

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 October 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Mike Fletcher, Garry Hague, John Kent, Angela Lawrence and Elizabeth Rigby

In attendance: Julie Rogers, Director of Environment, Highways and Counter Fraud
Dulal Ahmed, Housing Enforcement Manager
Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager
Gavin Dennett, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager
Andy Kelly, Strategic Lead Waste
Daren Spring, Assistant Director – Street Scene & Leisure
Stephen Taylor, Strategic Lead of Economic Development
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's Youtube channel.

64. Minutes

The minutes of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 2 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

65. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

66. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

67. Cross Party Waste Working Group and Municipal Waste Strategy for Thurrock 2021-2031

The following Members of the Waste Management Working Group were in attendance for this item – Councillors Byrne, Muldowney, Ralph, and Smith.

Councillor Fletcher, Chair of the Waste Management Working Group, presented the report and stated the Cross Party Waste Working Group had been formed in August 2019 with the key objective of reviewing the requirements of the Government's waste strategy paper and establish how Thurrock would be able to meet those requirements. The Group considered the statutory implications for the Council which would impact on the way Thurrock collected and disposed of their waste and to improve the level of the

recycle rate of household waste that was re-used, recycled and composted. Thurrock's recycling rate was 34.76% compared to the national average of 43.2%.

Members were provided with the areas investigated and the activities the working group had undertaken which included:

- Understanding the current process with household waste collection which included a visit to Bywaters, Thurrock's current dry recycling disposal point.
- A review of the current waste collections service levels and vehicles which included a visit to the Depot.
- An overview of communications and education had taken place in the past two years.
- Members attended a training event with WRAP. An insight into messaging and communication regarding recycling and reuse.
- An overview of the planned improvements for the Household Waste and Recycling Centre redevelopment.
- Supported the work currently being undertaken on the Flats Recycling Project.
- Benchmarking the collection regimes maintained by other councils.
- Reviewed the National Waste Strategy to understand the implications for waste services in Thurrock.
- A consultation of all residents was undertaken with a response rate of 1%, 684 completed surveys returned.
- Education work within schools would continue.

Councillor Fletcher stated that following the work of the Waste Management Working Group the recommended approach would be to:

1. Thurrock would have a refreshed Waste Strategy that was compliant and aligned with National Policy. The approach outlined in the strategy would include changes to domestic collections, implemented on a phased approach which would have implications for disposal contracts and vehicles. The key aspects would be: replace residual waste collections with a new weekly food waste collection to all households and an alternate weekly residual collection; retain the weekly collections of dry recycling; retain the fortnightly collections of garden waste; redevelop the Household Waste and Recycling Centre; review of Thurrock's waste collection fleet to ensure a reduction in carbon footprint and fuel usage; ensure future waste disposal contract negotiations followed new principles such as (i) reduction in distance travelled to disposal sites (ii) identify opportunities for additional recycling and reuse and (iii) ensure a reduction in waste sent to landfill; reduce the occurrence of single use plastics; investigate the feasibility of creating a transfer station within Thurrock to support alternative disposal options; investigate the feasibility of building an energy recovery facilities in the borough.

2. To ensure that throughout the implementation of the Waste Strategy, the service would consistently look to Educate and Empower residents to recycle and reuse with enforcement being seen as the final option.
3. The Council would consider any potential impact on jobs and services before the Waste Strategy was put in place.
4. That a Waste Communications Strategy would be developed as part of the Waste Strategy.
5. That the Waste Management Working Group continued to work with the waste service in an advisory capacity with update meetings being held 4-6 times a year.
6. That all options presented to the Waste Management Working Group did not include financial costs or savings.
7. The Waste Management Working Group acknowledged that the proposed changes would have a positive impact on the recycling rate but would also impact residents and therefore a robust communications campaign would need to be implemented.

Members discussed the consultation response rate and questioned what work had been undertaken to promote the consultation. Members were informed the consultation had taken place between January and March 2020, every Thurrock household had received a postcard with details on how to register, changes were made to the on-line consultation portal to make the registering process easier to encourage more residents to respond. A reminder mail shot that included bin stickers and best practice guides were distributed to every household. Paper copies were available in libraries and hubs, press releases and social media were used and the deadline had been extended to allow time for more residents to participate. Councillor Hague and other Members agreed that although they were disappointed with the level of response, acknowledged the challenges of when the consultation was undertaken.

Councillor Lawrence questioned whether residents had the opportunity to purchase a second brown bin. Officers informed Members that this had not formed part of the working group discussions and would be for Officer Groups to discuss and consider other garden waste options available and would report back to the committee.

Councillor J Kent commented that the residual waste collections should remain as a weekly collection, otherwise this would lead to fly-tipping.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether hospital clinical waste had been considered and was informed that there was not a separate clinical waste collection in Thurrock.

Councillor Rigby questioned why the recycling rates in Thurrock had reduced and was informed that this was potentially down to lack of awareness and contaminated collections and these areas would be included in the education part of the strategy.

