

OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

3 September 2019 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Coster (Chairman), Clayden (Vice-Chair), Bennett, Bicknell, B Blanchard-Cooper, Mrs Catterson, Dendle, Elkins, English, Huntley, Miss Rhodes, Miss Seex, Tilbrook and Mrs Worne

Councillors Mrs Gregory, Lury, Oppler, Purchase, Stanley and Mrs Yeates were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

Apologies were received from Councillor Dr Walsh – Leader of the Council.

181. WELCOME

A warm welcome was extended to members of the Public, Press and Members of the Committee in attendance by the Chairman.

182. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made.

183. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview Select Meeting held on 25 June 2019, as previously circulated, were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

184. COMBINED CLEANSING SERVICES CONTRACT - REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE SINCE AWARD AND EXTENSION OF CONTRACT

[During the course of the discussion of this item Councillor Elkins and Councillor Purchase made personal declarations as Members of West Sussex County Council]

In introducing the report, the Environmental Services and Strategy Manager welcomed Laura Parker, Biffa's Business Manager, to the meeting. The report, presented to the Committee provided an overview of the scope of operations delivered by Biffa, how these were managed and explored the contractual performance achieved during 2018/19.

The Committee were reminded that Arun District Council's three-year Combined Cleansing Services Contract commenced on 1 February 2017, having been awarded to Biffa Municipal Ltd. In December 2017 the then Cabinet agreed to a further three-year extension of the contract up to 2023. It was previously reported that the extension would allow the Council to retain a cost effective and high performing service as well as being able to fully explore service delivery before the next competitive tender process.

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The Environmental Services and Strategy Manager outlined the key services that the Combined Cleansing Services Contract provided as:

- Weekly refuse collection
- Bi-weekly recycling collection
- Bi-Weekly garden waste collection
- Street Cleansing (including the removal of fly tipping)
- Emptying and cleaning of 612 Litter Bins and 450 Dog Waste Bins
- Cleansing Service for all of the Council's public conveniences
- Small waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) weekly collection
- Weekly clinical waste collection (carried out by Medisort who are based in Littlehampton)
- Bulky waste collection (chargeable, on demand service)

Members were also reminded that management of this Contract was completed by the Council's Cleansing Team with rigorous monitoring and regular performance reviews undertaken. It was also highlighted that the support received from Arun Direct dealing with resident enquiries and complaints was invaluable to ensuring that they were resolved at first contact where possible.

An overview of the key performance measures and indicators was explained to Members and it was advised that nationally the results show that Biffa was a well performing team, alongside the low number of Complaints received that further support the confirmation that the contract was performing well.

Laura Parker, Biffa Business Manager, then provided the Committee with a presentation that outlined the service structure in place to deliver the Arun contract.

Following the presentation, a number of questions were asked. Key points raised were:

- **Recycling** - new upcoming initiatives to help promote education for residents in terms of what can be recycled. It was also confirmed that West Sussex County Council (WSCC) work collaboratively with schools in the area offering education sessions through their Waste-Buster initiative. It was also suggested that the Council might consider education sessions for the public at seasonal events in the future. Further discussion was had in relation to multiple occupation properties, in particular flats to ensure enough bins and recycling bins are made available for these residents. It was also confirmed that where refuse and or recycling issues are highlighted the Council do work proactively to educate residents and had seen great results.
- Confirmation was sought regarding the recycling process of small Waste Electrical Equipment and Textiles collection (WEEE) to ensure that these items were not ending up as landfill. It was confirmed that all elements of WEEE were being recycled properly and correctly.
- It was reported that WSCC had responsibility for recycling of plastic waste and how and what happens to this product was out of Arun District

Council's control. A further suggestion was made for Members to reach out to the Cabinet Member for the Environment at WSCC for further details on the process they use.

- **Carbon footprint** – the Biffa Business Manager was asked how modern their vehicle fleet was and what were Biffa looking at to proactively reduce their CO2 emissions. It was explained that whilst the age of a number of vehicles within the fleet varied, Biffa were currently investigating the option of electric vehicles, however with it being relatively new technology it needed to have careful consideration before decisions were made. Members were reassured that it was a matter that was very high on their agenda.
- **Brexit** – Members were keen to understand the impact of a no deal Brexit. It was confirmed that the Council was satisfied the risks were minimal and would have very little impact.
- **Green Waste Service** - Several comments relating to the cost of Green Waste collections were raised by Members who wanted to know if the Council would consider making the Green Waste Collections a free service, given the success of the initiative since it started in 2006. It was confirmed that currently there had not been any discussion on the topic and therefore an answer could not be provided at the current time. Confirmation from the Biffa Business Manager was that whilst it was good to see an increasing customer base, that it now meant there was an increase in service delivery costs to run the initiative. It was also confirmed by the Chief Executive that Central Government were expected to announce possible further funding in the Autumn 2019 and that while there was clearly strong feeling amongst the Committee, it might be premature to look to consider any changes when funding could be available shortly.

