

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

14 JULY 2014 - 2.30PM



PRESENT: Councillor Mrs French (Chairman), Councillor Swan (Vice-Chairman), Councillors S Clark, Farmer, Skoulding and Stebbing.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mrs Bucknor and Hodgson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Murphy and Oliver

OBSERVING: Councillor Sutton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jane Bailey, Richard Cassidy, Dan Horn, Tom Lewis and Mark Mathews

OSC5/14 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 2 June 2014 were confirmed and signed.

The Chairman updated members with regards to the Lease of New Road Allotments, Whittlesey, the situation is progressing and there will be a full report to this Committee in September.

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

OSC6/14 PROGRESS OF CORPORATE PRIORITY - ENVIRONMENT

Councillor Murphy - Portfolio Holder for Environment, presented the Progress of Corporate Priority - Environment Report and introduced the new report format to members.

Richard Cassidy confirmed that this is the first time that this new style report format has been used, the focus is low narrative and high data and stated that he would welcome any feedback on the format of the report from Members.

Members agreed that they were very happy with the new report format. Councillor Mrs French asked that as with previous reports a report cover is included. Richard Cassidy agreed that this would be included in future.

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

1. Councillor Farmer stated that the report refers to the percentage of missed bins that are collected the next day, and asked why these cannot be collected the same day. Councillor Murphy stated that by the time the team receive notification that a bin has been missed it is too late to go back, the refuse collectors are working a 12 hour day and there simply is not time to go back. People are very happy that their bin is collected the next day following a missed bin being reported;
2. Councillor Swan stated that Fenland District Council provide a 7 day a week rapid response service which is a fantastic service, the staff that work as part of this team deserve a special mention. They do a great job 'credit where credit's due';

3. Councillor Farmer stated that the report refers to the number of memorial inspections completed, and questioned whether this was the correct performance measure to be looking at. He asked if a better measure might be how many were made safe or if any action was taken from those inspections. Councillor Murphy stated that by law the Council have to put a notice on a memorial to let relatives know that there is a concern and that after a period of time we will lay it down, but agreed that a further measure following inspection would be useful;
4. Councillor Farmer stated that he has received a complaint from a resident who has reported that her road is missed during the green bin collection; but is included in the recycle collection, he asked how this can happen. Councillor Murphy confirmed that occasionally there is confusion when teams change over on the boundary of their collection round and each team thinks that the other are collecting that particular area. He stated that if Councillor Farmer passes the details on, the issue will be investigated further and resolved;
5. Councillor Swan stated that the report refers to the fact that Street Scene team is expanding its operations to include regular Saturday working, and asked if this has started. Councillor Murphy confirmed that this has started, stating that it is to support markets and events that generally take place on Saturday and that would have previously been worked as overtime;
6. Councillor Skoulding asked if the war memorials were included. Councillor Murphy stated that a question had been raised previously at Full Council, but that due to the new arrangements of Cabinet, members were unsure who was responsible for War Memorials. He confirmed that he has agreed to take on this responsibility again, and will insure that the issues are now investigated;
7. Councillor Mrs French asked if the War Memorial in March will be cleaned on the day of the service or if the Town Council should arrange for the area to be cleaned themselves. Councillor Murphy stated that the problem is ensuring that the memorials in all 4 towns are cleaned at the same time and agreed to come back to Councillor Mrs French;
8. Councillor Mrs French asked for clarification with regards to the income from the public toilets. Councillor Murphy stated that one person pays to use the toilet and holds the door for the next person to use without an additional fee. He added that the introduction of the fee was not to generate an income but aimed to reduce damage and improve cleanliness of the facilities;
9. Councillor Farmer stated that the hours going into the street scene patrols are impressive, he asked for clarification with regards to the difference between street scene active patrols and enforcement patrols. Richard Cassidy confirmed active patrols are the mainstay of the street scene officers role and that enforcement days are arranged to target areas based on information from the town council, officers come together to carry out these dedicated enforcement patrols;
10. Councillor Mrs French stated that the report refers to the hours spent on active street scene patrol in each town and asked why the hours spent in Whittlesey are so high. Richard Cassidy stated that looking at the data some differences have been revealed and these will be discussed with managers and closely monitored. He confirmed that Whittlesey previously paid more into this service for extra patrol, but this is no longer the case;
11. Councillor Farmer stated that looking at the data within the report just 21 fixed penalty notices were issued as a result of 380 hours of enforcement patrols in Wisbech. Councillor Murphy stated that street scene officers would have to carry out all sorts of work within these hours and would not just be issuing fixed penalties;
12. Councillor Swan asked if street scene officers should be spending more time dedicated to enforcement issues, and asked if we are doing enough. Councillor Murphy stated that the problem is that enforcement issues are very difficult to enforce. Councillor Swan asked why we spend so long trying to enforce if we know the difficulties, he added that the 2 most common complaints he receives from residents are about cemeteries and dog fouling and asked how the scales can be balanced;

