

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

7 SEPTEMBER 2015 - 2:30PM



**PRESENT:** Councillor Yeulett (Chairman), Councillor Hay (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Mrs Bucknor, Buckton, Davis, Mason and Pugh

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors Butcher, Murphy, Oliver and Sutton.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Bligh, Garratt, Miss Hoy and Humphrey

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jane Bailey (Member Services and Governance), Richard Cassidy (Corporate Director), Dan Horn (Head of Housing and Community Support) and Geoff Kent (Head of Customer Services)

### OSC12/15 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 13 July 2015 were agreed and signed.

#### Matters Arising:

1. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she has yet to receive a response to a question raised at the last meeting referring to the shared planning proposals, minute number OSC8/15 - bullet point 2, how many Section 215 notices have Peterborough issued and what expertise they have with regards to listed buildings? Geoff Kent agreed to follow up and ensure a response is circulated;
2. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she had also asked a question with regards to the £137k savings, minute number OSC8/15 - bullet point 7. She stated that although this question was answered at the meeting she would like further clarification of where the £137k would come from. Geoff Kent agreed to forward this request for clarification on to officers for a response;
3. Councillor Hay stated that she was also still waiting for a response from officers with regards to a query at the previous meeting, minute number OSC9/15 - bullet point 7. Officers had agreed to make contact with MM:UK to clarify the situation. Geoff Kent agreed to follow up this response and ensure that it is circulated to members of the panel.

**\* FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL \***

### OSC13/15 PROGRESS IN DELIVERING THE ENVIRONMENTAL CORPORATE OBJECTIVES 2015-2016

Members considered the Progress in delivering the Environmental Corporate Objectives 2015-16 Report and asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Yeulett stated that the panel members have expressed concern with regards to the make-up of the reports, adding that concerns had been raised previously with officers. Members are concerned that all the information they might require to scrutinise is not available in the report itself and it appears that data is missing;

2. Councillor Buckton stated that once again the panel have been presented with a progress report but we are given the information that people want us to see, the good news stories, but not perhaps where things are not going as well as they might be. He added that the report states 'Deliver the Streets Ahead Action Plan' but that he was unable to locate the action plan. There are also areas within the report where there are 5 priorities but only updates included for 3 of them, therefore it appears to the panel that they are receiving selected information;
3. Councillor Hay stated that we have asked questions previously and officers have agreed to get back to us with a response, but they do not always come back;
4. Councillor Mrs Bucknor agreed stating that there are blanks in the report where there should be data and just not enough meaningful information and data to scrutinise properly;
5. Councillor Pugh stated that with regards to the reporting on fly-tipping there are figures included, but the report does not tell us what has been done or what will be done in the future;
6. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that page 22 of the report refers to a Street Scene Enforcement Project which mentions the number of properties identified etc. there are no figures included, it is blank. She added that she believes that she has read in another report that this issue would be re-visited, but there is no mention of this here;
7. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the report mentions the Renaissance Project and refers to the slow uptake last year, she asked how people find out about this funding. Councillor Oliver confirmed that anyone that is eligible is contacted and notified about the funding, he added that this project is match funded, so unless they have the money to match the funding they are unlikely to apply;
8. Councillor Buckton stated that there is also an issue of when items come to Overview and Scrutiny, the panel are being asked to look at an update of an action plan but it would be more appropriate to have seen the action plan before publication. Councillor Yeulett agreed that it would be more beneficial to have been involved in the whole process;
9. Richard Cassidy stated that officers want to get the reporting right, they want to present a report at the meeting that members are happy with. He confirmed that the format of the reports was agreed by the previous Overview and Scrutiny Panel, but suggested that maybe the new panel might like to have a look at that format with a view to changing it moving forward. The format is the same for Portfolio Holder Briefings and to full Council and therefore the information is always presented in the same way. He added that officers are presenting reports to a timetable as the panel are requesting them as part of their work programme, and suggested that this might also be reviewed by the current panel moving forward. He agreed to take this feedback back to officers, stating that these changes are all do-able, and reiterated that officers want to make sure that they are producing reports with the information in that you need;
10. Councillor Yeulett confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel would arrange to meet to discuss these points moving forward, and would agree a general format for reports that would help the panel to be able to scrutinise and challenge;
11. Councillor Buckton stated that he believes that the format of the report is fine, but it is the missing information that is the issue. Richard Cassidy stated that officers generally will try to set out a picture of the main issues at the time that the report is written;
12. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the panel do not want to be negative about the reports and is pleased that the Chairman will be talking with officers with a view to producing more informative reports in the future;
13. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that with regards to the Street Scene Enforcement Project the report does not contain any data, it does not say how many properties have been identified or how you are moving forward with this. Councillor Oliver confirmed that the data with regards to the properties identified is on the next page. This tells us that there were 84 property cases and the number of those completed to date is 27. There are more details with regards to progress in Appendix A of the report;

14. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if anyone has been working at Constantine House recently. Councillor Oliver confirmed that there has been some work at Constantine House, but there is a deadline approaching and officers are continuing to liaise with them, we must also take into account that there has been a lot of work taking place at the front of the building and this may have delayed work;
15. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if it would be possible to have a breakdown of these properties and suggested that a spreadsheet would be a useful way of presenting this. Councillor Oliver confirmed that officers are in the process of looking at the detail of this now and updating their own spreadsheets, checking which can be signed off and which need to be progressed. He explained that page 53 of the report shows some of the building that have been looked at and confirmed that due to the sensitive nature of some of the data the details cannot be shared, but agreed that it would be possible to breakdown the information into towns;
16. Councillor Yeulett asked what the challenges are moving forward. Councillor Murphy stated that the idea is that the service continues as it is at the moment, we have a very good service and with the change of refuse and recycling contractors we are hoping for an even better service moving forward. He added that there are limits due to financial restraints, but the team are striving to provide residents with a first class service;
17. Councillor Yeulett asked if the housing growth in the area is going to put a stress on the service. Councillor Murphy stated that the team are starting to look at this now, altering rounds and work patterns, efficiency savings now to ensure that the work is covered moving forward;
18. Councillor Hay asked how the Council is getting the message across to households about which items of their waste is recyclable. Councillor Murphy confirmed that updates go out to all households every six months on the collections calendar that is left by the refuse teams when the bins are emptied. He added that the Council go out to schools and run educational workshops and activities and that particular streets and areas within the district are targeted where the data shows there is an issue with recycling;
19. Councillor Hay stated that she does not believe that the updates in the calendars are effective and asked if it would be better to stick details of what can be recycled on all blue bins. Councillor Murphy explained that the cost in producing such a sticker and placing it on every blue bin would out-weigh any additional recycling income;
20. Councillor Davis suggested that this recycling information should come out to Golden Age Fairs to educate older people in the district. Councillor Murphy agreed, stating that he is happy to investigate this further;
21. Councillor Buckton stated that he has not seen the updates with regards to recycling and suggested that the Council need to look at different ways to get the message across as people are not reading the leaflets. Councillor Pugh suggested that this information leaflet could be added to the Council Tax bill when it is sent out;
22. Councillor Yeulett asked how this Council is tackling dumping and fly-tipping. Councillor Murphy stated that this is an issue country-wide, it is an issue that the team are always looking into, but it is very difficult to prosecute people for this offence as you have to be 100% sure that you have the right person;
23. Councillor Davis stated that she understands the issues faced but added that the rapid response team do a fantastic job in clearing away any rubbish when it is reported;
24. Councillor Yeulett asked if the Council are losing money due to the recycling levels. Councillor Murphy confirmed that the Council are not losing money overall, as different materials fluctuate in price each year, so we are still making money on it, but it could be better;
25. Councillor Yeulett stated that with regards to the 3C's summary in the report, it would be useful if in the future there were comparison data from previous years, so that the panel can see patterns and trends. Richard Cassidy agreed that this can be included in future reports;

