

MINUTES

STRATEGIC PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

13 OCTOBER 2015

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Adshead
Anderson (Chairman)
Ashbourn
E Collins
Hearn
Hicks
Howard
Ransley
Riddick
Wyatt-Lowe (Vice-Chairman)

Officers: David Austin Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Delivery)
Craig Thorpe Group Manager - Environmental Services

Also Attendance:

Duncan Jones
Councillor Janice Marshall
Councillor Graham Sutton

The meeting began at 7.32 pm

27 MINUTES

The minutes of the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 08 September 2015 were confirmed by the members present and signed by the Chairman.

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillor Bateman, Matthews and C Wyatt-Lowe
Councillor Birnie substituted for Councillor Matthews and Councillor R Sutton substituted for C Wyatt-Lowe.

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

30 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

31 **CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO CALL-IN**

None.

32 **NEW WASTE SERVICE UPDATE**

C Thorpe gave a presentation regarding an update on the New Waste Service. He raised the following points:

- Before July 2013, there was an alternate collection of the bins and recycling was separated into different recycling boxes.
- After July 2013, the service then moved to a fortnightly collection with co-mingled dry recycling, with a weekly collection for food waste.
- The advantages of this new collection: reduction in complaints around summer smells, increased income through the Alternative Financial Model, an increased recycling rate, use of a single type of fleet and there is potential to collect extra material.
- The new service was launched with a family introducing the new 'family of bins'.
- Throughout the summer, a lot of publicity was generated regarding the new service and what was expected of residents in order to make it successful including a #trashyselfie competition with summer roadshows to introduce residents to the new bins.
- In October 2014, the service delivered 50,000 blue lidded bins, 55,000 kitchen caddies and educational packs were provided to residents.
- To coincide with the new service launch, the council organised a vehicle billboard competition which involved local schools in the borough. The competition winners had their designs put onto the fleet vehicles and won an iPad mini and £100 for the school.
- In the first week starting 24/11/14, 71 tonnes of food waste, 316 tonnes of mixed recycling and over 64,000 old recycling bins were collected.
- 3567 tonnes have been diverted from the green bins with the new service and residual waste has decreased.
- Difficulties in the short term included issues regarding storage of the third bin and recycling advisors were employed to solve storage issues. Also more kitchen caddies needed to be purchased which has now been solved. The seasonal suspension of the green bin collection was contentious however this has now been amended and extended for this year. Furthermore, the policy change to only one green bin per property has affected residents with larger gardens and this is currently under review.
- Difficulties in the long term include more bin and kitchen caddy deliveries as they did not account for those that may have been stolen. Also, trying to change habits has resulted in less tonnage collected than predicted.

Furthermore, there has been a dramatic fall in the market price of recycling material.

Questions

Councillor R Sutton asked C Thorpe to clarify if the green bins will stop being collected at Christmas.

C Thorpe advised that the last green bin collection for winter will be 14th December and this has been extended from last year. Calendars will be delivered to all residents in November to advise them of collection dates.

Councillor Hicks said that the kitchen waste caddies have been in households for 10 years and he had to apply for a new kitchen caddy because the green compost liners did not fit the old ones.

C Thorpe said there have been a handful of residents with this issue but the service did not take into account the 10 litre caddies that were introduced 10 years ago.

Councillor R Sutton asked that with the new 5p charge on carrier bags, can the new carrier bags that shops are providing be used in the kitchen caddies. C Thorpe said yes they could.

Councillor Birnie said that with the fall in market prices for aluminium and plastic, what about the price of cardboard? C Thorpe advised that cardboard prices had increased slightly, but steel prices had also dropped.

Councillor Anderson asked if it was possible to have the extent of green waste collected in next month's performance report and keep the tonnage of green waste collected under review. Councillor Anderson said he had received a lot of complaints from residents about the green bin that had large gardens of their own that would allow for composting on site. He then asked if the borough is still looking at around 60% recycling rate.

C Thorpe replied that the borough had achieved just over 60% in quarter 1, and 55% in quarter 2.

Councillor Anderson said that a ball park figure of between 50-60% was a great achievement and a good justification for the new waste service.

33 HERTS WASTE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Duncan Jones, the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP) Manager gave an update presentation and covered the following points:

- The HWP was started in the early 1990's as a communication partnership.
- County Council is the disposal authority, with ten boroughs and districts.
- In 2014/15, £81.5 million was spent on providing waste services. £43 million went on disposal itself with the remaining used for financing the collection of rubbish, recycling and recycling centres across the county.

