

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6 JUNE 2016 - 2:30PM



PRESENT: Councillor Yeulett (Chairman), Councillors Buckton, Count, Humphrey, Mrs Laws and Mrs Mayor.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Mrs Hay (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Bucknor, Mrs Davis, Garratt and Mason

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jane Bailey (Member Services and Governance), Richard Cassidy (Corporate Director), Geoff Kent (Head of Customer Services) and Mark Mathews (Head of Environmental Services)

Councillor Yeulett welcomed Councillor Count to his first meeting as a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

OSC40/15 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

Councillor Yeulett was appointed as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year.

OSC41/15 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

Councillor Mrs Hay was appointed as Vice-Chairman for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year.

OSC42/15 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 4 April were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising

Councillor Yeulett stated that Roddons have come forward with replies to questions raised at an earlier meeting and with notification of contact details as requested.

Richard Cassidy stated that following recommendations from members at that meeting a dedicated member email address is now in place and the details have been circulated to all members.

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

OSC43/15 GARDEN WASTE CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

Richard Cassidy and Mark Mathews presented the Garden Waste Consultation Overview, they circulated an updated version of the consultation survey following some changes recommended by Cabinet.

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

1. Councillor Yeulett stated that efficiencies over the past few years have resulted in reductions in the cost of the service despite the costs of additional rounds; he asked for clarification that the increased rounds were as a result of the increase of houses in the area. Richard Cassidy confirmed that the efficiencies have worked to delay the costs of additional rounds which are as a result of new developments in the area, as house building increases the number of collections;
2. Councillor Humphrey asked how refuse collectors deal with contaminated contents of the brown bin. Richard Cassidy stated that refuse collectors have a quick look into the bin, if they can see that the wrong material is in the bin they will put a sticker on it which tells the customer that the bin is contaminated and therefore was not emptied. There are instructions for the customer to contact us so that we can explain what they should do;
3. Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that she was surprised that some customers continue to use the wrong bins when sorting waste. Richard Cassidy stated that we will encourage customers to correctly sort waste through a combination of education and where necessary enforcement of standards;
4. Councillor Mrs Laws asked how many bins are contaminated each year. RC agreed to investigate and feedback after the meeting;
5. Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that she uses a food bin in the kitchen which is transferred to the brown bin to recycle food waste, and did not realise that so much food waste goes into the other bins. Councillor Buckton added that when you talk to residents about this they are concerned about attracting flies. Councillor Yeulett suggested that we should get the message out to people about recycling food waste. Richard Cassidy agreed that getting more information to customers about these issues is a good idea;
6. Councillor Yeulett asked a question on behalf of Councillor Mrs Bucknor as follows: While charging for garden waste has been common practice in other councils for some time, what research and impact on fly tipping has occurred? Richard Cassidy stated that other local authorities we have consulted have not found that additional fly tipping is a significant issue. It is anticipated that many people that are already engaged and recycle their garden waste using the brown bins will buy into the new scheme;
7. Councillor Humphrey stated that people who use the brown bins for garden waste are more likely to put it into another brown bin than to fly tip. Richard Cassidy agreed and stated that existing fly tipping is commonly other materials than garden waste; other local authorities have not seen an increase in fly tipping. Currently there are approximately 80 fly tipping cases reported each month, about half of these cases are household rubbish and the other half is commercial waste. The Government recognise that fly-tipping is a problem and have recently given powers to issue fixed penalty notices which we are intending to introduce. The Street Scene Officers have been involved in a campaign to encourage people to tell us if they know someone has been fly-tipping which we can then investigate;
8. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that we need to get better at publicising these prosecutions when they happen. Richard Cassidy stated that every time we prosecute we send a story to the local newspaper, unfortunately we cannot guarantee that the press will always print the story;
9. Councillor Mrs Laws suggested that the story could be published in local parish and town magazines. Richard Cassidy agreed to investigate whether town and parishes already receive the press releases, but agreed that this would be a way to ensure publication;
10. Councillor Buckton stated that there is also a query with regards to the paper sacks and asked for clarification about the service for the properties that use these. Richard Cassidy stated that there are approximately 500 properties in Fenland that use paper sacks. These are used where it is difficult to place or collect a brown bin. We are not keen to continue the paper sack service, as it is an expensive service to provide, but need to understand how we will manage the garden waste for these customers moving forward; This forms part of the consultation questions