26. Councillor Pugh asked if it could also be shown against targets. Richard Cassidy stated that there is a wider 3C's report that has that level of detail, but that report is across all corporate targets; he agreed to investigate how that data could be incorporated into this report in the future. Councillor Yeulett suggested that the wider 3C's report would be something that the panel might want to look at as an item on its own;
27. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she is concerned about Wisbech Cemetery, as there are some amazing memorials that have been laid down there. Councillor Murphy stated that we have to lay them down for safety; we have to be very careful about what we do to a grave. He added that there are 25,000 memorials in Fenland and there is a 5 year programme set out to inspect 5,000 each year. Memorials deemed to be unsafe are referred to the Council's grounds maintenance contractor, the contractor makes the memorial safe and the person responsible for the memorial is informed so that they can arrange for a repair;
28. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that although she appreciates the sensitivity of the situation with regards to memorials she asked what happens if we are unable to trace those responsible for some of the very old memorials. Adding that she does not feel comfortable with them being left laid down as it seems disrespectful. Councillor Murphy stated that the British Legion young members currently clean up and look after the old war graves, and this is making a difference. He added that we have to leave memorials for such a long time before we are able to do anything to them ourselves and there is just not the funding to do carry out the repairs ourselves. We keep the area around them neat by cutting the grass and trees and look after the roads and pathways, but there is only so much that the Council can do;
29. Councillor Davis stated that she is aware of cemeteries with similar issues where funding has been sought via the Diocese. Councillor Murphy stated that he was not aware of this type of funding, but would be happy to investigate further. Richard Cassidy confirmed that not all of the cemeteries in Fenland are run by FDC, some are owned and maintained by the Diocese, and their funding for repairs would be different. He added that the vast majority of graves that are unsafe are very modern ones, but asked members if they are aware of any that have a historic interest please let him know so these can be looked into;
30. Councillor Mason confirmed that he has responsibility for these issues at St. Andrews Church, he agreed that when a memorial is in a bad state of repair and becomes unsafe they are laid down and steps are taken to trace the family, but this is not always easy. He added that he does not believe that this is the responsibility of the Environment Team;
31. Councillor Yeulett stated that we all appreciate that this team provides an outstanding service, he asked if there is an opportunity for shared services or if a revenue could be earned from this service. Councillor Murphy stated that we do some partnership working and are actively involved in RECAP (Recycling in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire), he explained that there are six Councils involved and that they all meet regularly to look at ideas and share expertise. He added that this is a very good and worthwhile partnership;
32. Councillor Buckton stated that the report refers to the fact that the current blue recycling bin collections contract commenced in November 2014, and that this new arrangement compared to the previous one has saved the Council £57,000. He asked how this level of savings been achieved. Councillor Murphy stated that the jointly procured contract is run more efficiently and this has saved money, and the value of the income from recycling has contributed to this too;
33. Councillor Buckton asked if this level of saving is likely to continue. Councillor Murphy stated that he is hopeful that this level of saving will continue adding that prices fluctuate for each recyclable material over time;
34. Councillor Yeulett asked what difference does this saving make to your budget. Councillor Murphy stated that the Council are always looking at new efficiency savings and look at every part of the service for improvements;
35. Councillor Buckton asked if the Council have looked at shared services. Councillor Murphy confirmed that we already share services with regards to cross border services and this is working well;

36. Councillor Yeulett asked if we have common systems that are able to overlap cross border. Councillor Murphy confirmed that the main bulk is the same, but sometimes the colour of the bins differ at other Councils;
37. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked, with 50% of residents new to the area, how can this Council be more focussed on social cohesion in Fenland. Councillor Yeulett agreed, stating that this is a growing issue. Councillor Oliver stated that the Fenland Diversity Forum has been set up with partners to deliver and assist with these issues across the whole of Fenland. He added that this is led by David Bailey who does a very good job of bringing it all together and encouraging cohesion in the district. There are many projects taking place to help with integration, but there is a lot more to do, and we are in the process of identifying the gaps. He concluded that this Council is doing a reasonable job at the moment but there is more to do;
38. Councillor Yeulett asked if there is anything measurable to show what is and what is not working. Councillor Oliver explained that this can be a difficult community to reach into, and therefore difficult to measure outcomes, but places like the Rosmini Centre are well attended by the Eastern European residents and they are volunteering for different things which integrates them in the community;
39. Councillor Buckton asked what further activity is planned with regards to the issue of dog fouling. Councillor Murphy explained that enforcement with regards to dog fouling offences is very difficult. Officers have to be 100% sure that the owner of the dog is not going to come back and pick up the mess at some stage and this is why every Council in the country has difficulty enforcing this issue;
40. Councillor Buckton stated that the plan mentions enforcement plans and asked if we are targeting areas where there are particular problems and ensuring that officers are highly visible. Councillor Murphy confirmed that officers are out and about and are very visible, they talk to dog walkers and people in the community and organise talks for children in schools to raise awareness of the issue;
41. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the report refers to training in relation to domestic abuse and asked when this is scheduled for. Councillor Oliver stated that appendix B of the report refers to this and says that the sessions are to be delivered in September 2015, he agreed to check that it is going ahead and the dates it is taking place and circulate this information to the panel;
42. Councillor Buckton asked where he would be able to find a copy of the Markets Action Plan. Richard Cassidy agreed to circulate a copy to the panel;
43. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that with regards to information on rogue landlords, how are you obtaining this information. Councillor Oliver confirmed that the information is intelligence led, the team are made aware of issues and follow this up with their own investigations;

Councillor Yeulett thanked everyone for their contribution to the discussion this afternoon. The panel are in no doubt that this is a very good service but there will be challenges to face when it comes to providing that same level of service moving forward.