- The Joint Municipal Waste Strategy was signed in 2007 which set original targets of a 50% recycling rate by March 2013 and reduce residual waste to 185kg per head. In 2012, the Waste Partnership Agreement was signed which is a legally binding document and underlines the ways in which to work together on reducing waste in the area.
- Performance last year fell just below the 50% target, recycling reached 49.4%.
- Alternative Financial Model (AFM) designed to encourage authorities and providing additional rewards over and above the statutory requirements and last year was worth about £3 million. This is not split equally between boroughs, it is distributed based on performance and Dacorum received proportionately more than other boroughs with lower performing services.
- Operational context. The vast majority of household waste disposed of has to go out of county. Only disposal point in county is Westmill in Ware, in terms of the £81.5 million spent last year, a high percentage of that is spent on transport. Cost of this long term is something that needs to be looked at.
- Regarding organic waste – garden and food. Two facilities within county, one at South Mimms and one in Rushden, North Herts. Good example of a partnership.
- Prior to the Dacorum service change, waste went to Cambridgeshire and that contract runs until 2018.
- Recycling is sent across the world and a focus should be put on new recycling plants in the UK. Should then be able to repatriate the material and the economic development that comes with it.
- Waste Aware is part of the HWP and is the public face including recycling officers from the boroughs and county. Team of 11 people come up with an annual campaign. They promote campaigns on social media, set up roadshows and work with schools.
- In the last 12 months, there has been a continued focus on food waste. Food waste now accounts for 30% of residual waste.
- Electrical waste as a percentage of the waste stream is increasing and provides a lot of technical issues to extract metals. The electrical waste stream represents a source of material to get at.
- Last year, a huge focus on promoting real nappies to help save families money long term providing a subsidy for parents at £50.
- Peer review was undertaken on HWP and the findings are as follows.
 - Strengths:
 - Brings all county authorities together therefore creating opportunities for a combined voice and sharing expertise.
 - Enhanced recycling and waste reduction performance
 - Dedicated partnership staff
 - Allows authorities to personalise waste collection services.
- Weaknesses of the HWP:
 - Lacks strategic vision and deviates from agreed goals.
 - Individual authorities' preferences override collective ambition
 - Apprehension about real cross-boundaries working
 - Inadequate delegated decision-making authority
 - Assumptions that all councils will agree with HWP proposals.
- Key issues going forward:

- Development of local reprocessing capacity – two years from now, Dacorum's food waste will go to South Mimms. Therefore transport costs decrease.
- Lots of authorities collect waste on the same frequency so refuse is as important as food waste.
- Recycle prices – average income last year for one tonne was £58, this year it has dropped to £35
- Savings versus performance.
- Lack of targets for local authorities. Central government have national targets but none at local level.
- Time for a different delivery model

Questions

Councillor Ashbourn asked that with the advances in technology and the possibility of generating power from recycling plants and given the points about transport and infrastructure costs, is it feasible to have a task force looking towards the future. In addition, with regards to the issue of scalability and development of the local area, will there be more local processing in order to maintain services for the residents.

D Jones said there was a proposal to build a new waste site at Barnfield which was designed to take the entire county's household waste. However, this was turned down by the Secretary of State and an appeal was submitted. After May 2015, the new Secretary of State officially turned it down. The county are currently working on Plan B which, at the moment, is commercially confidential but is designed to take the waste that isn't recycled. In terms of scalability, it is pitched such that if you took a local decision to go after 80% recycling, you could do so. With regards to planning, there is a separate waste planning team that look at the planning issues around waste collections to ensure the correct facilities are in place.

Councillor Ashbourn said he was also conscious of the intentional situation and the longer term sustainability and believes it is important to look ahead to the future.

Councillor Ransley stated that Chesham pay £60 a year for green waste as a result of that, out of 50 houses, just 12 pay for green waste. What happens to the rest of it? Are they losing money?

D Jones said that with a charge comes the question, how much? WRAP have done some research and found that if you charge £20 a year, 85% of residents will still take part. Any more than £20, the participation rates will drop. The other issues are that if you have had a free service, and then opt to charge residents you get a big drop off but if you have never had a service and then implement a charge, you get a better take up. It depends on local circumstances.

Councillor Anderson commented that it would be a good idea to encourage residents to compost on site, especially those with larger gardens.

Councillor Birnie asked if the £81.5 million spent on waste services was a net figure. D Jones said yes, it was. Councillor Birnie then asked what happened to the amount that comes back, does it go to the individual councils presumably on the amount of tonnage they collect and is it charged back to the rate payers?

D Jones said yes it was a net figure and the county will raise £43 million.

Councillor Hicks asked D Jones if his department was responsible for the refuse dumps. D Jones said yes.

