

Scrutiny Streets, Environment & Homes Sub-Committee

Meeting of held on Tuesday, 9 October 2018 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber - Town Hall

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Sean Fitzsimons (Chair);
Councillor Jan Buttinger (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Robert Canning, Richard Chatterjee, Luke Clancy and
Callton Young

Also Present: Councillor Stuart Collins, Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon
Councillor Joy Prince

Steve Iles, Director of Public Realm
Tom Lawrence, Head of Environmental Services
Scott Edgell, Veolia

Apologies: Councillor Felicy Flynn sent her apologies, Councillor Joy Prince was in attendance in her absence.

PART A

26/18 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that a response to the letter of recommendations sent to the Department of Transport had been received following the meeting of 26 June 2018. This would be circulated to Members.

27/18 Disclosure of Interests

There were none.

28/18 Urgent Business (if any)

There were no items of urgent business.

Cabinet Member Question Time: Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon

Councillor Stuart Collins, Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon gave a presentation outlining the visions for his portfolio and the aims required to fulfil the intended outcomes.

During the course of the presentation it was noted that Croydon was a large and heavily populated borough with 24 Wards all different in character which presented a range of varying challenges. Croydon's recycling rate had been improving year on year, with 37.91% for 2017/18, and Q1 so far at 45.5% with 2019/20 targeted to achieve a rate of over 50%.

It was also noted that there were many areas of challenge and priorities which included the following:

- Croydon was looking to establish its leadership in effective waste management and sustainability by achieving a 50% plus recycling rate.
- A national campaign was needed on behavioural change in order to collectively tackle issues of fly tipping through an intelligence led approach. The Cabinet Member has written to separate ministers on this issue and would welcome support from Members about who else should be contacted directly on this matter.
- Opportunities to utilise the platform given by being part of the South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) to lobby the government on environmental issues were being considered.
- The Grounds Maintenance contract will be returning in-house and it was acknowledged that a lot of work was required to successfully manage the transition process.
- Further work was needed with Veolia on the prevention of bins on Croydon pavements.
- The process for the cutting of grass verges across the borough would be reviewed.
- The Free Bulky Waste service would be reviewed and take account of the financial implications for the Council.
- The Education Programme on recycling continued to be successful with 52 primary schools signed up. The target remained for all primary schools in the borough to be signed up by 2019/20.
- There had been a restructure within the 'Place Department' which included the merger of two existing posts and the amalgamation of frontline and operational services to ensure a more strategic approach to waste enforcement. An appointment had been made to the position of Director of Public Realm.

The Sub-Committee were advised that the borough was currently in week six of a twelve week roll out of the new waste service, which had been implemented as part of a drive to promote behavioural change and encourage more recycling. Prior to the roll out, notice of the changes had been sent to all residents. The initiative had been predominantly successful to date, with people within the waste and recycling industry commenting that it had been one of the most successful roll outs of a new scheme. There has been some

issues which was to be expected, but overall there had been minimal disruption to services, with missed collection rates under 1%. The contractor had been given this 12 week period to identify and address any issues, after which there were strict targets that would be challenging for Veolia and could result in sanctions if not met.

It was noted that all collection and recycling routes had been rescheduled and once the new timetable had imbedded, further disruption to services was not anticipated. The clinical waste service arrangements will continue to be provided by Veolia under the current arrangements with no planned changes.

In response to request for clarification about how the recycling figures for quarter one had been calculated, officers advised that the figures presented were always from the previous quarter so in effect were a quarter behind and over each quarter the figures evened out as typically recycling rates were higher in quarter one and two due to garden waste. The new bin roll out resulted in a 45% rate for September.

It was questioned why the presentation alluded to a £10m saving over a 10 year period from the reduction of landfill costs, when the SLWP report stated a figure of £2m over 10 years. Officers confirmed that the £2m was a net figure which took into consideration Landfill avoidance costs over a 10 year period.

All members of the Sub-Committee shared a concern about the possible withdrawal of the free bulky waste collection service, with it considered to be a detrimental step. The Cabinet Member confirmed that there were no plans to withdraw the service. It was also made clear that while it was acknowledged that it was a popular service for residents, it was always intended that it would be reviewed as was usual for all Council services, due to the amount of public money that was being spent. The Council had a responsibility to ensure that it was cost effective and achieved the results initially intended which was to reduce fly tipping.

