

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Gary Byrne (Vice-Chair), Daniel Chukwu, Sara Muldowney, Maureen Pearce and Paul Arnold (Substitute) (substitute for Elizabeth Rigby)

Apologies:

In attendance:

Michael Dineen, Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety
Anita Caccioli - Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure
Terry Fisher, Essex Police
Susan Reddick, Strategic Lead - Waste
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

10. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

11. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

12. Single Use Plastic Policy Implementation

The report was presented by the Strategic Lead for Waste. She explained that Cabinet had adopted the single use plastic policy last year around February 2022 and a framework is required to be implemented to make sure that the Council are acting to that policy. The report outlines the two proposed options for implementing the policy.

The report recommends option 2 is taken forward which is to implement a procurement process to ensure that the policy is considered at the point of

procurement for new procurements and a review is carried out for live contracts.

The Chair queried how the policy would work in terms of enforcing this against external providers.

The Strategic Lead for Waste gave the example that in a recent contact for new uniforms it was specified in the procurement contract that they were not to be delivered in single use plastic.

Councillor Byrne queried what has been done in the last year and asked if the policy had been forgotten about.

The Strategic Lead for Waste agreed the route to delivery has been delayed. She confirmed that it is part of the procurement process and they are trying to strengthen the process.

Councillor Muldowney stated that she had looked back at the decision made by Cabinet a year ago that said elimination of Single Use Plastic was to be a priority. She queried what was being proposed now.

The Strategic Lead for Waste confirmed that what is being proposed is a route for delivery to what Cabinet decided.

Councillor Muldowney queried the differences between options 1 and 2. The Strategic Lead for Waste responded that option 1 would require a project manager to deliver the strategy, calculations of time needed at different levels to deliver on that first option have been completed and given the Council's current situation it was not considered the best use of time. It was felt at a procurement level the same goals could be delivered in a lot less time intensive way.

Councillor Muldowney stated that the calculations and data should be in the report so that the Committee is able to properly scrutinise the options and know what each one means. Councillor Muldowney requested that the data is provided after the meeting.

The Strategic Lead for Waste agreed the data would be provided to Members the following day.

Councillor Arnold queried how the policy can be policed and if it will be more expensive to change contracts.

The Strategic Lead for Waste confirmed that through the contract change policy, financial implications will be considered on an individual basis. Sometimes it reduces the costs. The policy will be policed through a robust look at contracts and the procurement process and it will be considered at the point of purchase.

Councillor Chukwu queried how it will be implemented in schools and if they are on board.

The Strategic Lead for Waste responded that they will be writing supporting documents to help explain it to Schools. The Government is banning disposable plastic cutlery anyway this Summer which also helps. She stated that they have had some good engagement with schools and have sent an education person into Schools to talk about recycling and single use plastics. The Schools are on board and are interested about how they can support it further. In relation to events on council land, conditions will be attached regarding single use plastics.

Councillor Chukwu queried if this could be extended to the business world.

The Strategic Lead for Waste confirmed they are part of a Partnership called Oceans Together with DP World where they share good practice to reduce single use plastics and recycling. DP World found a way of recycling pallet wrapping and shared it within that forum.

Councillor Muldowney queried if the officers are confident they can deliver the policy through the procurement process.

The Strategic Lead for Waste responded that in the governance forms to procure it asks the individual contract manager to confirm that they have considered all the options and the process can therefore be audited.

The Assistant Director for Street Scene and Leisure added that as part of going out to tender there will be a requirement that they don't want the goods to be supplied in single use plastics and the supplier needs to demonstrate how they will meet those requirements.

Councillor Muldowney queried if there are any plans to educate council staff.

The Strategic Lead for Waste stated that there are plans to educate staff and they could offer this training to members too.

Councillor Muldowney queried if the decision needs to be made tonight as she would like to have seen the supporting data.

The Strategic Lead for Waste responded that if a decision is not made tonight it will delay the roll out.

Councillor Muldowney confirmed that she didn't want to cause delay and she is happy to agree the recommendations tonight provided the data and calculations completed are provided tomorrow.

The Chair agreed that the data should be provided to members tomorrow.

RESOLVED:

1.1 To agree the approach across the Council to implement to eliminate where possible SUP's from Thurrock Council

13. Waste Service Update Report

The Strategic Lead for Waste presented the Waste Update Report to the Committee. She confirmed that the report outlines the changes to the Waste Service coming into place in September 2023 and an overview of the improvement plan.

The new waste service collection plans due to commence in September 2023 are as follows: -

- Alternate Weekly Refuse Collection
- Weekly Recycling Collection
- Alternate Weekly Garden Waste Collection
- Weekly Food Waste Collection

The Strategic Lead for Waste updated the Committee that in February 2023 17 agency workers will become full time employees. She also confirmed that there remains a national HGV driver shortage which poses a challenge for recruitment of drivers.

The Chair raised concerns about the new caddie bin to be provided and raised concerns about the number of bins and whether they will be returned to the correct house. The Chair also queried if another vehicle will collect the food waste.

The Strategic Lead for Waste explained that there will be one 5 litre caddie which residents can store in their kitchen and there will also be an external 27 litre caddie to be stored outside. Both bins are small enough that they don't need wheels and can be carried. The bin to be stored outside is lockable so creatures cannot open it and it will fit on top of resident's wheelie bins. The Strategic Lead for Waste proposed holding a Member's engagement session where they can view the sample caddies. The Strategic Lead for Waste confirmed that the new trucks have a rear lifting system for recycling and a side lifting system for food. A company has been found that will transport the food waste to Croydon in vehicles that use bio-fuels. Members were invited to visit the food waste plant if they wanted to.

