

ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2013

PRESENT:- Councillors Peter Heaton-Jones (Chair), Mark Dempsey (Vice-Chair), Junab Ali, Mike Bawden, Wayne Crabbe, Toby Elliott, Emma Faramarzi, Mary Friend, Richard Hurley, Julian Price, James Robbins, Nicky Sewell and Steve Wakefield

Councillor Foley, Cabinet Member for StreetSmart and Corporate Services was also in attendance.

24. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. Councillor Mark Dempsey made a non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda Item Nos. 5 and 6 in his capacity as an Environmental and Waste Consultant.

25. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2012, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Mechanics Report – Following concerns stated by Councillor Dempsey, the Chair advised that the Swindon Heritage Board were in the process of arranging a meeting with all interested parties to discuss the Advisory Group's report and findings, following the recommendation of Cabinet on 12th December 2012. He agreed to pursue this and ensure that all Members of the Advisory Group were invited to the meeting and the Committee agreed that a progress report be submitted to the next meeting on 4th April 2013.

26. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

27. Q & A - Waste Management and Recycling Report (Cabinet Member for StreetSmart and Corporate Services)

Councillor Foley, Cabinet Member for StreetSmart and Corporate Services attended the meeting to present a report on the Council's waste management provision and its work regarding recycling. She explained that Cabinet had considered a report outlining the Council's proposed measures for the management of demand for garden waste collections at their meeting on 6th February, following a Motion at Council on 20th September 2012. Cabinet had also asked for a further report to be presented to them outlining how the Council could support those residents who support their communities by cutting highway verges and collecting leaves in autumn.

The number of missed collections was very low, although it was

acknowledged that there were some pressures, especially in the Northern expansion, where rounds would need to be re-structured. There were also exceptional demands placed on the service as a result of the wet summer and a number of steps were taken to respond to these problems at the time. The proposal, which was approved by Cabinet, was to introduce a limit on the volume of garden waste presented from each house to four bags per fortnight and Councillor Foley advised that the cost for the scheme would be £850K.

Officers and the Cabinet Member for StreetSmart and Corporate Services responded to the following issues raised by Members of the Committee:-

- A leaflet campaign would take place to ensure that all households were aware of the waste collection services and would include information on the opening hours of the Household Waste Recycling Centre.
- Compost bins were bought in bulk a few years ago in response to a government initiative. Unfortunately, this scheme is no longer available but compost bins are more widely available to purchase at a relatively low cost.
- All services, except for cemeteries and crematorium and waste disposal will be publicly tendered through the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) from January 2014. Sue Mendham (Head of Commercial Services) would be leading the tender process for StreetSmart and Rachel Ind (Commercial Partnership Manager) for Highways maintenance.
- The vision is that StreetSmart should be delivered at a local level, except for green waste and recycling, and each StreetSmart officer has their own areas.
- Just over 1% of Council Tax is spent on green waste. There were high capital costs in the purchase of wheelie bins and Councillor Foley agreed to find out the total cost of using these bins.
- Information on the talks and educational visits to groups in order to encourage recycling was shared with Ward Members.
- Councillor Foley agreed to investigate the rates of the Council's StreetSmart services with other comparable Local Authorities.
- The green waste bags are taken to a composting facility at Brinkworth where farmers either buy it or it is bagged up and sold at a low cost.
- Green waste recycling accounts for about 20 – 25% of the recycling target.
- Swindon Council were above the national average for the percentage of household waste sent for re-use, recycling or composting.
- Localities were encouraged to communicate to local residents information relating to collections and the recycling services.
- Biodegradable bags had been considered but these were very expensive and difficult to source.
- Only 4 bags per household would be collected and each bag has to be able to be lifted by one person. Stickers on additional/overweight bags would identify why the bag had not been collected.
- Three areas have been identified where improvements were needed and an action plan developed to implement these changes.
- Weekly waste collections would cost around £3M and this was therefore not an option.
- Full monitoring and review would be undertaken and Councillor Foley would welcome any comments/feedback from Ward Members.

Resolved – That the Cabinet Member for StreetSmart and Corporate Services and officers be thanked for attending the meeting and responding to questions and comments from Members of this Committee.

28. Q & A - Operation of Waste to Energy (Managing Director Swindon Commercial Services Limited)

Councillor Foley, Cabinet Member for StreetSmart and Corporate Services, and Sean Magee, Head of Waste Solutions, explained the process that turned household waste into fuel, otherwise known as refuse-derived fuel (RDF). They explained that the Council were currently tendering for a fuel use contract and were keen to ensure that the waste was treated in the UK, although it was not envisaged that this would happen in Swindon. It was likely to be a five year contract plus three years plus two years, therefore giving time for the processes to develop. The UK, in particular, was interested in the long term research from thermal treatment incinerators. It was hoped that the first waste would be produced by the end of October 2013.

Officers and the Cabinet Member for StreetSmart and Corporate Services responded to the following issues raised by Members of the Committee:-

- The moisture from the plant is dispersed as steam through a chimney and there is the provision to shut down if there is any smell emanating outside the boundary of the plant.
- The plant would be running seven days per week, 24 hours per day. Very strict response times would be included within the contract and there will need to be back-ups in place should there be any breakdowns.
- Fully trained local staff will run the facility.
- This would not affect the frequency of the recycling services.
- Alternative options were considered and this model was the most financially viable for the Council to take.
- Only household waste and not commercial waste would be used.

Resolved – That officers and the Cabinet Member for StreetSmart and Corporate Services be thanked for attending the meeting and responding to questions from Members of the Committee.