Councillor J Kent stated that the Council should be ambitious in their review of Thurrock's waste collection fleet and to take the opportunities of all

possibilities. Councillor Lawrence agreed and questioned whether leasing would be the way forward instead of purchasing new vehicles.

Councillor J Kent stated his uncertainty and that serious consideration would need to be given when investigating the feasibility of building an energy recovery facilities in the borough.

Members discussed their concern on any impact to job losses and were reassured that the service was currently backfilling a number of vacant posts with agency staff and that following the finalised route optimisation this would more than cover any potential resource implications. Members were also reassured that the Council would protect any potential job reductions and would not recruit into permanent positions until such time as this transition period had been completed.

Councillor J Kent asked for the costs of the two waste survey exercises and questioned the value for money of these exercises. It was agreed that Officers would provide this information following the meeting. This information is as follows: Mail-out 1: Postcard delivered to 68,000 properties in Thurrock, two sided colour postcard printed on recycled paper - Total Cost for printing and distribution - £12,280. Mail-out 2: Educational/Information and Survey Reminder Pack including letter, full-colour recycling guide printed on recycled paper and a weather proof recycling bin sticker to go on blue bins distributed in a pack to 68,000 properties. Total cost for printing and distribution – £26,746. The combined total cost was £39,026.

Members had a lengthy discussion on how the community should be made aware of the potential changes and agreed these should not be implemented until residents had been informed. That a clear mandate should be provided with clear details of the proposals and therefore all Members agreed that a further recommendation should be added to the report:

Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that they consult fully with the community before they enact with the refuse collections in Thurrock.

Councillor Redsell thanked Members for the good debate and discussion and thanked members from the Waste Management Working Group for all their hard work and contribution.

Councillor Redsell asked whether Members now agreed with the five recommendations. Members agreed to all recommendations apart from Councillor J Kent who voted against recommendation 1.2.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the activities and research undertaken by the Cross Party Working Group.**

2. **The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the refreshed Waste Strategy and Communications Plan, recommending it to Cabinet.**
3. **The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee proposed that the Cross Party Working Group continue to have a role in reviewing the progress of the implementation of the Waste Strategy.**
4. **The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered as part of the new Waste Strategy how the council can lead by example and act to reduce, and where possible, eliminate single use plastics.**
5. **That Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that they consult fully with the community before they enact with the refuse collections in Thurrock.**

68. Public Protection work involving Animals

Gavin Dennett, Strategic Lead Public Protection, presented the report which provided members with an update on the services and functions the Public Protection Team undertook that involved the regulation and permitting of animal movements in relation to the control of diseases of livestock, detention and quarantining of pets in relation to rabies control and the licensing of some animal related services.

Councillor Redsell stated the Council needed to be stricter and to follow up on those residents living under a tenancy agreement where there were lots of pets in one property or dangerous dogs. Gavin Dennett stated these instances should be referred to Housing but if it was a risk or health concern for the animal the RSPCA would need to be involved.

Councillor Lawrence questioned what could residents do when they saw horses tied up on the roadside. Gavin Dennett stated that horse welfare would fall under the Animal Welfare Act and the RSPCA would enforce where horses were in distress. The welfare of horses that may stray onto roads and the welfare and safety of road users fell with the Police who had some powers to ensure that roads were kept clear. The Council would also ensure that any leases issued for grazing covered the appropriate conditions and was dealt with properly.

Councillor Lawrence asked for clarification on housing associations where there had been reports of the number of dogs in flats and questioned whether the Council had any powers to deal with that. Gavin Dennett stated housing associations would have their own terms, tenancy agreements and stipulations with the Council would not having as much control as they did over their own tenancies. Councillor Lawrence questioned what the process would be to report an incident of a resident living in Thurrock but under another housing association who kept dangerous dogs. Gavin Dennett stated

that if the resident had concerns about dog noise the Council did have some powers but if the resident felt in danger of a dog attack they should report this to the Police and the Council could assist the Police in communicating with such housing associations.

Councillor Rigby questioned whether there had been an improvement in the reduction of puppy farms following the compulsory registering of breeders with the Council. Gavin Dennett stated there had been an improvement with those that registered but the issue was with the illegal puppy farms who were unlikely to register. That the Council issued dog breeding licences which were enforced vigorously and also worked alongside other local authorities. Councillor Rigby further questioned whether the imported dogs were being picked up at the ports or once they were in the communities. Gavin Dennett stated that these were normally identified through a consumer complaint received through the Trading Standards Team. Also any potential stowaway animals found in the port area would be dealt with differently as they were potentially importing disease so would have to be quarantined.

Councillor J Kent noted his disappointment in the contents of the report which should have focused more on the welfare of animals as detailed in the terms of reference of the Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor J Kent recommended that the Council's Animal Welfare Policy should be readdressed and possibly written to take those concerns into account and for clarification on the selling of animals from council premises and from car parks within the borough.