It was suggested that the scope to coordinate the work of the fly tipping and bulky waste teams should be explored to improve collection times for bulky waste collection. Officers advised that it may be difficult to do so due to the differences in the types of material retrieved from each of the collection services, but welcomes the positive suggestion. Further assurance was provided that cost effective opportunities to improve the services would continue to be explored and all suggestions were welcomed.

A Member thanked officers for the informative and positive presentation and acknowledged that tangible benefits would be experienced in the longer term. A question was asked about what steps had been taken to ensure that streets were free of spillage after dust carts had collected rubbish. Officers replied that traditionally street cleansing took place after collection due to the potential for spillage, but it was expected that the new contained boxes would significantly reduce spillage. Additionally the new fleet had more measures in place to prevent spillage which would help to resolve street cleansing issues.

Members of the Sub-Committee raised concerns about the size of the new bins and questioned the decision made to provide the largest capacity bins. The Cabinet Member informed Members that the decision to implement the largest capacity bins available was taken to future proof the system and reduce the need for any further changes in years to come. Additionally 70% of household waste currently collected was recyclable and as such the decision was taken to deliberately reduce the size of waste bins in order to encourage more recycling. There is a national target to reduce waste and increase recycling and a recognised need to change the culture for environmental purposes.

It was further acknowledged that there would be some homes that had more items to recycle than others and by deploying the largest capacity bins allowed for this. Residents had been informed to contact the Council if they were experiencing issues with the smaller capacity waste bins. Officers also stated that there had been less than 1% complaints received regarding the new service and they had been working hard to rectify any issues highlighted. Veolia had been working to build its relationship and trust with residents by ensuring that services ran smoothly and through the continued review of any identified issues. Assisted collections for the elderly would continue with residents encouraged to contact the Council to arrange for this service where needed. Additionally Veolia officers worked with street champions and maintained the relationship in order to be kept aware of areas of required improvement.

It was noted that further increases in the recycling rate would be positive and Members would welcome information in the future on identified reasons behind the increase.

It was also questioned whether there would be any future changes to the frequency of collection services. Officers reassured Members that there were no plans to reduce the frequency of services. There was now stability in the service, residents have had to experience many changes over recent years and they can be reassured that there were no further changes planned.

Officers agreed that there were still many identified challenges to be resolved including collections from flats, with consideration to be given to the type of provision that would allow for access to recycling. Houses of multiple occupancy also presented challenges. The plan was to roll out a dedicated service for flats, with work underway to plan how this could be done effectively.

In response to questions about the monitoring of performance management of street cleaning, officers advised that there was a team of four monitoring officers who undertook inspections each month, sometimes in known hotspots in the borough but also on an ad-hoc responsive basis. Data was gathered and reported on a quarterly basis. As part of the contract there were penalties and sanctions for poor performance. Veolia had been informed that they must ensure that bins were taken back to the curtilage and not left on pavements,

which would be closely monitored. Street Cleansing had been successful with monitoring figures demonstrating that streets were being kept to the expected standards. Officers agreed to share street cleansing performance statistics with the Sub-Committee.

The Chair commented that the performance of the contractor used by Veolia for the delivery of the bins, Jett had been disappointing and that their performance should have been monitored more closely. Officers acknowledged that there had been challenges with areas of weakness identified and dealt with appropriately. Valuable lessons had been learnt.

The Sub-Committee learned that in order for savings to be realised for the boroughs in the SLWP, contractors had to adhere to strict performance targets, which were closely monitored. It was imperative to ensure that they were all getting the best value from the partnership, which resulted approximately £5m savings each year.

SLWP had discussed how to relay information to the public on the effectiveness of the recycling campaign and the journey of each recycling stream. Suggestions included side panels of collection vehicles being used to display information and information being uploaded to dedicated pages within each borough's website. Members commented on the importance of providing information to residents about the journey of the recycling and gave an example of food waste, which Veolia stated was sent to Anaerobic plants for processing. The Member stated that it was important for residents to know that their food waste was used to produce compost and turned into renewable energy, with a view that this knowledge could assist in changing attitudes and encourage more recycling.

