

Scrutiny - Cooperative Scrutiny Reviews

Friday 8 August 2014

PRESENT:

Councillor Murphy, in the Chair.

Councillors Hendy, Martin Leaves, Michael Leaves, Morris, Storer and Tuohy.

Also in attendance: Tom Cox (Project Manager – Transformation), Simon Dale (Interim Assistant Director for Street Services), Ross Jago (Policy and Performance Officer), Helen Rickman (Democratic Support Officer) and Councillor Vincent (Cabinet Member for Environment).

The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 4.45 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Agreed that Councillor Murphy is appointed as Chair for this review.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the code of conduct.

3. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

4. WASTE COLLECTION RE-ORGANISATION BUSINESS CASE REVIEW - TO FOLLOW

Simon Dale (Interim Assistant Director for Street Services), Tom Cox (Project Manager – Transformation) and Councillor Vincent (Cabinet Member for Environment) provided Members with an introduction to the Waste Collection Re-Organisation Business Case.

Members were informed that –

- (a) the Waste Collection Re-organisation Business Case was due to be discussed at Cabinet on Tuesday 12 August 2014;
- (b) Councillors had already had an opportunity to comment upon the business case at briefing sessions however there was still work to be done in further developing the policy and engaging with members of staff, trade unions and the community;

- (c) the focus of change and development in the business case linked to the reorganisation of the refuse and recycling collection routes, the waste collection policies and the assisted collection arrangements;
- (d) the current refuse and recycling collection rounds were considered to be inefficient as refuse vehicles visited the same area of the city on different days in what was considered to be a 'scatter gun' approach;
- (e) current policies regarding waste collection were inconsistent; the proposal to charge individuals for the delivery of replacement bins other than the receptacle would be included;
- (f) approximately 9000 residents had opted for assisted collection in which refuse collectors would access the customers property to retrieve and return the waste bin, however it was considered that several people no longer required or were entitled to this service therefore this needed to be investigated;
- (g) officers accepted that more work was needed to tackle the issue of 'side waste' – in specific areas of the city residents were placing bags of rubbish beside their bin as the bags would not correctly fit inside; side waste was not collected by refuse collectors and it was considered that the majority of side waste could be recycled;
- (h) the Council's call centre received approximately 5000 calls a month regarding waste collection and disposal; Officers were anticipating a 50% increase in calls regarding waste issues during the implementation of the reorganisation however were hopeful for a significant drop in calls once the reorganisation was embedded;
- (i) there was considered to be a proliferation of bins in the city, which were requested as replacement bins however were not used by residents or required;
- (j) it was proposed that there would not be a charge for replacement bins however there would be a delivery charge; residents had the option to collect a replacement bin free of charge from the depot. Replacement waste bags would be delivered free of charge with the refuse lorry;
- (k) Officers were investigating the feasibility of storing replacement bins and bags at different locations across the city, including libraries and community centres, to help alleviate residents' frustration;
- (l) having undertaken a benchmarking exercise with other local authorities in the Council's family group it was recognised that the majority of authorities had some sort of charging regime for replacement bins;

- (m) bins would only be emptied if the lid was closed; it was considered that if the lid was open at a 45 degree angle then it would be able to be loaded on the refuse lorry to be emptied however bins with lids completely open or with overloaded bags would not be cleared;
- (n) the Council valued how the majority of Plymouth residents dealt with their waste;
- (o) the Council was confident it could achieve increasing recycling levels and also reduce its carbon footprint;
- (p) savings would be achieved through reduced transport costs and by recouping money by selling vehicles.
- (q) more information would be provided to Plymouth residents around Christmas detailing future changes;
- (r) communication regarding the waste collection reorganisation would take place at several stakeholder events as well as in newspaper adverts, via social media and the Council's website. Officers would also be situated in prominent places such as supermarkets and libraries;

The Chair advised Members that Diana Beale (Unite representative) would be present at the meeting as a witness to advise Members of her involvement with the previous waste collection reorganisation in 2008 and to help offer advice on specific areas to focus upon, specifically with regards to the workforce.

