

Select Committee Review

Wednesday 31 August 2016

PRESENT:

Councillor Bowie, in the Chair.
Councillor Ball, Vice Chair.
Councillors Fletcher, Morris and Storer.

Also in attendance: Jacky Clift (Plymouth Octopus Project), Lou Hayward (Assistant Director for Street Services), Ross Jago (Lead Officer), Michael Leaves (Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Environment), Penny Tarrant (Plymouth Food Waste Partnership) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 9.30 am and finished at 12.05 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel 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. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors, in accordance with the code of conduct.

2. Chair's Urgent Business

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

3. Select Committee Review: Plan for Waste

The committee received a presentation from Councillor Michael Leaves (Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environment) and Lou Hayward (Assistant Director for Street Services) which highlighted the following key points -

- the current position;
- the Council's big challenges;
- the Council's vision;
- proposals;
- increase income generation;
- increase recycling rates;
- customer relations and enforcement team.

The committee heard representations from the following witnesses –

- (a) Jacky Clift (Plymouth Octopus Project) and Penny Tarrant (Plymouth Food Waste Partnership) advised that -

- the separate collection of food waste had previously been investigated but at that time had not been implemented;
- there were concerns that the proposed waste plan was not robust enough to bring about the improvements, reduction in waste and cost savings that were required;
- these proposals provided an opportunity to look at tackling food waste in Plymouth and the options available to address this issue;
- Plymouth City Council and Exeter City Council were the only local authorities in Devon that were not currently collecting food waste separately;
- there were significant challenges in achieving sustainable waste management in Plymouth, such as changing people's attitudes and behaviours towards food, cost implications, etc;
- significant reductions in general waste or improvements in recycling would not be achieved without the introduction of a high profile, interactive, creative, innovative and sustainable awareness programme;
- working with the Council would be key in the rolling out of a food waste education programme.

In response to questions raised by the Committee, the follow key points were reported –

- (b) it was not the intention under these proposals to close the Weston Mill recycling centre facility; following an assessment of the site by the Environment Agency, works would need to be undertaken to address drainage issues;
- (c) with the proposed reduction in household waste going to the incinerator, it was not envisaged that there would be any implications relating to the council's contractual commitments;
- (d) in locations where it was feasible to place containerised bins these would replace the use of bin bags; areas where this was not appropriate would continue to receive a weekly collection service;
- (e) it was recognised that in order to address the issue of fly-tipping a range of measures would need to be implemented such as improving community engagement, increasing the levy of charges, the roll out of education programmes, etc;
- (f) under the current proposals, there would be no change to the way in which garden waste was collected; however, options for the

future would need to be considered;

- (g) work was being undertaken to assess whether in certain locations it would be feasible to replace standard wheelie bins with steel bins which would be collected on a more frequent basis;
- (h) different methods of communications would be used as part of a community education programme;
- (i) in order to alleviate the problem, at times, of queuing traffic at the Weston Mill recycling centre, the operating methods and the layout of the site would be reviewed;
- (j) the 'Pickles' grant had been awarded to the Council in 2011 for the maintenance of a weekly waste collection service (for a period of five years); however the grant for this service was now due to end;
- (k) if the recycling targets for the City were not achieved, then the Council would incur financial penalties;
- (l) every effort would be made to minimise the impact of these proposals on members of staff.

The Committee wished to register its disappointment at the lack of detailed information provided regarding this complex issue.

(Please note: this item was webcast)

4. **Recommendations**

The Select Committee agreed that –

- (1) it was unable to take a position on the proposed changes to waste collection at the meeting due to the lack of information presented;
- (2) the Cabinet Member for Strategic Street Scene and Environment should publish the Plan for Waste to provide clarity for councillors and members of the public on the future of waste management in the city;
- (3) prior to implementing a Plan for Waste containing proposals regarding waste collection, and education and communication plan should be shared with the Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for feedback from councillors; communication regarding changes to waste collection should be simple, pictorial, timely and permanent where appropriate;

- (4) detailed information to support assumed levels of savings and increased income should be provided to the Select Committee Review on budget and policy proposals under the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

(Please note: this item was webcast)