

Medway Council
Meeting of Regeneration, Culture and Environment
Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 28 March 2017

6.35pm to 8.37pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

- Present:** Councillors: Clarke (Chairman), Bhutia (Vice-Chairman), Etheridge, Gilry, Griffin, Hicks, Mrs Josie Iles, Osborne, Stamp and Tejan
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Purdy (Substitute for Carr)
Cooper (Substitute for Craven)
- In Attendance:** Richard Hicks, Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation
Councillor John Avey
James Bilsland, Assistant Head of Legal - Place
John Britt, Head of Adults 25+Partnership Commissioning and Better Care Fund
Ruth Du-Lieu, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Anna Marie Lawrence-Lovell, Performance Manager
Melanie Tong, Contracts Manager Medway Municipal (South Region) Veolia Environmental Services (UK) PLC
Councillor Rupert Turpin, Portfolio Holder for Business Management
Sarah Valdus, Head of Waste Services
Ellen Wright, Democratic Services Officer

868 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carr, Craven and Saroy.

869 Record of Meeting

The record of the meeting held on 17 January 2017 was approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

870 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

871 Declaration of interest and whipping

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

Councillor Stamp referred to Item 7 – Annual Review of Waste Contracts and advised the Committee that he worked for the Environment Agency and that the Agency had a responsibility for regulating the Waste Industry. However, he did not consider that this precluded him for taking part in the debate on this item.

872 Petitions

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out a summary of petitions received by the Council which fell within the remit of this Committee.

Paragraph 3.1 of the report set out a summary of the responses to petitions that had been accepted by the petition organisers.

In accordance with the Council's petitions scheme, one petition had been referred for discussion by the Committee and the lead petitioner was in attendance and invited to address the Committee.

The Committee welcomed Mr C Brown to the meeting and he set out his reasons for requesting a review and possible arrangements for residential parking in and around Southwell Road in Strood.

Mr Brown, as Chairman of the Residents' Association for the area explained the difficulties that residents living in Southwell Road, Lincoln Close, Carlisle Close, Guildford Gardens, Peterborough Gardens and St Albans Road were having parking their cars on roads in the area and requested that the Council provide a new hard standing for parking and/or a residents' parking scheme. He explained that the availability of on street parking in these roads was severely reduced by the number of commercial vehicles parked in the area, many of which did not belong to local residents. In support of the petition, photographs had been supplied which showed the indiscriminate parking of vehicles causing an obstruction so that pedestrians and, in particular, mothers with prams and elderly persons were forced to walk in the road. This situation was particularly evident during the evenings and weekends and there was concern as to the reduced access for emergency vehicles. The parking of large vehicles close to junction corners was also creating blindspots for drivers when exiting junctions.

Councillor Avey, as Ward Councillor for Strood South spoke in support of the petitioners request for a review of the parking arrangements in the roads stated in the petition.

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The Assistant Director Front Line Services thanked Mr Brown for highlighting the issues and, in particular, supplying photographic evidence of the problems. She suggested that the following measures be progressed:

- Undertake a review of the area and investigate whether there are any parking restrictions currently in place with a view to pursuing more robust enforcement;
- Investigating possible actions to restrict the parking of commercial vehicles on the corner of junctions where they create a blindspot for drivers exiting the junction e.g. the provision of double yellow lines on the corners of junctions.

In response to the petitioners request for the provision of restricted parking or the introduction of a Controlled Parking Zone in the area, she confirmed that this would only be considered as a last resort as such arrangements involved a lengthy process and required the agreement of all local residents.

The Committee discussed the petition and the response from the Assistant Director Front Line Services and expressed concern that similar parking issues were experienced in residential areas across Medway. In some instances, the parking of large commercial vehicles was causing damage to grassed verges and services located beneath the pavement. It was recognised that whilst the conversion of green verges into parking bays would be a controversial move, this may be the only way forward in the future so as to accommodate demand for parking subject to available funding.

A Ward Councillor for Strood South commented that the possible conversion of green spaces in the Ward to hardstanding for parking bays had been considered previously but not progressed and she suggested that this be reconsidered. The Assistant Director Front Line Services suggested that this be incorporated into the options previously outlined.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the petition responses and appropriate officer actions set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the report.
- b) thanked the petitioner for attending the meeting and requested that officers:
 - Undertake a review of the area and investigate whether there are any parking restrictions currently in place with a view to pursuing more robust enforcement;
 - Investigate possible actions to restrict the parking of commercial vehicles on the corner of junctions where they create a blindspot for drivers exiting the junction e.g. the provision of double yellow lines on the corners of junctions.

