

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



3 JUNE 2013 - 2.30PM

PRESENT: Councillor Chambers (Chairman), Councillor Mrs French (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Broker, Mrs Bucknor, Cornwell, Stebbing and Sutton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Jolley, Murphy and Oliver

APOLOGIES: Councillors Hodgson, Miss Hoy and Swan

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jane Bailey, Richard Cassidy, Phil Hughes, Anna Goodall and Mark Mathews

OSC1/13 WELCOME

Councillor Chambers welcomed the new members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillors Archer and Broker, and Councillor Mrs French as the new Vice Chairman.

OSC2/13 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 15 April were agreed and signed.

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

OSC3/13 OUTSIDE BODIES REVIEW GROUP UPDATE

Councillor Chambers asked members to agree a member of the Overview and Scrutiny panel to replace Councillor Miscandlon on the Outside Bodies Review Group. Councillor Mrs French agreed that she would be happy to join the group.

Members agreed that Councillor Mrs French would join the Overview and Scrutiny Outside Bodies Review Group.

OSC4/13 CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADULTS, WELLBEING AND HEALTH (AWH) OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Chambers asked members to agree a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to represent Fenland District Council on The Cambridgeshire County Council AWH Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a member as a substitute.

- Councillor Cornwell agreed that he is happy to continue to represent Fenland District Council on the AWH Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Councillor Sutton agreed that he is happy to represent Fenland District Council on the AWH Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a substitute.

Members were informed that there will be an informal workshop taking place on the 11 June, and both agreed that they would like to attend.

OSC2

Members agreed that Councillor Cornwell would continue to be the AWH Overview and Scrutiny Committee representative for Fenland District Council and that the substitute would be Councillor Sutton.

OSC5/13 PROGRESS OF CORPORATE PRIORITY - STREETS AHEAD

Councillor Chambers introduced the Progress in Delivering the Streets Ahead Corporate Objectives 2012-13. He thanked the officers and members for attending and for providing a very good and informative report.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Mrs French asked why the report ran from April 2012 to May 2013 therefore effectively covering 13 months. She suggested that it would make more sense for the report to run from May 2012 to April 2013 to look at the last 12 months. By completing the report this way the very successful March St. Georges Day Fayre 2013 was missed out of the report. Councillor Jolley agreed with Councillor Mrs French's comments. Richard Cassidy stated that looking at the data contained within the report it would appear that much of the information is until the end of the financial year in April, however the Portfolio Holder Meeting was in May, and it seems that this is when the report was dated to. Officers agreed to note this feedback;
2. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that with regards to the increased tonnage of recyclable materials, how does this impact financially on the Council? Councillor Murphy stated that increased recycling makes a positive contribution to the Council's costs. The material is taken to the recycling centre in March and this is then transported to Peterborough, the Council then receives a recycling credit back, however the value of the material recycled does vary year on year so it is difficult to predict how much we would expect in the future;
3. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that it is difficult to compare as we have no monetary figures which would give a clear picture and measurable outcomes. Richard Cassidy stated that officers have recently produced some summary figures going back three years looking at cleansing and recycling service costs and income. He agreed that when the outturn report is complete in approximately three weeks he would circulate that information to members of the panel;
4. Councillor Cornwell stated that the report is looking back; he asked what plans and ideas are in place to improve the figures even more in the future. Richard Cassidy stated that the corporate priority is to maintain current levels of recycling. There are a number projects being looked into, one is harmonising collections across Cambridgeshire and the other is looking to combine more Cambridgeshire authorities into the recycling contract. He added that the way to make services more efficient in the future is to look outside the authority and look towards more shared services;
5. Councillor Stebbing stated that he had noticed that different areas have different refuse collection arrangements and asked if this council looked at alternative arrangements, for example in some areas the householder sorts their own recycling at home and it is collected separately. Councillor Murphy stated that the system used by this council was introduced a few years ago, all the authorities using this system including Fenland find it to be a very successful system and all report an increased recycling rate. The credits received are slightly lower as our households do not sort their own waste, but the system is working well and there are no immediate plans to change these arrangements;
6. Councillor Cornwell stated that the report refers to the fact that there were 549 requests for bulky waste collection and that 100% of these requests were collected on the advertised day. He asked how the advertised day is agreed, and what the average turnaround of a request is. Councillor Murphy stated that the collection date is agreed when the customer makes contact to arrange collection and a number of collection dates can be offered that are convenient for the customer;

7. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she thinks the refuse service in Fenland is wonderful and that they do a great job. With reference to refuse service efficiencies and in light of the recent accident involving a refuse vehicle. Has that vehicle had to be replaced, and how has this impacted on collections? Councillor Murphy confirmed that there is a spare vehicle so collections have not been affected, the vehicle involved in the accident is covered by insurance and is being replaced, but these vehicles cannot be replaced quickly. With this in mind and following an issue in the past there has always been a spare vehicle available to use;
8. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if the problems at the Waterbeach Waste Treatment Plant have had any impact on this Council. Councillor Murphy confirmed that this Council has not been affected by the plant breakdown;
9. Councillor Mrs French asked if the breakdown had any effect on recycling credits received by this Council. Councillor Murphy confirmed that the breakdown had no effect on the recycling credits received, he explained that compostable waste is treated at separate facilities on the Waterbeach site and that the recyclable materials are sorted by the contractor at their facilities in Peterborough;
10. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that it would appear that the residents of Fenland will pay towards the repairs following the breakdown, but are not directly affected.
11. Councillor Stebbing stated that it is incredible that the breakdown has taken so long to repair. Councillor Murphy stated that it is a very large piece of machinery, and not a straight forward repair, there are also legal issues to determine who is responsible for the cost of the repairs;
12. Councillor Cornwell stated that there had previously been concerns about the quality of the compost that is available for collection, however this has now improved. He added that the residents who live in March are very lucky to have the waste transfer site nearby. He asked if there were any plans to make this available in other areas. Councillor Murphy stated that this arrangement is operated by the County Council; this is where the soil improver is delivered to, and therefore where residents can collect it from. Councillor Murphy agreed to mention this matter at a future waste partnership meeting;
13. Councillor Sutton stated that he understands that the compost is also available for collection at Frimstone in Wisbech and it had been previously agreed that a skip containing the compost would be taken to the allotments in Manea. If these arrangements have been made then it would seem that there might be an opportunity for more collection points to be arranged;
14. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that with regards to recycling figures within the report the Council have underperformed by 2%. Councillor Murphy stated that the weather was terrible and affected the brown bin waste. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if the weather affects the recycling rates too. Councillor Murphy stated that it appears that residents are not spending as much money in the supermarkets and therefore there has been a reduction in the cartons and packaging, although the overall tonnage of dry recyclables collected was slightly up on the previous year;
15. Councillor Stebbing stated that he would like to congratulate the street cleansing team who were responsible for the clean up in Whittlesey following the Straw Bear Festival, he explained that by mid-morning the next day the whole area was clean and tidy;
16. Councillor Cornwell stated that with regards to the street cleansing service in March, it is a case of Litter Picker verses Sweeper. The litter picker leaves behind cigarette ends, and outside some establishments there are a lot of cigarette ends to pick up. He asked if we ensure that these are picked up by the sweeper. Councillor Murphy confirmed that these areas are both litter picked and swept, but during the day in certain places the cigarette ends build up, this is not just an issue in March, but in all areas. There was an issue previously when the sweeper broke down and was out of service, but repairs have been made and the sweeper is back in operation;