13. Councillor Farmer stated that the same data shows that 240 hours of enforcement patrol in Chatteris resulted in just 1 fixed penalty being issued as a result of dog fouling. He asked if this was really the best use of resources. Richard Cassidy stated that during these hours of enforcement the street scene officers spend many hours in towns and are seen by the community, therefore somewhat act as a deterrent. He added that there are plans in the future to tone down the uniforms on the enforcement days so that the officers are not so visible;
14. Councillor Farmer stated that when Wisbech were preparing for the Rose Fair, 2 cars had to be towed from the car park, they had expired tax discs and had clearly been there for some time, and yet the data shows that there were no fixed penalties issued for parking issues. Richard Cassidy stated that the data in this document relates to fixed penalty notices issued, but when a vehicle is reported without tax the issue involves joint working with Environmental Services and that data is not picked up in this report;
15. Councillor Mrs French raised the point that the report included more than 1 year's data, she asked for clarification on this. Richard Cassidy stated that when the report was being prepared we decided that members might want some more up to date information included within the report;
16. Councillor Swan stated that the report shows that the grounds maintenance contractor - The Landscape Group carry out assessments of their work, he asked if we should be satisfied with the data that shows that out of 543 inspections, 90 were assessed as amber and 22 failed to reach the level required. Councillor Murphy agreed that these results have not reached the standards that this Council would have expected and that the amber and fail data is too high;
17. Councillor Swan stated that there are issues with regards to the maintenance of the cemeteries and that this needs to be investigated further. Councillor Murphy agreed, stating that the cemeteries are cut once a fortnight, but could do with a little more 'TLC', and that the weather has been perfect grass growing weather;
18. Councillor Mrs French stated that the hostel in Creek Road was not included in the contract for grass cutting and arrangements had to be made for the grass to be cut. Councillor Murphy stated that there are pieces of land that were not included, but that the hostel has been added, and will be included in the new contract;
19. Councillor Farmer stated that the report gives data on the number of residents supported through work of the Community House, he asked what this means. Dan Horn confirmed that this data relates to advice and assistance received from the team based at the Community House in Wisbech;
20. Councillor Mrs French asked what the Community House is. Dan Horn stated that the Community House is a drop-in support service for Wisbech residents;
21. Councillor Farmer asked how many days a week the Community House is open and how many staff are based there. Dan Horn stated that the Community House is open most days for a period of time and has 2 part time members of staff;
22. Councillor Farmer stated that this is not very efficient as it means that the Community House is dealing with 2 or 3 people a day. Dan Horn stated that they deal with a range of issues and work closely with other support services in the area, he confirmed that the house is owned by Roddons and that the staff are employed by FDC and that the house is used for all kinds of multiagency work in the area;
23. Councillor Mrs French suggested that this work could be done through the one stops shop;
24. Councillor Farmer stated that the report says that it is dealing with 2 or 3 people a day but does not give members any idea of the work that is being carried out;
25. Councillor Mrs French asked for costings with relation to the Community House, she stated that we need to be sure that this is cost effective. Dan Horn agreed to feedback costs information to members;