## **OSC14/15 COMMUNITY HOUSE**

Members considered the Community House Report presented by Councillor Cornwell.

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

1. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked what is the purpose of a Councillor. Councillor Cornwell stated that they are to represent their area. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked how many meetings have taken place with local Councillors with regards to Community House. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that there has been none. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she had asked consistently to be kept updated, but has heard nothing. Councillor Cornwell stated that there will be an update coming out to members. He added that there is a

possibility that there will be a gap in the funding and this will need to be looked at. He stated that nobody is trying to hide anything or make this difficult, we are trying to get funding to keep Community House going but it has been very difficult. He stated that there is a question related to this matter included in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and we are hoping that we will get some feedback on this, as we want to get Fenland included in the funding streams. There are some areas in Fenland outside of Wisbech, that unless some action is taken to help them, will move backwards into the deprivation levels, and we want to address this;

2. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked about the partnership with Circle Housing, do they have any intentions of taking the property back. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that Circle Housing have said that they would not be able to guarantee that it would be rent free from April 2016. Richard Cassidy stated that discussions are still ongoing with Circle Housing;
3. Councillor Yeulett stated that there are some good results looking at the report, and added that he appreciates the comments with regards to other areas in Fenland. Councillor Cornwell stated that the DWP scheme at Community House has dealt with people from other areas in Fenland too;
4. Councillor Pugh asked if the Council has approached the colleges with regards to funding, they have deprivation funding available to them that they may be able to access for this type of project. Richard Cassidy agreed to investigate;
5. Councillor Hay asked if the project is good value for money. Councillor Cornwell stated that the DWP think that it is good value for money or they would not have gone down this route, he added that the indicators within the report are green, the community house is hitting its targets.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor expressed a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that she is a Roddons Board Member.

Councillor Buckton expressed a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that he is awaiting confirmation that he is a Roddons Board Member.

## **OSC15/15 MEMBERS' ICT PROVISION**

Members considered the Members' ICT Provision Report presented by Councillor Hay.

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

1. Councillor Yeulett stated that he is disappointed that not more members responded to the questionnaire;
2. Councillor Mrs Bucknor congratulated the members involved in putting this report together, she added that it was done quickly and is pleased to see that this issue is finally moving forward. Members will need to get used to new ways of working. There are many wasted papers after meetings that have been printed 'just in case they are needed', and better use of the screen can cut down on printing too;
3. Councillor Hay stated that we need to make the printable versions of agendas and reports more easy to find online so that people can print the information that they need;
4. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she uses a printer for handouts for street surgeries and newsletters, and hopes that some toner for the printer will still be available for this type of use;
5. Councillor Pugh stated that training for members was highlighted as a requirement too.

**The Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:**

- **That all Members to commit to going paperless, using their existing Tablets/Laptops, and that where requested the council provide loans to Members which could be repaid over the remaining term in office by deduction from Members allowance to enable them to purchase suitable devices (to a maximum of £500, upon submission of a receipt);**
- **That a small number of laptops be made available on loan for use in committee meetings for those who do not wish to provide their own. Members would return these devices to Member Services after each use;**
- **That Training is arranged for all members to facilitate this change and that Members requiring paper copies after 1 April 2016 do so at their own cost;**
- **That a secure, confidential mechanism be created for sharing confidential agenda items with Members;**
- **That the agenda be displayed on a screen at Committee meetings;**
- **That only six paper copies of each meeting agenda be provided for members of the public attending meetings;**
- **Laptops and printers currently supplied by the Council to Members should be returned as soon as possible with no further printer consumables being supplied;**
- **That the above recommendations are included in a report by this Panel, to be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 17 September 2015.**

#### **OSC16/15 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered the Future Work Programme 2015/16 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel making the following comments:

- as discussed earlier in the meeting, 3C's across the whole council should be added to the work programme;
- Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Update to be added to November 2015.

**Members agreed the Future Work Programme 2015/16 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel subject to the amendments above.**

4.35pm

Chairman