

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

held on 25 January 2021

Present:

Cllr D E Hughes (Chair)
Cllr M A Whitehand (Vice-Chair)

Cllr S Hussain Cllr G G Chrystie
Cllr M I Raja Cllr J R Sanderson
Cllr J E Bond

Also Present: Sarah Beck (JWS Operation Manager), Jo Chauhan (JWS Head of Operations), Jack Fidler (Green Spaces Support Assistant), Tracey Haskins (Green Infrastructure Manager), Arran Henderson (Senior Green Spaces Development Officer), Gareth John (WBC Solicitor), Geoff McManus (Director of Community Services), Councillors A-M Barker and C Kemp.

Absent: Councillors D J Bittleston and R Mohammed

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bittleston, K Davis and R Mohammed.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 21 December 2020 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

The Chairman advised that the recommendation referred to under agenda item 7, as the first recommendation in the LGA report, was "How the Council more clearly articulated how decisions are aligned to the Council's priorities in order to address perceptions such as new buildings are just for outsiders", and wished for this to be documented as stated at the last meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Chairman advised that the list of empty properties for members was yet to be shared, however officers were working on the list to ensure it was in line with GDPR.

Attention was drawn to the outstanding work from Kornferry for the opposition groups which the Chairman would follow up on after the meeting.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to discuss.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

6. JWS MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Chairman introduced Sarah Beck, Operations Manager, and Jo Chauhan, Head of Operations, who presented the Joint Waste Solutions (JWS) item. JWS provided waste and recycling services to Woking Borough Council and its neighbouring authorities. An overview was provided on the contract management, waste and recycling performance, service improvements and future aspirations.

The contract was managed and reviewed by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and include data such as missed collections and the quality of recycled waste. The contract also sets out an Annual Service Plan which was driven by the KPIs, addressed any service improvements that had been identified throughout the year, health and safety concerns and community involvement. JWS develop a programme of work to meet the objectives for residents to reduce waste and recycle more.

The knock-on effects of Covid-19 were discussed and included challenges with maintaining frontline services, which was assisted by utilising agencies to provide service cover when staffing was impacted by sickness and absence. There had been a sufficient increase in the amount of waste across all services due to residents spending more time at home. The team adapted to the increased waste and different tier restrictions, advised residents on how to deal with waste if required and also appeared on Channel's 4 Britain's Unsung Heroes following the essential work that had been undertaken.

Ms Chauhan touched on the IT incident in that occurred in December 2020 that prevented residents of Woking and Surrey Heath being unable to report waste collection issues and make payments on the usual platforms available. The team reacted quickly and created a temporary online form on the JWS website, and garden waste payments could be able online and by the phone, for bulky waste collections and additional refuse bins could be arranged by calling the contact centre. Following investigations, there was no evidence to suggest that any personal data had been impacted however Amey would continue to investigate.

Ms Beck shared the statistics on the waste and recycling performance over the past five years, the data showed an increase in waste collected, especially in the last ten months where the average had risen from 3,000 tonnes per month to 3,500 tonnes per month. Another graph showed that the recycling rate (including food and garden waste) had dropped during the summer of 2020 but recent data shows a steady increase despite seasonal variations. The missed bins target was set to under 80 bins per 100,000, the graph detailed a dip in performance from December 2019 to February 2020 due to vehicle and staffing issues with Amey however since the new depot team had been introduced in August 2020 figures had continually improved. The details of the processes that had been implemented to improve service delivery was shared and future aspirations for JWS.

Members praised the work undertaken by the teams involved and noted that feedback from residents had been more positive than previous years. Following questions on the IT issues, it was confirmed that payments could be made over the phone, online and by cheque.

The process following blocked access to areas was explained and frequently monitored, and it was effected by more people being at home with their cars, however teams were always required to return to collect the waste.

The rules for contaminated waste were mentioned, as well as the recent work that Ms Beck had done with the collection crew to understand the context with contaminated waste. Cllr Whitehand questioned where there had been a development with option to recycle tetrapak, however Ms Chauhan advised that it could not be collected kerbside at the moment for recycling.

The key messages that JWS spread to the team and the public on how to recycle is very important but also underpinning the source of unnecessary packaging was important too.

The Chairman asked whether there had been any developments as to additional materials that could be collected or recycled however there was no update to the list of recyclable materials but work had been done at communal sites by providing more the facilities to ensure better quality of recycled waste.