Members discussed this at some length and agreed that the Animal Welfare Policy should be readdressed and for this to be undertaken in the most efficient way would be to have a working group. Therefore Members agreed to add a further recommendation for a working group to be established to review the Council's Animal Welfare Policy.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.**
- 2. The Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that a working group be established to review the Council's Animal Welfare Policy.**

69. CCTV Public Identification Policy Update

Dulal Ahmed, Housing Enforcement Manager, presented the report that outlined the Council's CCTV purpose, the six month interim results implementing the policy during COVID-19 and assisting with the successful prosecution of offenders. That CCTV was an invaluable tool for Essex Police and the Community Safety Partnership to combat crime, deter anti-social behaviour and environment crime such as fly tipping, whilst enhancing community safety. Members were referred to the data sharing part of the

report and the evidence packs that were produced for the Police and Council enforcement officers.

Councillor Redsell referred to the mobile cameras and questioned whether these were connected to vehicles. Dulal Ahmed stated there were 10 mobile camera devices that were fitted around the borough on street furniture and that the Council did not have any cameras on moving vehicles.

Councillor Redsell referred to the problem of motor bikes on Blackshots Field and questioned why this camera did not pick anything up. Dulal Ahmed stated the Council had worked closely with Essex Police on a number of operations on motor bike offenders and had been identified with their items being seized.

Councillor Lawrence questioned what the process was for Members to ask for a mobile camera to be moved into a certain area. Dulal Ahmed stated that intelligence of such activities would be presented to the Council's Local Action Group and would be discussed with partners including the Police to identify what offences were being committed, the operation need and whether it would be feasible to install a camera at that location. Members could report such activities to the Police as a priority area or an email could be sent to the community safety partnership team.

Councillor Lawrence questioned whether mobile cameras had been in operation to capture the use of gas canisters. Dulal Ahmed stated that cameras had been deployed to car park areas to deter this from happening and contact was being made to those offenders using the vehicle registration number to identify them. Members were reminded that these incidents, and where the registration number was known, could be reported to the Police. Julie Rogers stated a lot of joint work had been undertaken with the Police and the Council's enforcement team and had some very positive outcomes and that Members could report any such incidents through member enquiries.

Councillor J Kent questioned whether the Council were considering in any way the use of facial recognition software. Dulal Ahmed stated that his team were in the process of drafting a CCTV Strategy and there were no plans, at this stage, to look at using facial detection as a surveillance tool to identify persons of interest.

At 9.20pm, Councillor Redsell suspended standing orders.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the interim results of the Public Identification CCTV policy.**
- 2. The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Community Safety Partnership oversee the monitoring of this policy.**

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70. A collaborative approach to Arts, Culture and Heritage in Thurrock

Stephen Taylor, Strategic Lead Economic Development, presented the report that set out the role of the Council to facilitate a collaborative approach to develop shared ambitions around community driven arts activity and the steps being taken by partners to secure resources and support delivery. The Council recognised the value of arts, heritage and culture and heritage in itself and as a way of improving health and wellbeing, learning and skills, civic pride and a community driven growth agenda.

Councillor Redsell stated the residents were missing culture and heritage events but it was good to hear that work was still continuing in the background.

Councillor J Kent queried whether this item fell under the terms of reference of this committee. Stephen Taylor stated the fees and charges report for theatre and museum had traditionally been presented to this committee for approval and this had been the basis for bringing this report this evening.

Councillor Hague asked for some examples of practical and physical outputs of this work programme to ensure that the Council build on the strengths and capabilities that Thurrock had locally. Stephen Taylor stated that the outcome in terms of the community driven arts and heritage activity would be determined through development of the shared vision and priorities but an agreed approach would give a good basis for external funding bids, help identify who was interested in what and to see where there may be opportunities to join up and collaborate to deliver a bigger or better programme. In terms of looking at the economy, jobs, skills and business it would be an opportunity to look at what could be attracted into the borough or grown from existing business base. Councillor Hague thanked for the answer and although creative was important it should also be linked into the economic development in the area and building in the sense of place.

Councillor Redsell stated the Council needed to be more imaginative in their ideas and plans.

Councillor J Kent stated that more consideration should be given to matching developments with the need of the local art community and referred to the close working of the High House Production Park with Acme Studies. Councillor J Kent stated the approach of the report was too self-selected and there was a concern that a lot of artists were missing out. That it was for the community to be given the tools they need to run events such as an open-air cinema and not for the Council to tell the communities what they think they want. Councillor J Kent referred to the Creative People and Places lottery bid and stated the members did not know what was in that report, what that would deliver and what success would look like and stated the report was very unclear as to what the message was that they were trying to get across.

Stephen Taylor stated Tilbury on Thames Trust had been selected by a voting process managed by the CVS and acknowledged that it would have been helpful to have had this information in the report and agreed that transparency was important and would work with partners to ensure that any future bid to Creative People and Places was clearly summarised and explained.

Councillor Redsell stated it was important to get the community together.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report and the collaborative approach taken to developing the shared ambitions around community driven arts activity.**
- 2. The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the development of funding applications to help secure delivery.**
- 3. The Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the collaborative approach to broadening out the work to consider the impact the cultural sector can have on the economy, jobs, skills and the growth agenda.**

71. Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme.

The meeting finished at 9.48 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**