26. Councillor Swan stated that the report refers to the number of successful Rural Capital Grant Submissions and asked for a breakdown of where that money was spent and more information on the bids for capital projects that FDC are currently supporting. Officers agreed to provide more information to members as requested;
27. Councillor Mrs French stated that the members of this committee are concerned and horrified about the article on the front page of the Wisbech Standard dated 11 July 2014;
28. Councillor Skoulding agreed, stating that the garages referred to in the article are in a disgraceful state, he added that his major concern is that Roddons are going to say that this area cannot be cleaned up and the garages will be demolished and built on as was the case at Smith's Drive. Richard Cassidy agreed to contact Roddons and investigate further;
29. Councillor Mrs French stated that she has had many complaints that Roddons and their contractors are not arriving on time when arrangements have been made, and that issues are not being addressed. Councillor Murphy suggested that these are issues that can be raised when Roddons attend the Overview and Scrutiny Panel later in the year;
30. Councillor Farmer asked why we have data relating to English as Second or Other Language (ESOL) courses. He stated that it is a good idea but questioned if we are carrying this out efficiently. Councillor Oliver confirmed that FDC are not doing the work directly but are enabling the courses. Dan Horn stated that a gap was identified in the cohesion action plan which FDC coordinate, and by enabling these courses we are ensuring that there are opportunities available;
31. Councillor Mrs French stated that the welcome packs offered to people who have moved into the area from overseas are great but is concerned that the information is not as good for other people moving into the area. Councillor Oliver confirmed that the welcome packs are available to everybody;
32. Councillor Stebbing asked how everybody would know the welcome packs are available, are they on the shelves to help yourself to or offered by staff? Dan Horn agreed to find out and feed back to members;
33. Councillor Mrs French stated that on page 31 of the report it says that 218 customers were satisfied out of 213 questioned and believes that these figures need to be swapped. Councillor Murphy confirmed that they have been put into the table the wrong way around and will be amended in the final version;
34. Councillor Farmer stated that with regards to 3C's he feels that the current system has not been working since Councillors stopped receiving notification of the complaints made to the Council due to data protection issues. Richard Cassidy stated that he was not aware what the issues were with regards to data protection, but agreed to look into it. Tom Lewis stated that the personal information was redacted from the complaint i.e. name and address as there just needs to be one case where someone is unhappy that their details have been forwarded onto a third party. The redaction of that information would have been carried out to avoid that;
35. Councillor Mrs French added that the complainant may not want their details passed on to the Councillor and this is what the issue is. Councillor Farmer stated that he feels that this is a bad interpretation of the data protection laws and that Councillors should have access to specific details when a complaint comes in. Richard Cassidy and Tom Lewis agreed to investigate further with a view to reviewing this policy. Richard Cassidy stated that looking at the 3C's data in this report, the information provided is just a snapshot of the service. He confirmed that the 3C's system is a strong and robust system dealing with complaints as well as requests for services, the requests for services are actioned straight away whereas the complaints, of which there are relatively few, require investigation by line managers;
36. Councillor Swan stated that over the past few weeks he has many residents complaining to him about various issues. Richard Cassidy confirmed that these issues are actioned as a request for service not as a complaint;

37. Councillor Mrs French asked who she should speak to if she has a question with regards to Heritage Week, she explained that the town council have been approached by the group with a view to making arrangements to clean up the cemetery and organise a heritage walk there. Councillor Farmer stated that Vicki Whittingstall is making the arrangements on behalf of FDC. Richard Cassidy confirmed that this is a national scheme, stating that it would appear that it is being picked up by the Fenland Tourism Board.

Councillor Mrs French stated that members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are happy with the new report format with the addition of a front cover as discussed earlier in the meeting and thanked members and officers for attending today.

Councillor Murphy declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that he is a Roddons Board Member.

OSC7/14 ANNUAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT 2013/2014

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-2014 presented by Councillor Mrs French.

The report emphasises the key achievements of the committee as well as highlighting the focus of the panel during the next months to come.

Members agreed to recommend the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-2014 to Council.

OSC8/14 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Future Work Programme 2014/15 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Following discussion members agreed to make the following changes to the work programme:

- The meeting scheduled to take place on 13 April 2015 will be cancelled due to Purdah, and the items to be included in that meeting to be moved as follows:
 - Progress of Corporate Priority - Communities - move to the meeting scheduled for 23 February 2015;
 - Local Health Partnership - move to the meeting scheduled for 23 February 2015;
 - Wisbech 2020 Vision Update - move to the meeting scheduled for 19 January 2015.

Members agreed the Future Work Programme 2014/15 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, subject to the above amendments.

3:40pm

Chairman