Diana informed Members that –

- (s) the Council's refuse collectors were an ageing workforce and they undertook an intensive job role; the reorganisation of waste collection in the city was considered to have a huge impact on staff and it was integral that communication took place between unions, the Council and members of staff;
- (t) in the 2008 waste reorganisation there were proposals that the waste collection zones would be reduced and that a four day week would be introduced however these were not fully implemented;
- (u) the previous waste collection reorganisation was not considered to be successful, in her opinion, as staff were not communicated with properly and jobs roles were confused. Refuse collectors were not advised where assisted bins were located and in the first six weeks of implementation the missed bins amounted to approximately 400;
- (v) it was considered that previously the process of waste collection was cobbled together resulting in inefficiency as ad-hoc teams were required to go back to an area to collect bins that had been missed;

- (w) unions had not yet been consulted on proposed job losses and Diana emphasised the importance of communication with them and members of staff that would be affected by the proposed changes.

In response to Members' questions it was reported that –

- (x) certain parts of the city continued to experience problems with waste collection and side waste however officers were working very hard to tackle these issues;
- (y) refuse collectors may refuse to collect side waste if it was considered that their contents included recyclable material;
- (z) the Council was proposing to charge residents for the delivery of a replacement bin, this was not a fine; residents were able to collect a replacement bin free of charge from a variety of locations around the city if required however the delivery of replacement bags would be free of charge;
- (aa) Officers would carefully consider the impact of the delivery charge for replacement wheeled bins on residents;
- (bb) the Council would charge residents for the delivery of a replacement bin unless it was found to be the fault of the Council that the bin was damaged in the first place;
- (cc) officers were aware that there were over-flowing bins in certain parts of the city and more work was required to further assess the reasons as to why this was the case;
- (dd) assisted collections needed to be analysed to assess that appropriate resources were used; assisted bin collections were currently provided to a Plymouth resident that requested one however it was recognised that several residents in Plymouth were no longer eligible for this service;
- (ee) Exeter Council charged for replacement refuse and recycling bins;
- (ff) the Council was intending on applying a sticker to residents' bins detailing what could be disposed of in the bin; Officers would investigate the possibility of also including information specifying where a bin should be placed for collection;
- (gg) currently residents in receipt of pension credit, income support and Council tax and income benefit were eligible for receiving bins free of charge;
- (hh) there was currently no charge for swapping bins to either a larger or smaller receptacle;
- (ii) Officers would investigate the possibility of liaising with housing associations in order to include waste collection information in housing induction packs;

- (jj) the communication plan for the waste collection reorganisation was considered to be a multi-faceted campaign in which information would be made available to different sectors of the community in shopping centres, supermarkets and libraries etc;
- (kk) the Council's target for recycling was set at 45% however the Council was currently not meeting this percentage; Plymouth was unable to recycle plastic bags or tetra packs however this was made available at specific outlets across the city such as supermarkets. The Council was also encouraging residents to recycle furniture and toys with St Luke's charity;
- (ll) garden waste would be staggered on the alternate week to recycling collection to alleviate the impact of receptacles on the street.

Agreed that the following recommendations are forwarded to the Performance and Research officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Cooperative Scrutiny Board for approval via delegated authority –

- 1 that Cabinet carefully consider the impact of the delivery charge for replacement wheeled bins and ensure that it is made as easy as possible for residents to access free alternatives to delivery.
- 2 that Cabinet consider the possibility of a reduced cost of delivery for recycling bin replacements.
- 3 to ensure that waste operatives can return bins to the correct household and mitigate the risk of bin theft, a facility for residents to clearly make an identifying mark on bins should be considered.
- 4 that the Cabinet Member for Environment considers the impact of proposed changes within the business case on the licensing of homes in multiple occupancy and ensure that landlords and tenants are fully informed of their responsibilities.
- 5 that the Co-operative Scrutiny Board (or delegated panel) receives the project's communications plan when available and ensures that all elected members are able to communicate changes to constituents.
- 6 that officers, when developing the communications plan in relation to waste collection reorganisation, liaise with housing associations and developers to include waste collection information within home induction packs where possible.

(A recorded vote was requested for this agenda item)

Councillors Murphy, Hendy, Morris, Tuohy and Storer voted in support of the Waste Collection Re-organisation Business Case.

Councillors Martin Leaves and Michael Leaves voted against the Waste Collection Re-organisation Business Case.

5. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.