The Chair queried if a food waste recycling centre had been considered in Thurrock. The Chair also queried who is on the Waste Service Board and noted there could be health and safety issues with the workers wearing shorts.

The Strategic Lead for Waste responded that health and safety issues had been considered regarding the workers wearing shorts and they are prohibited from entering certain areas in shorts for health and safety reasons.

She also confirmed that she is on the board, Councillor Jefferies, the Assistant Director of Street Scene and Leisure, representatives from the fleet, the Health and Safety representative, Directors Julie Nelder and Julie Rogers, customer service team and information management team representatives.

The Assistant Director of Street Scene and Leisure added that the board is operationally focused and therefore there has been input from across the Council. It is task related and therefore some of these representatives won't be invited all of the time.

Councillor Byrne commented that the department have never ever put their hands up and said we got it wrong. He stated that a resident told him that recently when a driver got out of the truck there was a smell of cannabis. Councillor Byrne stated that he has raised this as a complaint and the response was the worked don't smoke.

The Assistant Director of Street Scene and Leisure Council stated that the Council has recently improved the drug and alcohol policy and they will be implementing this. If evidence is provided to them they will commence an investigation and deal with it in line with the Council's policy.

The Strategic Lead for Waste confirmed spot checks are being completed once a month and this will be recorded so it can be audited.

Councillor Muldowney commented that this is Government legislation which must be put in place. She praised the procurement of sustainable transport for this and that there is now a proper audit trail for complaints. Councillor Muldowney queried the assisted bin collection service.

The Strategic Lead for Waste responded that they are currently checking the assisted bin collection list. They are also looking at an option to put a sticker on these resident's bin to demonstrate to crews which bins require this additional service. The loaders collect 1300 -1500 bins a day and therefore this may help to improve the service especially when it is not the usual workers completing the route due to staff sickness.

Councillor Muldowney queried if recycling will be staying two weekly and if this can be guaranteed given the Council's financial situation.

The Assistant Director of Street Scene and Leisure referred to paragraph 2.1 of the report which outlines the new bin collection regime being brought forward in September 2023. The department are waiting on the outcome of a Government consultation which could affect how they collect the waste which may require greater source separation. The Assistant Director of Street Scene and Leisure stated she cannot answer at this time if there will be any change to the proposals described at paragraph 2.1 of the report.

Councillor Muldowney queried the current recycling rate.

The Strategic Lead for Waste stated that the recycling rate for last quarter was 32.2 % and nothing went to landfill.

Councillor Arnold questioned if there will be random drug and alcohol testing.

The Assistant Director of Street Scene and Leisure responded that the drug and alcohol policy is a recent policy and she doesn't know if it goes as far as random drug testing. If there is evidence and they are able to pointed in the right direction they will investigate.

The Assistant Director for Enforcement and Community Safety added that his team would be interested in taking forward the complaint Councillor Byrne raised earlier in the meeting. He is also new to the role and therefore does not have detailed knowledge of the new policy yet however testing falls under three categories completely random, intelligence led or incident led.

Councillor Muldowney queried if brown bins will be collected again in Spring.

The Strategic Lead for Waste responded that Monday will be the start of week 1. This is with the caveat that they do not have high levels of sickness or van breakdown. It is a work in progress. The Strategic Lead for Waste highlighted that she is nervous about service delivery but it is the number one priority to make sure there is another staff to run the service.

Councillor Muldowney agreed it was right not to over promise given the service history.

The Chair commented that the Strategic Lead for Waste and the new Assistant Director for Street Scene and Leisure had made a good start and wished them luck. She highlighted that the service needs to get better and communication to residents.

RESOLVED:

1.1 It is recommended that Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report.

14. Council Funded Police Officers Options Paper

The Committee discussed that item 7 is an exempt report and therefore the public and press and any officers not involved would need to leave the meeting so the item could be heard in private.

Councillor Byrne commented that he could see no reason why item 7 should be an exempt report. It goes against what Councillor Coxshall has said about the Council being transparent going forward and demonstrates that they are keeping secrets again like they have done for the last 2 – 3 years.

Councillor Muldowney also queried why the report should be exempt.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer confirmed that under the legislation the reason given by officers for keeping the report confidential from the public is that it contains *information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Community Safety and Resilience confirmed that when he came to the role the report was exempt and his understanding is that this is because it is about changing the roles of those outside our organisation.

The Members took a vote and three agreed it should remain exempt (The Chair, Councillor Arnold and Councillor Pearce) and three members disagreed (Councillor Byrne, Councillor Muldowney and Councillor Chukwu).

The Senior Democratic Services Officer confirmed that if a decision was made by Members that the report should not be exempt she would advise that legal advice is obtained and the item should be deferred.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Community Safety and Resilience agreed with the Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Neil Speight from the press asked to speak and the Chair allowed this. Neil Speight outlined that he had seen the report as it had been leaked to him and he could not see any reason why it is exempt. In his opinion, the report is about an important policy of the Conservatives and the only reason it is not being disclosed to the public is because it embarrasses them.

The Chair responded that she had read the report and had also queried why it was exempt but she could not ignore the fact that it was on pink paper.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised the Chair that if she was not sure she could defer the item so that legal advice could be obtained as to whether all or parts of the report could be disclosed to the public and that it would be within her discretion to call an extraordinary meeting so the item could be heard at a later date as there were no more Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings scheduled for this municipal year.

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Community Safety and Resilience added that the review was on the value for money of the contract and the right time to assess this was at the end of the first year of the contract, not the last and the longer this goes on the less importance the decision will have.

The Chair decided to defer the item so that legal advice could be obtained and requested that an extraordinary meeting is arranged to consider the report.

15. Work Programme

Item 7 was deferred to be heard at an extraordinary meeting on a date to be confirmed.

The meeting finished at 8.54 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**