by more Wardens.
- Crime scene tape and notices to say that the Council were aware of the issue, were used for fly tipping, could this be used if on private land? Also, regarding litter dumped from vehicles, what evidence is needed to convict? In response, Officers advised that crime scene tape and an adhesive label was attached to dumped waste. Landowners are responsible for clearing waste dumped on their land but this could be looked at as the label is intended for public land only at present. Members were reassured that prolific fly tippers were being pursued. With a recent change to legislation

it is now easier to address littering/fly tipping from vehicles. A letter is sent to the registered keeper of the vehicle asking for details of who the offender is. The registered keeper will now be held responsible if no additional information is received. This system had been introduced and implemented in July/August of 2020. It does have to be captured on camera (dashcams etc) in order to proceed on this basis or, alternatively, if the person reporting is willing to make a statement then proceedings can start against the alleged offender without video or photographic evidence.

- A comment regarding health and safety was made as a result of crime scene tape and waste being left prior to collection.
- Heaton Woods was a fly tipping hotspot, what resources did we have to catch offenders? In response, Officers advised that the problem occurs in an area which was difficult to capture with cameras due to its length. Cameras were in use but their location was not discussed.
- How many cameras does the district have and how do Ward Councillors request cameras to be fitted? In response, Officers advised that the Council's contractor manages CCTV systems and bus lane cameras which are a mix of fixed and Viper cameras. Wildlife cameras capturing images and motion detectors are also deployed but usefulness is limited. There were currently 35 fixed and 15 Viper cameras in operation and a review of their effectiveness was already underway. If there is a fly tipping issue, it should be reported to the relevant Warden or Enforcement Manager who would then look into whether a camera could be effectively deployed. Staff are trained to install cameras but the process of assessing and site and installation is a lengthy one.
- Could signs be put up to deter fly tipping? In response, Officers advised that a poster/sign campaign had been postponed due to COVID-19 but these would be coming out soon.
- Was there a contingency in place to avoid increased fly tipping around Bonfire Night? In response, Officers advised that more Wardens had been recruited and deployed staff were also assisting but it was difficult to know how bad it would be. The priority would still be to ensure people are warm and fed etc. An emergency meeting had taken place but it would be different from last year due to various issues, such as staff going in Police vehicles due to the rule of 6 etc. imposed due to COVID-19. As much rubbish as possible will be removed to avoid waste being turned into bonfires.

Resolved –

That the 2021/22 annual update be scheduled for January 2022 and every year thereafter to allow future briefings to include benchmarking data and trend analysis drawn from DEFRA's annual release which normally occurs in Oct/Nov of each year.

ACTION: Strategic Director, Place

13. REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21

The Scrutiny Officer presented the work plan of the Chair of the Committee.

Resolved –

That the Work Programme 2020-21 continues to be reviewed throughout the year.

ACTION: Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER