

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 13 September 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C D Zosseder

Councillors: T A Bond
P M Brivio
S C Manion
M Rose
R S Walkden
P Walker
H M Williams

Also Present: Councillor T J Bartlett
Mr G Morison (Veolia)

Officers: Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)
Head of Commercial Services
Waste Services Manager
Strategic Development Lead (Leisure)
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager

47 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D A Hawkes.

48 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager advised that no notice had been received for the appointment of substitute members.

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T A Bond declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Minute No. 59 (Your Leisure Covid Support Funding) on the grounds of his wife's employment and advised that he would withdraw from the meeting for the consideration of that item of business.

50 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021 and 12 July 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET RELATING TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The decisions of the Cabinet relating to recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 6 October 2021 were noted.

Councillor C D Zosseder raised concerns over the lack of Member involvement in the East Kent Food Poverty Group and proposed that the Cabinet be requested to

address the perceived democratic deficit by appointing Member representatives to the group.

It was moved by Councillor C D Zosseder, duly seconded by Councillor P M Brivio, and

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Cabinet that in respect of decision CAB29 (Referral from Council – Food Poverty Review) that two councillors be appointed to the East Kent Food Poverty Working Group.

52 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL, CABINET, OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager advised that there were no issues referred to the Committee by Council, Cabinet or another Committee.

53 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager presented the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions to the Committee for its consideration.

There being no dissent indicated, it was agreed that the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions be noted.

54 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

Members identified the following items for inclusion in the work programme:

- Housing Repairs
- The 149th Open Golf – breakdown of costs

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted and the proposed priority schedule be agreed, subject to the inclusion of additional items relating to housing repairs and the breakdown of costs of the 149th Open Golf.

55 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager advised that a member of the public had requested to speak in respect of the Waste Service Update. The Chairman, with the consent of the committee, agreed to vary the public speaking arrangements and let the member of the public speak for three minutes in respect of the item of business.

56 SOUTHERN WATER UPDATE

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T J Bartlett, and the Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial) provided an update to Members on the progress of discussions with Southern Water in respect of the problems with flooding in Deal.

The Committee was advised that the Member of Parliament for Dover had been involved in the matter. A Deal Flood Water Action Task Group had been formed which would be chaired by the MP for Dover and involved local elected members, OFWAT, Kent County Council, Dover District Council and Southern Water. The Group would operate for six months.

Southern Water had acknowledged long standing issues that needed to be addressed and the first meeting had been held. A qualified engineer would be part of the Group as the issues were of an engineering nature not a customer issue.

The Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial) would continue to update the Council on its progress and pointed that Councillor T A Bond could do the same for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members welcomed the formation of the Group and the involvement of Southern Waters engineering teams as their concerns related to the capacity of the local network and how flood water was dealt with.

It was agreed that the Committee would receive a further update following the conclusion of the Group's work.

57 WASTE SERVICE UPDATE

The Committee received an update from the Head of Commercial Services and a representative of Veolia, Gary Morison (Senior Contract Manager), on the performance of the waste service.

The Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial) advised that this had been a difficult time for the waste services team who were trying to provide the best service that they could in the circumstances.

The service was now showing signs of improvement and had achieved a degree of stability. As part of this, the Council would look to reintroduce the green waste service once it was confident that this would not impact on the performance of the rest of the waste service.

Mr Morison apologized on behalf of Veolia and advised that a combination issues with the introduction of the new Echo system, the impact of the 'pingdemic' which had seen 13 members of staff off at one point and the shortage of HGV drivers had all contributed to the issues with the performance of the waste service.

However, since the suspension of the green waste service on 22 July 2021 in Folkestone and Hythe and 4 August 2021 in Dover the service had improved and Veolia had recruited 15 new HGV drivers, 13 of which had been retained. Veolia was also fast tracking non-HGV drivers to qualify to drive HGV vehicles and had 22 members of staff on the scheme.

The review of routes had been postponed while the service was stabilising and this would not be considered again until early 2022. Members were advised that while the service still had further improvements to make the previous weekend had been the first where it had not been required to bring in additional crews from outside the district to complete rounds. Veolia had deployed an additional vehicle for the last 2 weeks to clear the backlog of collections.

Veolia was confident that performance had been improved sufficiently to reinstate the green waste service in one district at this point with the other district's green waste service reinstated a couple of weeks after that date.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T J Bartlett, advised that it had been a difficult period for the service following 10 years of excellent service from Veolia. He emphasised the importance of Veolia solving the problems and restoring the high standard of service that residents had come to expect.

Members raised the following concerns with the current performance of the waste service:

- That the previous promise of service improvement in three weeks had not been achieved.
- To ask that drivers with local knowledge be involved in setting any new vehicle routes.
- That there were still problems in respect of emptying communal waste bins.
- That street cleaning was not happening and the mess created during the collection and non-collection of bins was going uncleared.
- That poor management of the waste service by Veolia had led to the problems being experienced under the new contract and that the national shortage of HGV drivers and the impact of the 'pingdemic' were not the only factors for the poor service. In addition, Veolia would have been aware of the shortage of HGV drivers when the new contract was introduced.
- That the new routes introduced under the new contract were not suitable for the resources allocated.
- That communication on the problems affecting the service and the suspension of the green waste service had not been properly communicated to residents.
- That green waste subscribers were Dover District Council customers and not Veolia customers and therefore the Council was responsible for communicating changes in service to them.
- That uncollected waste was causing vermin problems in the district.
- That there were difficulties in reporting missed bins on the website.
- That waste vehicles were not being effectively used and that vehicles had been seen parked in the centre of Deal while bins remained uncollected.
- The impact the poor performance of the service had on vulnerable residents.
- The need for Veolia to have contractual penalties applied for poor performance.
- The importance of the Council being robust in its dealings with Veolia and making Veolia deliver the service it was contracted to deliver.
- The lack of resilience in the service.
- The need for effective communication with local residents as further changes were made to the waste service and in advance of the green waste service being restored.

Members were advised that subscribers to the green waste service would be advised prior to its restoration.

It was requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further update before any changes were made to the waste service so that the resilience of any changes could be scrutinized.

The Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) presented the Performance Report for Quarter 1, 2021-22.

Members were advised that the new style Strategic Dashboard was still in development and would be consulted on as soon as a final draft was ready.

Although the new style Strategic Dashboard was not ready there had been several amendments introduced for the Quarter 1 2021-22 Performance Report. These related to the consolidation of the Housing Indicators in a single place and additional Civica indicators relating to the use of the portal and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Furthermore, there was a brief introduction to Port Health and future reports would have further information included.

The impacts of the Covid Pandemic were still seen in the Performance Report, and there had been an adverse impact on call waiting times as a result of the challenges with the performance of the waste service. However, overall a huge amount of work and a number of projects continued to be delivered in the circumstances.

Members considered the following points:

- The impact of the performance of waste services on the council's call answer time. Councillor T A Bond expressed concern that this had been a problem before the problems with the waste service.
- The performance of business rate collection and the impact of government support on the collection rate.
- That problems arising from the switch over of residents to Universal Credit was still impacting on the Council Tax collection figures. Members were advised that the Council was working with Kent County Council to identify families under pressure.
- To express concerns that the targets in respect of some indicators could be more challenging.
- To question how vacancy levels in the Council were reported. Members were advised that the Council did not automatically backfill vacancies and each post was examined as it became vacant to see whether it needed to be filled. It was suggested that a more appropriate indicator would be the number of posts the Council was currently advertising for.

In the absence of dissent, it was agreed to note the Performance Report.

59 YOUR LEISURE COVID SUPPORT FUNDING

The Strategic Development Lead (Leisure) presented the report on Your Leisure Covid Support Funding.

Members were informed that due to the Covid Pandemic, Tides Leisure Centre had been required to close on a number of occasions or subject to additional restrictions when open that had impacted on the financial risk facing Your Leisure. While the business was recovering it was not in a position to absorb its trading losses and the support funding would assist with this.

The future of the Tides Leisure Centre would be considered as the district emerged from the pandemic and it was noted that the whole project would need to be reviewed in light of the impact of the pandemic.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to the Cabinet that decision CAB34 be endorsed as follows:

- (a) That the business recovery measures undertaken by Your Leisure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic be noted and welcomed.
- (b) That the allocation of £80,000 as COVID-19 support funding for the Tides Leisure & Indoor Tennis Centre be approved.

(Councillor T A Bond declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Minute No. 59 (Your Leisure Covid Support Funding) on the grounds of his wife's employment and withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of this item of business.)

The meeting ended at 8.26 pm.