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- Investigate whether there is capacity for provision of additional parking areas to be provided in the locality, including the possible conversion of green verges into parking bays.
- c) requested that the outcome of the above be the subject of a future report and that the lead petitioner be kept informed of progress.

873 Attendance of the Portfolio Holder for Business Management

Discussion:

Members received an overview of progress made on the areas within the scope of the Portfolio Holder for Business Management which fell within the remit of this Committee as set out below:

- **White Road and Hook Meadow Community Centres**

A Member referred to plans to re-develop the White Road and Hook Meadow Community Centre sites and requested information as to the outcome of the consultation events and sought an assurance that the process of developing the sites and providing replacement facilities would be open and transparent.

In response, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that at this stage consultation events had only been held with users of the facilities and stakeholders. Once proposals were further advanced, further consultation would take place and the developments would be subject to the planning application process. Initial consultations with users of the facilities and stakeholders were favourable as the proposed replacement facilities would be an improvement on those currently available. The next stage involved a feasibility study and identifying possible funding sources for the project.

The Portfolio Holder gave an assurance that the process would be open and transparent as it was essential to have the community on board with the proposals.

- **Community Centres – cost savings**

A Member requested clarification as to the statement in paragraph 2.3 of the report which referred to potential cost savings at Community Centres.

The Portfolio Holder outlined examples of minor changes to services that had produced cost savings.

- **Community Wardens**

A Member expressed appreciation for the challenging work undertaken by the Community Wardens but outlined concerns that in recent months

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Community Wardens had been requested to assist with tipper truck duties to clear flytipping.

The Portfolio Holder thanked the Member for the praise for the Community Wardens and he advised that an individual had now been employed to drive the tipper vehicle and therefore the Wardens had been able to return to their normal duties. He further advised that the Wardens were constantly investigating innovative ways of improving their service were currently pursuing the use of Facebook as a means of keeping in touch with residents and elected Members.

A Member requested an update on the proposed Volunteer Community Warden pilot project. He sought an assurance that if implemented, such scheme would complement the existing Community Warden Service and not be seen as a replacement service. He suggested that this be conveyed to existing staff so that they were not worried about potential loss of jobs.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the possibility of introducing a Volunteer Community Warden Scheme was still under investigation but could not progress until funding could be secured for training and provision of equipment. He reassured the Committee that if this scheme was introduced, it would work alongside and provide support to the existing Community Warden Service but it was not intended that it would replace the service. He confirmed that no jobs would be at risk from the introduction of the Volunteer Warden Service.

A Member referred to litter picks staged in various Wards across Medway and the support provided by the Community Wardens. She commented that a number of individuals had said that they were keen to take part in the litter picks but could only do so if they were held at the weekend.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Members for getting involved with and initiating litter picks and noted the suggestion that occasional weekend events could encourage increased participation by residents.

- **Bereavement and Registration Services**

A Member drew attention to a correction to the name of the cremator manufacturer in that it should read 'Facultatieve Technologies Ltd'.

In addition, he sought information upon whether the Council was legally compliant relating to mercury levels and whether the crematorium project would be delivered within budget.

The Portfolio Holder thanked the Member for correcting the name of the company and confirmed that this company was used by the majority of crematoria across the country.

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He advised that the Council was legally compliant, although the Council was not currently able to benefit under the Government's Mercury payback scheme with the existing equipment.

In response to whether the project would be delivered within budget, the Portfolio Holder advised that the project was on target to be delivered within the budget referred to in recent reports.

- **Emergency Planning**

A Member asked whether there would be further emergency planning exercises in April 2017.

The Portfolio Holder advised that emergency planning exercises were always welcomed and he encouraged Councillors to attend and view these events. He confirmed that officers had plans for similar exercises to those run in 2016, but confirmed that each time a different scenario was the subject of the exercise.

He also referred to the regular testing of equipment and emergency planning systems on the Peninsula.

Decision:

The Committee thanked Councillor Turpin for attending the meeting and answering questions and noted the correction to the name of the company named in paragraph 5.3 of the report.

874 Annual Review of Waste Contracts

Discussion:

The Head of Waste Services presented a report setting out an update on the activity carried out by Veolia Environmental Services in the provision of waste and recycling collection, waste disposal and street cleansing services and FCC in the management of the three household waste recycling centres.

Melanie Tong from Veolia was in attendance and gave a brief presentation to the Committee on Veolia's annual service report. The Head of Waste undertook a presentation on behalf of FCC on the basis that the new Contracts Manager had only been in post since January 2017.

The Committee noted that Melanie Tong would soon be leaving Veolia and would be replaced by Kim Savill in April 2017.

Melanie Tong and the Head of Waste then answered Members' questions as follows:

- **Percentage of Recycling**

A Member questioned why the percentage of recycling in Medway had decreased more than that being experienced nationally.

The Head of Waste confirmed that the recycling rates outlined in the report related to all recycling services and not just kerbside recycling. She advised that this reduction had been a direct result of certain types of items/materials that could no longer be recycled at Household Waste Recycling Centres, mainly involving bulky rigid plastics, oil and mattresses.

She advised that following the introduction of weekly recycling collections, statistics had shown an increase in kerbside recycling rates. Furthermore, the leaflet distributed to households in March 2017 accompanying the Council Tax bill, had resulted in Veolia receiving 500 requests for recycling bags in a two day period. This was considered a positive response to encouraging increased recycling.

- **Bulky Waste Collections**

A Member drew attention to the statistics within the report relating to the tonnage for bulky waste and questioned whether the reduction in tonnage could be attributed to the introduction of a charge for the collection of bulky waste.

Melanie Tong advised that the level of bulky waste collections varied dependent upon the time of year and she advised that it would not be possible to assess the impact of the introduction of the collection charge until a full year's statistics were available. However, the Household Waste Recycling Centres had recorded an increase in the number of items being taken to the Centres for recycling, especially electrical goods. Melanie Tong explained that the tonnage figures did not reflect the true picture of the number of items being sent for recycling as the tonnage for a television would be considerably less than the tonnage for a three piece suite.

- **Street Cleansing satisfaction levels**

A Member referred to the satisfaction levels for Street Cleaning and in particular the low level of satisfaction achieved at 56%. This was considerably below the satisfaction target of 75%. Whilst it was noted that the survey methodology had changed in April 2016 from a monthly tracker using electronic, paper and telephone surveys, to using the Citizens Panel, it was considered that this decrease in satisfaction level warranted further investigation.

During discussion on street cleansing, a number of Members expressed their appreciation for the work undertaken by street cleaners and refuse

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collectors in their particular Wards and it was noted in particular that the number of missed refuse collections was extremely low.

A Member asked whether it was possible for some residents to be provided with refuse bins as opposed to sacks if they lived in areas where their refuse sacks were continuously being torn open by animals. The Head of Waste agreed to investigate this in consultation with the Member direct.

- **Litter at the Hoath Way Roundabout**

A Member referred to a number of complaints she had received concerning the level of litter at the Hoath Way Roundabout in Gillingham and asked whether any action could be taken to remedy this.

Melanie Tong advised that Veolia had previously held meetings with Tesco to discuss the need for Tesco to improve methods for reducing litter from its site and commented that the addition of the Kentucky Fried Chicken unit nearby had added to the litter problem in this area. She confirmed that this issue would be raised again with Tesco Store and the other companies in the vicinity of the store.

- **Queuing at Household Waste Collection Sites**

A Member asked what action was being taken to reduce the queuing times at the Household Waste Collection Sites.

In response, the Head of Waste Services referred in particular to the Hoath Way site and advised that although officers had carefully considered the layout of this site, owing to the limited space available, it was not possible to reconfigure the layout of the site in any other way. However, the other sites were being actively publicised to encourage users to visit them.

- **Cleansing of Highways and use of Household Waste Collection Sites by non Medway residents**

A Member sought information as to which local authority had responsibility for cleaning and litter picking major highways and whether Medway received any funding from other local authorities when their residents used Medway's Household Waste Collection sites.

The Head of Waste advised that Kent County Council and Medway Council were responsible for cleaning and litter picking those sections of highway that were within their own boundaries.

She also confirmed that Medway received a proportionate level of funding from Kent County Council for usage by non- Medway residents at all three Household Waste Collection sites.

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The following issues were also discussed:

- **Christmas/New Year refuse/recycling collections**

Whilst discussing services provided by Veolia, a Member referred to the discussions at the meeting of this Committee on 28 January 2016, following problems that had occurred with the waste and recycling collections over the 2015/16 Christmas/New Year period. He confirmed that there had been significant improvements with collections over the 2016/17 holiday period and he congratulated Veolia and the Waste Services team for resolving these issues.

- **Recycling in flats**

A Member also expressed appreciation for the work undertaken to extend recycling facilities to those residents living in flats.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the annual service updates provided by the two contractors set out in Appendices 1 and 2.
- b) agreed that a briefing note be provided setting out the reasons why the survey methodology for measures of public satisfaction had changed from a monthly tracker to use of the Citizens Panel and why the satisfaction level for street cleaning is significantly below the satisfaction target in 2015/16.
- c) requested officers to undertake further meetings with Tesco and other companies sited in proximity to the Hoath Way roundabout to discuss ways of reducing litter from their premises and Members be advised of the outcome.
- d) expressed their best wishes to Melanie Tong and thanked her for the work that she had undertaken at Veolia in Medway.