After further discussion Councillor Dendle proposed that the Council look to introduce a free garden waste service. This was seconded by Councillor Miss Rhodes.

Debate then took place on the proposal and a summary of the key points made are highlighted below;

- Contractually there would be a significant cost implication which the Council would need to bear.
- As the Council were waiting for the directive from the Government to come forward, it would be untimely to make a decision now.

Councillor Dendle stated that based on the debate that had taken place he wished to make an amendment to his original proposal to read as follows, “that Arun District Council introduce a free/reduced cost green waste service, subject to the Government's decision on funding.” This was seconded by Councillor Miss Rhodes.

Debate on the amended proposal led to Councillor Bennett putting forward a counter proposal to read as follows, “that this Committee asks the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and Officers to prepare a detailed financial report on what would

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happen if we were to implement a completely free or reduced cost green waste service now or at the end of the Contract and how much would it cost the tax payer at each of these stages.” This was seconded by Councillor Mrs Catterson.

Members discussed the importance of education for recycling, re-use of waste and composting benefits for residents within the Arun District when debating the proposal made by Councillor Bennett.

The Committee Manager reminded Members of Councillor Dendle’s first proposal as amended, as a vote still needed to take place.

As the result of the vote was tied (7 voting for, 7 voting against) the Chairman confirmed he would use his casting vote. This resulted in the amendment falling.

The Committee then turned to the counter proposal (put forward by Councillor Bennett), this was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

The Committee therefore

RESOLVED -

“That the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Officers prepare a detailed financial report detailing the implications to possibly implementing a completely free or reduced cost Green Waste Service now or at the end of the Contract, looking at how much this would cost the Tax Payer at each of these stages.”

The Chairman thanked The Environmental Services & Strategy Manager and Biffa’s Business Manager for providing a detail update.

185. HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT (HRA) REVIEW

The Group Head of Residential Services presented her report outlining the HRA that was introduced on 3 April 2018 and was the most significant change in the last 30 years introducing new assessment, prevention and relief duties owed to people who found they were homeless or had been threatened with homelessness, irrespective of priority need or if they were deemed to have made themselves intentionally homeless.

The legislation was now focused to prevent homelessness within a 56-day period (previously 28 days), under the new duties, local housing authorities are required to carry out an assessment and develop a personalised housing plan with any applicant. If the applicant was threatened with homelessness, a prevention duty would be owed, in that circumstance the personalised housing plan would aim to enable the applicant to stay in their current accommodation or find a new place to live. If an individual becomes or was already homeless a relief duty would become owed and the steps in their personalised housing plan would aim to assist the individual to secure suitable accommodation for a period of at least 6 months. Each stage comprises of a 56-day timeframe.

At the current time the Act had been in force for 16 months, and one of the implications of the Act to date was that the Council had seen an increase in individuals presenting themselves as homeless, and that was found to be because individuals can present as homeless or threatened with homelessness much earlier on.

A further impact of the Act on the Council was the significant increase in the administrative work required to be completed. The redirection of resource was impeding the Council's ability to meet the needs of applicants at risk of homelessness. However, it was explained the team had standardised a lot of the administration tasks as far as currently possible.

The Residential Services team had recently been successful with a bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for funding of £120,000 over 12 months to focus on its dedicated approach to accessing the private rented sector, which would reduce the use of time spent in temporary and emergency accommodation.

Members participated in a full discussion of which the key points have been highlighted below:

- Confirmation of details of the top reasons individuals present as homeless was 1) Household had been served notice, 2) Friend or Family eviction and 3) Relationship Breakdown.
- Concern was raised in relation to individuals who don't want to present as Homeless due to recovering from addiction and worrying they would be placed in a shared accommodation that would not be appropriate for a recovering addict. It was confirmed that the very best would be done to ensure that individuals would be placed in the best type of accommodation for their own needs, however it was subject to availability.
- The financial implications of the Act raised some concern amongst the Members. Reassurance was given that there was a huge amount of work being completed in terms of prevention, in conjunction with work to increase the number of social housing properties available through S106's and finally a dedicated approach to working with Landlords.
- The funding cuts made by WSCC to charities such as Stone Pillow and what the impact of these cuts would be on the Arun District was of interest to Members. It was advised that at the current time the cuts have not yet been implemented and would not be until later in the year.