Councillor Hicks said there is a lot of stuff you can recycle at the tip and not at home. He asked if there was a correlation between that recycling material and the distance to a dump. The refuse dump site in Tring was shut down so residents must drive to the Berkhamsted site so has that seen a drop in recycling rates?

D Jones said it was hard to achieve such localised figures which would be possible to obtain with microchipped wheelie bins. In terms of the waste tips, the debate and reaction to the change in opening times requires some realism. The requirement is to provide two sites which do not have to be in a central location. The county used to provide 17, and they needed to save £750,000 in that one service. One proposal was to shut 2 tips and have 15 open 7 days a week. At five days a week, you can use single shift, over 5 days a week there must be double shift which is more expensive. The recycling rates from household waste sites have dipped slightly and the reaction to the changes are now positive.

Councillor Hicks stated that he did not understand why there can be no correlation made?

D Jones said they can work out recycling rates for each individual site but they don't have the data to look at correlations, they can do local surveys but nothing that could indicate an accurate recycling rate.

Councillor Anderson said that when Hunton Bridge site was closed not long after Waterdale was built, the residents of Kings Langley were not happy at the closure of Hunton Bridge and received lots of letters from angry residents. Councillor Anderson stated that he had to dispose of an item and so went to the Waterdale site and was very impressed with the fantastic new facilities. People that had complained about the closure of Hunton Bridge began travelling to the Waterdale site for a better service.

Councillor Anderson asked that the facility that might be on the drawing board that is currently commercially sensitive; will that be purely residual waste or does that include dry recyclables as well?

D Jones replied that it was just residual waste.

Councillor Anderson said that in terms of the site at South Mimms, was that just dry recyclables?

D Jones said the existing facility at South Mimms handles organic waste. There are plans to build a neighbouring plant and when that comes online, it will take the food waste that currently goes to Chertsey making the process far more efficient.

Councillor Ashbourn said that we live in time where the focus is on cost cutting, and with lots more people that generate waste, it is important to have a waste service so hope that at a higher level, the service isn't afraid of fighting their corner in order to provide a suitable waste service. Also, it is important that we maintain the level of the

waste service to the very best of our abilities from a resident's point of view. It seems there is a tipping point and if the service dips below a certain level, then that has a knock on effect to many different things. Waste services are a critical service.

Councillor Anderson asked how disparate the other waste services in the county are.

D Jones said quite a lot. With the change rolled out in Broxbourne, organic waste is largely done the same way but Dacorum is now leading the evolution of that in terms of providing a weekly food waste service which is really crucial. Three authorities keep the paper recycling separate, and there will be further alignment within the authorities in the future.

Councillor Anderson asked if the general direction of travel was correct.

D Jones said it was and said there was a key role for members as the HWP can be more or less involved depending on what the members dictate.

Councillor Birnie asked if D Jones was suggesting that the HWP was to become an independent waste service.

Councillor Anderson stated that there was a dilemma between having a system that was optimised for the best performance for everybody which would effectively be one refuse service for the whole county and retaining some sort of local democratic control which some people will feel is very important to control the service. The issue is trying to get the best of both worlds which at the end of the day, what is the sense in having ten different authorities with ten different refuse collections. Democratic control is important but what's the point when arguing over something as simple as bins?

D Jones said in a previous role, he would go out to residents that had missed collections so was well aware of those problems. Residents want the best service they can get at the cheapest cost. If it fails, they want to be able to pick up the phone or write an email to their local councillor so that they can get something done. If you satisfy those three things, they do not care about the delivery model that is behind it.

Councillor Hicks said that despite what he mentioned previously in the discussion, he was totally for recycling. If a high level review is underway, is there any way of not having individual recycling bins that stick out outside terrace houses. In Tring, there are rows and rows of bins outside houses that are only 15ft apart and there must be a way of saving money and centralising those recycling bins.

D Jones said at the moment, that was a local issue and down to the planning departments. When a planning application comes in, they go through with a fine tooth comb to try and prevent that issue, something that Dacorum is very good at. Now, it's quite a technical process with old housing stock which will be an issue for a long time to come.

Councillor Hicks said a lot of the houses had been there since 1870 or 1900 and they will still be there in a 100 years to come.

Councillor Anderson said that was one of the reasons why the borough has gone down the route of co-mingling the dry recycling with just one blue lidded bin. Some countries have a seven waste stream.

34 **COMMITTEE MEMBERS IDEAS EXERCISE**

Councillor Anderson proposed that if members become aware of anything they want to scrutinise, then to email the Chairman or Vice Chairman who will maintain the work programme. All members agreed.

35 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The work program for 2015/16 was agreed.

The Meeting ended at 8.34 pm