11. Councillor Yeulett asked a question on behalf of Councillor Mrs Bucknor as follows: Can the council waste disposal sites cater for the enormous increase of visitors and waste? Richard Cassidy stated that the County Council, who manage the household waste sites, have been engaged in relation to the proposed charging for garden waste. The household waste sites are run by contractors and the County Council has been liaising with their contractor. The experience of other authorities is that the amount of waste collected through the chargeable system remains 70-80% the same. Some material currently collected will be home composted or will no longer be produced and will not enter the system. Some material could move to the household waste site but it is not clear if this results in additional traffic;
12. Councillor Yeulett stated that the panel had looked at and discussed the document at the pre-meeting and feel that the survey is good, and that residents completing the survey do not want too many questions or they will not engage. Richard Cassidy stated that officers had worked hard to try to get it right, we have tried to keep it simple and given people 4-6 weeks to complete and return it. It is also a way of preparing residents for the charge by being clear about what we are trying to achieve;
13. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that officers had shown a map in the presentation which included details of charges for the same service in surrounding areas, she asked if this could be placed on the website so residents can see it, she suggested that Peterborough should be added to the map as Whittlesey residents will compare themselves to that area. Richard Cassidy agreed;
14. Councillor Buckton suggested that the council should not be using terminology such as 'difficult decisions' and 'tough decisions' but that these decisions should just be referred to as 'decisions'. Richard Cassidy stated that he is happy to discuss this further, but explained that this use of language is to try to get over to people that we are not taking these decisions lightly;
15. Councillor Yeulett stated that other discussions at the pre-meeting were about the costing for the customer. He wanted to ensure that the suggested fee of £40 would include everything and that there would be no additional cost to the customer. Richard Cassidy confirmed that it is intended that the fee includes everything for the customer who has an existing brown bin. He stated that no matter what the charge is, it will be unpopular to begin with. The first years fee is an estimate, but in the following years the fee will depend on the number of customers that have signed up to the scheme. So the more people that sign up, the lower the fee and if fewer people sign up, the fee may increase slightly. We feel that customers will feel that they understand the fees if we are transparent about how we work out the figures behind the charges;
16. Councillor Mrs Mayor asked for clarification that if there are lots of customers that sign up to the scheme you will reduce the charge. Richard Cassidy stated that it was intended that the charge would be reviewed each year based on the previous year's take up. These would be included in the fees and charges report that comes to this panel for scrutiny;
17. Councillor Humphrey stated that if the charges are set at £40, but the take up is good it might be better to keep the charge at that level, as an increase in the year following if take up falls will not be popular. Richard Cassidy stated that although to begin with the charge will not be popular, it is a fair charge and looking at other local authorities there is a big variation;
18. Councillor Humphrey asked for clarification with regards to households who request and pay for an additional brown bin, will the second bin be charged at a reduced rate. Richard Cassidy stated that there would be a one off charge to receive the new bin, but the actual annual charge for the second bin could be reduced slightly, although we do not want to encourage misuse of the second bin at another property for example;

19. Councillor Mrs Laws asked why a customer of an additional brown bin would receive a new bin. She suggested recycling some of the bins from properties that were not buying into the scheme. Richard Cassidy stated that the arrangements for the old bins are still being discussed as it is not clear what the best way forward is. It is not financially advantageous to collect them all, they are about 10 years old and many will not be suitable to be reused, however, re-using bins that were sound would be preferable to issuing new ones;
20. Councillor Yeulett stated that the panel feel that any bins that are not being used should be collected as they are a potential problem otherwise. Richard Cassidy stated that if someone wants the bin collected we will collect it, but if someone wants to keep it and make use of it in another way we are happy for them to keep it as it is not financially advantageous to collect;
21. Councillor Mrs Laws asked how the refuse collectors will recognise the households and bins that have paid and should be collected. Richard Cassidy explained that the bins included in the scheme would be identified with a large and clearly marked sticker, he showed some examples of stickers that other authorities use;
22. Councillor Mrs Laws asked what happens if her neighbours swap bins, will the refuse collector have to check every address. Richard Cassidy stated that in cab technology will know the addresses that are included in the scheme and will let the refuse collectors know which should be collected;
23. Councillor Mrs Laws asked for clarification around the second brown bins, she asked if we are looking at buying in new bins or making use of recycled bins, and will this affect the cost. Richard Cassidy confirmed that some bins will come back that are not damaged and will be able to be reused, but others will not be re-useable and will have to be recycled. The charge for the bin is also closely associated with delivery costs and not directly based on the purchase cost of the bin;
24. Councillor Yeulett asked if we should be promoting the idea of having a second brown bin. Richard Cassidy confirmed that for those that will make use of it we are promoting the second bin;
25. Councillor Buckton stated that the FAQ's say that the second bin will also cost £40, he asked if that is likely to change as a result of the consultation. Richard Cassidy stated that we could consider reducing the cost of the second bin a little, but we want to ensure that people use it and do not misuse it by using it for a second property for example;
26. Councillor Yeulett stated that we should encourage re-use of the bins from households where they will not be required, he asked for clarification that everything is included in the £40 fee. Richard Cassidy stated that if we anticipate a lot of bins being collected that could be costly and might affect the scheme price;
27. Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that the information about moving house and moving the collection arrangements from your property appeared to be confusing and asked for clarification. Richard Cassidy stated that the proposal is generous with regards to moving home. If someone moves house midway through the year they take the arrangements to their new address as long as their new address is in Fenland, but the arrangements at the old address also remain so that the new residents can make use of the collection until the end of the year when they will be offered to buy in to the service themselves;
28. Councillor Yeulett asked if there will be concessions offered to households on benefits and if there will be an early bird discount as mentioned on the survey. Richard Cassidy stated that there will be no concessions offered for households on benefits as the cost to the council to monitor people's ability to pay will increase the cost overall. There may be an opportunity for an early bird discount, a discount for paying by direct debit, or an option to pay in instalments but not a different fee depending on your ability to pay;
29. Councillor Yeulett asked what happens if someone moves into Fenland from another area. Richard Cassidy stated that the resident would have to pay in full for the scheme unless arrangements were already left in place by the previous household;