Some members felt that the KPI's that were reported in the Green Book did not portray key information, this topic had been discussed before and would be picked up with Cllr Davis as Portfolio Holder.

Looking forward, JWS and Amey had scope within the contract to incorporate commercial waste collections however the organisations focus was to improve services for residents, before looking to expand. It was suggested for JWS to liaise with the Vyne on food recycling to avoid waste.

The Chairman thanked Ms Beck and Ms Chauhan for their detailed presentation and assistance with questions.

7. PLAY AREA MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Chairman introduced Arran Henderson, Senior Green Spaces Development Officer, and Jack Fidler, Green Spaces Support Assistant, to present the item. The presentation provided an update since last reported at the Committee in November 2019, the work programme for 2020/21, the challenges faced and aspirations for 2021/22.

The play areas in the borough had weekly visual inspections, quarterly operation inspections and annual independent inspections, to report anything from general wear and tear to health and safety issues. Serco would carry out general maintenance that covered fencing/equipment repairs works, graffiti removal, rubber re-surfacing, littering picking and grass cutting. Large repair works were scheduled on a rolling programme however as the majority of parts required were sourced from Europe and there can be a lead time on some materials.

The parks were closed in March 2020 due to lockdown rules from the government, however regular inspections and maintenance services were continued by Serco, ready for

when they re-opened in July 2020. Mr Henderson shared examples of rubber and grass mat re-surfacing, painting and replacement of equipment work that was conducted in 2020.

The Committee was advised that the Play Area Refurbishment Programme had refurbished 24 play areas since 2003. Mr Fidler then provided a detailed explanation on the project at the Loop Road play area, which had a £130,000 budget to allow for adequate refurbishments and wheelchair accessible equipment, following the results of a petition. The inclusive design included a multi-play unit with a bespoke design for a variety of ages and abilities, an inclusive roundabout, basket swing, sensory play and rubber surfacing throughout.

Future works included resurfacing repairs across a number of sites, however Horsell Moor, Oakfield and Sutton Green play area works had been put on hold due to Covid-19 and then the financial outlook would be re-assessed. The remaining areas may be incorporated into a new programme following a review of the Play Strategy.

Members praised the work of the team, especially the work for the Loop Road play area which would also take into consideration views and feedback from those with disabilities, users and the residents who started the petition to ensure all aspects of inclusive play were covered. The Chairman advised the team on some other leisure users and the Hoe Valley Neighbourhood Forum that could provide some insight.

Mr Henderson advised that if members had individual refurbishment concerns for any areas, to contact him outside of the meeting with the location and details, to allow him to follow up. Anti-social behaviour was also discussed, and it was advised that members of the public should always report any incidents of anti-social behaviour to the Police, who can allocate resources to monitor the situation.

After discussing the Play Strategy, members felt that the timeframe of refurbishments was too long – 25 years. It was considered that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding could be put towards some projects if supported by local residents to preserve some of the budget for other maintenance and refurbishment works. The Chairman suggested the strategy could also review the amount of shade provided in play areas for the children playing and also parents watching.

Mr Henderson advised that the multi-use game areas had remained closed, which was in line with government guidance and were not open to the public, even family bubbles unfortunately.

The Chairman thanked officers for the presentation and answers to questions.

8. SURREY LIFELONG LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Cllr Sanderson updated the Committee on the progress made since various teams and stakeholders had liaised on health and wellbeing services, and community development in the borough, more specifically in Goldsworth Park, with Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership (SLLP). The SLLP scheme had unfortunately been effected by Covid-19 and therefore faced challenges.

RESOLVED

To add to the Work Programme and receive an update on the progress made in July 2021.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman went through the Work Programme for the upcoming months and advised that the Housing Topic Scrutiny would also include the work undertaken on viability assessments following two meetings, one with Kempton Carr Croft (KCC), a company used by Woking Borough Council Planning Officers to conduct viability assessments. A Councillor briefing had also been organised for 1 February with KCC, to outline the process of viability assessments and assist members with any questions.

RESOLVED

That the Work Programme be noted.

10. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Committee reviewed the November Green Book, and noted the following points, increased trend related to fly-tipping which could be a knock-on effect from Covid-19.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 10.12 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____