875 Dementia Task Group - How far has Medway gone in becoming a dementia friendly community?

Discussion:

The Committee received the final report of the in-depth Dementia Task Group review on 'How far Medway has gone in developing a Dementia Friendly Community'.

The Committee was advised that the report had been considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 14 March 2017 and, the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 March 2017 and the comments from both the Board and the Committee were set out in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the covering report.

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The Committee commended officers and the Members of the Task Group on the production of a comprehensive, well written report and referred to the following:

- **Dementia Friends awareness sessions**

A Member referred to the recommendations from the Task Group concerning Dementia Friends awareness sessions and suggested that such awareness sessions be offered to all Medway Council's partners including NORSE in addition to elected Members, staff and Parish Councils.

- **Safe haven at Chatham Waterfront Bus Station**

A Member referred to the safe haven at Chatham Waterfront Bus Station and commented that the bus timetable signs were currently not working and the toilets were closed. The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation agreed that the Assistant Director Front Line Services would follow this up.

- **Timescales for implementation**

A Member sought information as to the timescale for implementation of the recommendations of the Task Group. The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation advised that some recommendations could be implemented as soon as possible once the Task Group report had been considered by Cabinet in May 2017, particularly if they did not have any significant financial implications. However, other recommendations would be actioned as and when opportunities arose e.g. when sports centres were undergoing a refurbishment programme.

He gave the Committee an assurance that officers were committed to fulfilling the recommendations of the Task Group as soon as possible.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the recommendations made by the Dementia Task Group as set out at Appendix 1 of the report together with the comments from the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee for referral to Cabinet on 9 May 2017 with the following comment:

The Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the recommendation that Dementia Friends awareness sessions be offered to elected Members, staff and Parish Councils and requests that such sessions also be offered to Medway Council's partners e.g. NORSE

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- b) noted that officers will follow up the issues raised concerning the bus timetable display boards and toilets at the Chatham Waterfront Bus Station.

876 Council Plan Quarter 3 2016/17 Performance Monitoring Report

Discussion:

The Committee received a report setting out performance in Quarter 3 for 2016/17 for the key measures of success and projects relevant to this Committee.

The following was discussed:

- **Cleansing of Highways**

A Member referred to the cleansing of highways and the difference in the cleansing regimes for those road networks that encompassed both Kent County Council and Medway Council and he sought information as to the contact person at Kent County Council who was responsible for these works. The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation agreed that the Assistant Director Front Line Services would provide this information direct to the Member.

- **Collection of trade waste at Chatham Dockside**

A Member referred to issues with trade waste at Chatham Dockside and the Assistant Director Front Line Services confirmed that the Environmental Enforcement team were aware of these issues and would be serving enforcement notices if considered necessary.

- **Removal of street furniture**

A Member advised that British Telecom was currently in the process of removing street furniture that was no longer in use e.g. old telephone boxes. He requested how the Council was progressing with the removal of excess street furniture. The Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation agreed that the Assistant Director Front Line Services would respond direct to the Member.

Decision:

The Committee noted the quarter 3 2016/17 performance against the key measures of success used to monitor progress against the Council Plan 2016/17.

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877 Work Programme

Discussion:

The Committee received a copy of its work programme.

The Democratic Services Officer drew attention to paragraph 3.3 of the report setting out suggestions from the pre-agenda meeting held on 9 March 2017 for the future reporting of a number of items.

In addition, she reminded the Committee that the next Scrutiny Task Group would be on the subject of Employment Opportunities for 18 – 21 year olds (Including apprenticeships). This would be set up around May 2017 ahead of the next meeting of this Committee and was a cross cutting Task Group between this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that of the Children and Adults Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Decision:

The Committee:

- a) noted the current work programme.
- b) agreed the following changes to the work programme in line with the suggestions at the pre-agenda meeting:
 - The report on information on the levels of finance needed to be invested in the highways network in order to maintain current levels of technical performance be scheduled for report in August 2017.
 - The Annual Review of Waste Contracts be submitted to Committee in March 2018 on the basis that this will be 12 months from the current report.
 - A report on Street Licensing – Placing objects on the Highway be scheduled for the August meeting of the Committee
- c) noted that the next Scrutiny Task Group will review Employment Opportunities for 18 – 21 year olds including apprenticeships and agreed that the membership should be on the basis of 3 Conservative Group Members and 2 Labour Group Members (noting that the UKIP Group will not be taking up their place on this occasion).

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Chairman

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