The Committee expressed thanks to The Group Head of Residential Services and her team for their great work and noted the report update.

186. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS REFERRED TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN RELATING TO PLANNING MATTERS

The Director of Place updated Members on his report that summarised the complaints considered by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) during 2018/19 which related to matters pertaining to planning.

The request for further information on complaints received relating specifically to planning came from Members at the Overview Select Committee meeting on 25 June 2019. He explained that the report provided a review of the period 2018/19 as well as the outcome of the eight stage 2 complaints received related to planning, which were considered and concluded by the Council during the same time.

He went on to explain that learning points had been identified and that training and the review of processes were an ongoing focus along with implementation of the recommendations from the 2018 Planning Peer Review. It was also highlighted that the approach taken with stage 1 complaints had also been reviewed and it showed that, the more rigorous the investigation at that level, specifically providing the customer with a full explanation to their complaint, the fewer stage 2 complaints received.

There was some discussion on the location and position of planning notices, with Members highlighting that some of the notices were placed so high up that wheel-chair users would find them very difficult to read. It was confirmed that there were restrictions in terms of where the planning notices could be placed and this sometimes leave the Council with very few options, however it was agreed that ensuring that notices were placed at a lower reading level was an expectation and that if anyone finds any examples of notices not placed correctly, it should be reported to the Group Head of Planning or the Director of Place to ensure that feedback could be provided. Further confirmation was provided regarding concerns raised that some planning notices had been placed at both the front and rear of some properties, however it was confirmed that while this was not a new process, the last 6 months had seen a particular focus on ensuring that all of those residents who needed a view of the planning notice were given equal opportunity to see it on display and that was why placement at the front and rear of properties was being completed. It was agreed that the Council would reach out to local Parish Councils to advise them of this process to avoid any unnecessary complaints from residents.

The Director of Place when summing up confirmed that the Council would be looking to deliver a service/app called Planning Finder. This facility would allow you to input a postcode and it would confirm what planning applications were in that area as well allowing for representations to be made.

The Committee noted the report update.

187. FEEDBACK FROM MEETINGS OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 28 JUNE 2019

The Committee received and noted the feedback report from the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing, Councillor Mrs Yeates following her attendance at the meeting of the Sussex Police and Crime Panel held on 28 June 2019.

Members participated in a full discussion of which the key points have been highlighted below:

- It was requested that data be provided to the Committee to support the promise of improvements that are to or had be made to the 101-reporting service to ensure that the service was now being managed effectively.
- During discussion relating to the reduced number of PCSO's it was stated by Councillor Miss Seex that River Ward crime figures showed more crime per head than the whole of the Chichester District, Councillor Mrs Yeates advised she would investigate and come back to her with a response.
- A suggestion was made by Councillor English that the Committee should write to the Police representative on the Joint Area Committee's to ask what the current arrangements were to replace PCSO's as a valuable local intelligence and enforcement function as he felt this would provide a prompt response.

The Committee then noted the report.

188. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS AND UPDATES

There were no questions submitted ahead of the meeting.

The Chairman asked the Cabinet Member for Technical Services the following question;

"In connection with the no. 2-4 Waterloo Square demolition, how did we get into this situation with the poor condition of this building and the tenant failing to maintain it properly? And what procedures do the Council have to ensure that maintenance on all owned or leased properties is kept in good condition?"

Councillor Stanley advised the Chairman that the Council now had a list of all the properties that were owned or leased within a conservation area, however he would need to investigate further in order to answer the question fully and advised that he would respond at a later date.

Councillor Dendle asked the Cabinet Member for Corporate Support the following question;

"I have been trying to obtain the figures relating to the Annual list of payments made to Councillors in 2019/19 but have been unable, can you explain why?"

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The Chief Executive answered the question put forward by explaining that it was simply a matter of work load for the team completing the work and it would be completed as soon as it could be.”

189. WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20 FULL YEAR

The Group Head of Policy drew the Committee’s attention to the Equalities and Diversity Policy that had been added to the Work Programme. She requested that members who would like to be involved in the review make contact with her after the meeting.

The Committee then noted the work programme

(The meeting concluded at 8.28 pm)