30. Councillor Yeulett stated that members are concerned that Chatteris has no household recycling centre and that this may lead to problems. Richard Cassidy stated that many of the people who make use of the household recycling centres for garden waste may make use of the option to have an additional bin;
31. Councillor Yeulett asked if the recycling centres can cope with the additional waste. Richard Cassidy stated that if 40% opted into the scheme they would still generate up to 80% of the waste, therefore, we are not anticipating a huge increase at the recycling centres, although as stated previously we are working closely with the County Council in relation to minimising any impact;
32. Councillor Yeulett asked what the arrangements are for stolen or missing bins. Richard Cassidy stated that the arrangements will be as they are now, if your bin is stolen we will replace it;
33. Councillor Yeulett asked if checking if a property is eligible for collection has been costed into the scheme, as this will take longer during refuse collection rounds. Richard Cassidy stated that using the sticker on the bins and the in-cab system which has all of the properties logged into it, collection times should not take any longer than they do now;
34. Councillor Mrs Laws asked how the consultation survey is being distributed to households. Richard Cassidy confirmed that it is being sent out via royal mail;
35. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that she is concerned about the opening hours for household recycle centres. Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that she is concerned about fly tipping outside the centres when people arrive but the centre is closed. Richard Cassidy stated that we will work closely with Cambridgeshire County Council to design a scheme in partnership with them;
36. Councillor Yeulett stated that it is important that we get the message out to people about recycling kitchen waste and recycling in general. Richard Cassidy stated that we are looking at starting up a scheme to introduce recycling champions to the community, these would be people who are enthusiastic about recycling and waste issues. This is a scheme that works well in other areas;
37. Councillor Buckton stated that he had been involved starting a similar scheme with recycling champions and that it was very successful way of promoting recycling in the community;
38. Councillor Humphrey stated that we should be promoting recycling at community events. Richard Cassidy agreed stating that there is more that we can do and we are looking at different approaches to promote recycling.

Councillor Yeulett thanked the officers for attending today stating that he hopes the panel's input has been helpful.

Richard Cassidy thanked the Panel.

(Councillor Count declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that he is the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council and left the room for this item)

(Councillor Yeulett declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that he is a Councillor at Cambridgeshire County Council)

(All Councillors present declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that they are Fenland residents and users of the garden waste service)

OSC44/15 DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report presented by Councillor Yeulett.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed to approve the Annual Report for forwarding to Council.

OSC45/15 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Future Work Programme 2016/17 for the Overview and Scrutiny making the following comments:

1. Councillor Yeulett stated he is concerned that portfolio holders are not available for scheduled items that are on the work programme and suggested that cabinet members should have a deputy to attend if they cannot;
2. Councillor Yeulett suggested that the Leisure item scheduled for the July meeting should be rescheduled as Councillor Tanfield is not available to attend. As the work programme is very busy it was suggested that an additional meeting should be organised during August for this item.

Members agreed the Future Work Programme 2016/17 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel subject to the comments above.

4.03pm

Chairman