

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held as a remote meeting via Zoom on Thursday, 3rd December 2020

PRESENT: Councillor D M Tysoe – Chairman.

Councillors B S Banks, J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson, D A Giles, Mrs S Smith and Mrs S R Wilson.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors T D Alban, S J Criswell and Mrs J Tavener.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Mrs M L Beuttell.

26 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th November were approved as a correct record by the Panel.

27 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

28 NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st December 2020 to 31st March 2021.

Having noted that the Digital Strategy did not appear on the Notice of Key Executive Decisions, the Panel was informed that once the overarching strategy had been reviewed, the Digital Strategy would proceed through the governance process.

29 WASTE MINIMISATION STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report by the Operations Manager for Waste and Recycling (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in which the Waste Minimisation Strategy was presented to the Panel. In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment informed Members that there had been significant improvement in the waste service and that the main targets for the service were to achieve a reuse and recycling rate of 60% and to keep the contamination rate below 7%.

Councillor Smith questioned the focus on the contamination target of 7%, particularly as the current rate of contamination in the District was favourable when compared to the national average. In response, it was confirmed that the types of

contamination that Officers have witnessed were entirely avoidable and with the appropriate measures and communications campaign, it was anticipated that the rate would decrease.

Following a query from Councillor Giles regarding the most common contamination materials found in the recycling bins throughout Huntingdonshire, it was confirmed that the most common were: textiles, black bags, food waste and sanitary products.

A question was asked by Councillor Wilson about commercial waste. In response, it was confirmed that the Strategy focussed solely upon domestic waste which, since the beginning of lockdown in March, had increased as residents adjusted to life at home.

The types of materials that the Council collected for recycling was raised by Councillor Smith. It was noted that the Council collected a significant number of different materials for recycling and that, if all recycling facilities were utilised, then residents would be able to recycle additional materials.

The Chairman asked whether there was tension between waste minimisation and alternative ways of disposing of waste such as waste incineration. Members were informed that the District Council was the collection authority and not the disposal authority. The disposal authority, Cambridgeshire County Council, currently had a lengthy and expensive waste disposal contract with a contractor, therefore discussions on alternative options in the disposing of waste were presently financially prohibitive.

In discussing the 60% reuse and recycle target, the Chairman asked what step, or steps, would need to be taken in order to exceed the target. In response, it was confirmed that the next significant step that had the greatest potential to increase recycling rates, would be the introduction of separate food waste collection. This was a service the Council may have to provide as it was expected that separate food waste collections were to be mandatory throughout England next year. Members were reassured that Officers had modelled the introduction of separate food waste collections within the District and consequently the Council was aware of the approximate costs of introducing and running the service. Further to this, Members were informed that food waste was the Council's biggest contaminate and had been previously found in the recycling and general waste bins.

In addition to the discussion on food waste contamination, Members were informed that, in addition to food waste contaminating the recycling bins, up to 35% of the general waste bin comprised of food waste. To counter this, Councillor Smith suggested an information campaign should be undertaken via leaflets attached to bins informing residents how to correctly dispose of food waste. In response, whilst recognising the value of such a campaign, Officers were mindful of the logistical, time and cost issues that would have to be overcome in order to execute the campaign.

The Panel thanked the Operations Service who had maintained full waste collection provision throughout 2020, despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the document was well written and Members commended the positive and proactive approach of the Strategy in progressing the waste minimisation aims and objectives of the Council. The Panel,

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to approve the Waste Minimisation Strategy and Action Plan.

30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was considered by the Panel.

Chairman