OSC4

17. Councillor Cornwell asked if there is anything that can be done with managers and landlords to ensure that they take responsibility for the areas outside their premises. Councillor Murphy confirmed that officers do go inside premises where this issue is a problem and landlords and managers are asked to check and keep them clean;
18. Councillor Chambers asked if these premises are supposed to keep the front of the property clean and tidy. Councillor Murphy stated that they do not have to by law. Councillor Sutton stated that it could be a condition when licensing these premises;
19. Councillor Mrs French stated that previously there had been an arrangement with a Street Scene Officer who would go into premises to talk to them about the mess outside, and if there was no improvement she would follow up her visit with a letter. Councillor Murphy stated that this is still the system used and it works for a little while but is not a permanent solution to the problem;
20. Councillor Stebbing explained that the Street Scene Officer in Whittlesey goes into premises, and reports the areas with issues at the Town Council Meetings. The meetings are minuted, the minutes are published and available at the local library for anybody to read;
21. Councillor Mrs Bucknor referred to a recent article where a Town Councillor complained about the state of Elm Road, and asked officers to look into this matter;
22. Councillor Sutton stated that the before and after pictures of the riverside underpass are a little misleading as they have not been taken from the same place. Councillor Murphy agreed, and noted Councillor Sutton's comment;
23. Councillor Cornwell stated that the report refers to 81 abandoned vehicles being investigated, with just 3 being removed. He asked if this means that there are 78 still abandoned, what has happened to these. Councillor Murphy stated that whilst scrap metal values were high, vehicles tended to be removed before further enforcement action needed to be taken;
24. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that there is an ongoing issue at Lynn Road, Wisbech, where there is a second hand car sales forecourt. The issues here are that visitors park on the land across the road and on the cycle lane, making the whole area muddy and unsightly, this is a particular problem as this is the main road into Wisbech. FDC officers have been trying to stop this happening for some time, but so far there have been no improvements to this area. Councillor Mrs French stated that she is very aware of the issues at Lynn Road, but that Cambridgeshire County Council will not enforce the problem, and so there is nothing more that FDC can do about it;
25. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that this is one of the main routes into Wisbech and looks awful, she has suggested that to solve this problem wooden bollards could be placed along the area to prevent the cars from parking, but that Cambridgeshire County Council explained that this would cost tens of thousands of pounds. Councillor Mrs French suggested that members lobby their new County Councillor for the area to see if they can help;
26. Councillor Mrs French suggested that the Fenland markets should be better promoted, with better signs into the towns on market days. Councillor Jolley stated that there are lots of discussions taking place at the moment with regards to the markets, with plans to better advertise market days and to encourage farmers markets and other markets too. This is going to be a big project and members will get more information as it develops;
27. Councillor Mrs French asked that the town councils be kept informed too as they will be happy to be involved and to assist with the project in their area. Councillor Jolley agreed;
28. Councillor Cornwell asked what the situation is with the Wisbech Christmas Market as the Town Council now control the market place. Councillor Jolley stated that the Christmas Market has already being organised for this year, and added that he would like to see something similar organised in March in the future, however is unsure that there is time organise it for this year. Councillor Oliver confirmed that an agreement is in place between Wisbech Town Council and Fenland District Council that the Council can run a Christmas Market every year;

29. Councillor Cornwell stated that the Fenland Tourism Board are keen to focus on the markets and the item is on the agenda for discussion later this week, they will look forward to an update as the project develops. Richard Cassidy stated that there is a passion to revitalise the markets, and that members will be updated on the project as it progresses. The Christmas market in Wisbech has been agreed and will be run by FDC, there are plans to try to arrange a Christmas Market in March to coincide with the light switch on event, but this has not yet been confirmed, members will be updated accordingly;
30. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the Wisbech Christmas Market is a fabulous event and people are still talking about it, there is always a great atmosphere. Councillor Jolley agreed and stated that this is why we want to start to put the plans in place to extend the Christmas Market into March;
31. Councillor Cornwell stated that the report refers to the fact that summer 2012 was the wettest on record, and that this led to issues with the grass cutting. He added that he had looked at some areas and was concerned that we are getting dangerously close to the same issues happening again this year. He asked for reassurance that this is something that is already being looked at. Councillor Murphy confirmed that following the issues last year, a wet weather programme was drawn up with the contractor, however so far this year there have been no issues and the work is on schedule. Councillor Murphy agreed to look into the areas that Councillor Cornwell had looked at and felt that there were issues with;
32. Councillor Mrs French stated that she had been asked about the opening times for the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Furrowfields, Chatteris. Councillor Murphy agreed to investigate and let the Councillor know;
33. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she has had numerous complaints about the time that the play equipment in Wisbech Park is locked up in the afternoon, as people feel that it is too early. She asked if consideration could be given to making arrangements with the person who locks up the toilets to also lock up the zip wire, this would give the visitors an extra hour or so of playing time. Councillor Murphy stated that it had been agreed with neighbouring residents that the zip wire would be closed at a certain time in as initially there had been issues in that area;
34. Councillor Cornwell stated that it seems a shame that a lot of money is spent on this equipment for it to be controlled by local people who do not use it, with this in mind it begs the question if this was the right place for this play equipment to be situated. Councillor Murphy stated that the Council have entered into an agreement with the local people with regards to opening hours for this equipment following many complaints about bad behaviour. Richard Cassidy confirmed that when the equipment was installed there was some poor behaviour by young people in the evenings, some work was carried out with the police to try to control the behaviour, but this continued when the police were not in attendance, so an agreement was made that the zip wire would be closed after a certain time. The zip wire could be moved to a more central part of the park, but this would have a financial cost. Councillor Cornwell asked if there was a consultation with the local residents prior to the building of the play area. Richard Cassidy confirmed that there was a consultation process, but unfortunately there was poor behaviour when the area was first opened and we had to find a balance following the responses from the neighbouring residents;
35. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that visitors to the area would appreciate even just one hour extra added to the opening times, they are not looking for it to be opened into the evening. Councillor Murphy agreed to investigate the matter further.

OSC6/13 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Future Work Programme 2013/14 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Members agreed the Future Work Programme 2013/14 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

3.30pm

Chairman