A Member questioned what research had been carried out to identify the external factors that influenced fly tipping and what checks were carried out on licenced carriers to ensure that they were not involved in the practice. Officers advised that it was unusual for licenced carriers to fly tip due to the penalties and possible implications. The enforcement team worked closely with the police to conduct regular surveillance and it was very rare to catch a licenced carrier fly tipping. It was known that the most prolific offenders were people who were indifference to the fact that there was a free bulky waste collection service available that could be utilised.

The proposals to reduce the number of cuts made to highway verges was questioned and in response officers advised that there was an opportunity to review how the service was delivered, as some areas had been identified as requiring more frequent maintenance than other.

The Chair commented on the increase in graffiti across the borough and lack of visibility of vacuum cleaners in Wards. Officers agreed to provide an update to Member on Council performance on both of these issues.

The Chair asked for an update on the interactive services and what had been done to ensure the interface of the systems promised for the last few years

had taken place. Officers advised that the Council was undergoing a review of its digital contracts, the new systems had not progressed as far as expected and the Director of Public Realm stated that this was an area of priority. The Chair stated that the response was disappointed and would be discussing with the Sub-Committee the possibility of extending an invite to the Chief Digital Officer to attend Scrutiny to discuss this in greater detail.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance and answers to questions.

In reaching its recommendations, the Sub-Committee reached the following **CONCLUSIONS**:

1. The Cabinet Member and officers were thanked for their presentation and report
2. Although the roll out of the bins had been successful in most areas, there were notable issues in some areas by Jett the company used to deliver the bins.
3. It was encouraging that Croydon residents were recycling 38% of their household waste.
4. There were concerns regarding the size of bins and the Council's decision of a one size fits all policy.
5. The Members were not convinced with the Cabinet Members response that the choice to use the largest capacity bin was a means of future proofing the service.
6. There had been a lack of communication with Councillors on decisions made surrounding the roll out. Councillors has not been consulted on the potential impact within their individual wards.
7. Further work was needed to raise awareness of assisted collections for members of the Community who required this service.
8. It was acknowledged that Veolia recognised the sporadic and often poor performance by Jett throughout this project and that their performance should be monitored.
9. That the Free Bulky Waste collection service should continue to be monitored to ensure that it fulfilled its initial purpose and was reviewed against the occurrences of fly tipping in order to mitigate potential environmental implications.
10. That the Scrutiny and Overview Committee add to its work programme an item on the Council's Digital Roll Out Programme. In particular the areas of Software Integration that should have been implemented as advised.
11. There appeared to be a reduction in the presence of Electric Vacuums Cleaners in some Wards.
12. Occurrences of Graffiti appeared to be on the rise, in particular on shop fronts in some Wards and more needed to be done to tackle this issue.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Recommend to the Cabinet that the Sub-Committee fully supported the retention of the free Bulky Waste Collection service

2. Recommend to the Cabinet that the Council review its 'one size fits all' policy that has been adopted in deciding the capacity of bins, in particular for households who consistently produced a small amount of waste.
3. Recommend that the Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon confirm that there would be no further changes to the waste and recycling collection service timetable.
4. Recommend that the Council actively engaged with residents to promote the importance of recycling. In order to promote behavioural change the Council should focus on encouraging residents to recycle and working with them in a positive manner.
5. Recommend that the Council provides information to residents on the recycling programme, such as producing information on anaerobic digestion so that they were aware that the food waste they recycled was used to generate energy or processed into renewable natural gas and fuel.
6. Recommend to the Cabinet that a review of the Councils Digital Programme be conducted, as there were concerns that the programme which was promised several years ago had not occurred as described or as anticipated.
7. Recommend to the Council that officers report back to the Sub-Committee on the findings from the review of difficult properties, such as those above commercial premises in the bin roll out programme.
8. Recommend to the Council that an update on performance relating to the removal of Graffiti be provided to the Sub-Committee.
9. Recommend to the Council that an update on the roll out, performance and any changes in the use of Electric Vacuum Cleaners be provided to the Sub-Committee.

30/18 South London Waste Partnership Update

It was agreed that no further discussion would take place on this item as all discussion had taken place under the Cabinet Member Question Time section of the meeting.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

31/18 Work Programme 2018/19

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the work programme for the remainder of the 2018/19 municipal year.

32/18 Exclusion of the Press and Public

This was not required

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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