
GENERAL PUBLIC SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday 29 June 2017 from 7.30pm to 8.26pm.

Present: Councillors Phil Brading (Lead Member, Public Services), Roger Seabourne (Lead Member, Community Safety), Rupert Barnes, Martin Brooks, Marilyn Butler, Diana Barber (substitute Member for Cllr Debbie Morris), Stephen Cox, Joy Mann and Andrew Scarth.

Officers: Ray Figg, Head of Community Services
Malcolm Clarke, Waste and Environment Manager
Jennie Probert, Environmental Strategy Manager
Nick Egerton, Environmental Health Manager, Watford Borough Council
Justine Hoy, Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head, Watford Borough Council
Steven Halls, Chief Executive
Geof Muggeridge, Director of Community & Environmental Services
Mike Simpson, Committee & Web Officer

Councillor Roger Seabourne in the Chair

GPS 01/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Debbie Morris (Cllr Diana Barber to substitute) and Valerie Coltman.

GPS 02/17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the General Public Services and Community Safety Committee meeting held on Thursday 9 March were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairmen.

GPS 03/17 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

GPS 04/17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

Councillor Phil Brading in the Chair

GPS 05/17 PEST CONTROL UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Nick Egerton and Justine Hoy to the meeting.

The Committee received an update on the performance to date of pest and animal control services provided by Environmental Health and Licensing at WBC, which was accompanied by a presentation.

The presentation provided a summary of the types of issues dealt with, along with details of performance targets. It was shown that response rates met targets in the vast majority of cases, although there was a dip when an Animal Control Officer left the service, but WBC were back on track following the recruitment of a new and highly experienced member of staff. KPIs were driven by data produced as a result of calls to the Customer Service Centre, and there had been no complaints relating to the service to date, and it was considered to be working well.

A Member suggested that the KPIs could be reviewed to reflect more accurately the excellent performance as they were, at present, adversely skewed by the recording method concerning receipt of calls and some residents not being able or willing to accept appointments offered.

The majority of calls related to wasp infestation, although such instances required several visits to each property. A Member asked whether foxes featured among the statistics and if WBC responded to calls regarding them. The Member noted that foxes did not feature within the animal control remit, and it was better not to cull them as doing so encouraged them to breed further to restore numbers. In response to a question from another Member, the Environmental Health Manager said the issue was not limited to rural areas, as problems also arose in urban neighbourhoods largely due to the availability of food. The most effective solution was to remove the food source. Every ward had issues with foxes due largely to the availability of waste food.

A question was asked regarding glis glis, and it was explained a licence was required to treat them and that WBC possessed a licence.

A Member sought clarification with regard to the treatment of bees, which were not a nuisance in the way that wasps were and should not be treated as such. The Environmental Health Manager and Environmental Health and Licensing Section Head confirmed that different protocols applied to bees.

A Member asked how the numbers of Canadian Geese were being controlled, and was informed that oiling the eggs e.g. with sunflower oil was an effective and humane measure as it terminated the growth of the embryo by depriving it of oxygen.

A Member asked how one should best deal with a dead fox, and was advised to contact The Fox Project for advice.

A question was asked by a Member regarding how to prevent rats entering houses and going into bedrooms and kitchens, to which the reply was to book a visit by Pest Control officers who would visit the premises and advise accordingly.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report and content of the presentation be noted, and officers review how the KPIs might more accurately reflect response times within the control of the Council.
- 2) Members who had further questions to direct them to Officers; and
- 3) That any Members wishing to see the service would be welcome to join the Animal Protection Officers on a visit.

GPS 06/17 TRADE WASTE SERVICE REVIEW

The Environmental Strategy Manager (ESM) said that Three Rivers operated a good waste and recycling service, and was now looking to build up the trade waste element of the service to make it more commercially viable. The intention was to push recycling and waste services more, and compete commercially for business rather than be a last resort option to private companies.

A Member asked whether the Environmental Enforcement Officer, who would be tasked with focusing on the development of the trade waste business, would be an existing employee or a new employee. It was stated that the new role would be assumed by a current member of staff, who would combine it with their trade waste enforcement responsibilities.

The Waste and Environment Manager said a monthly direct debit scheme would be introduced shortly which would help the service delivery.

A Member noted from the consultant report that an additional 16 new customers per month could be achieved and felt this was very ambitious.

A Member asked whether the Enforcement Officer would be fully aware of the services offered by commercial competitors, especially with regard to shortcomings. The ESM said that this type of information would be gathered in dialogue with potential new customers.

A Member said the success of the project would depend on cost and reliability, and how much confidence there was that the Council could beat private contractors in these areas? The Waste and Environment Manager replied that the Council currently offered competitive rates and a good level of service.

The Member asked how the Council would attract new customers for trade waste collection, to which the ESM responded by saying that a real push would be made to recruit customers by advertising and increasing public awareness as there was currently a lack of awareness of the trade waste service provided by TRDC.

The Lead Member for Public Services agreed that the service needed to be actively marketed with a more proactive approach. A Member asked whether, in view of the increasing number of housing developments, more staff would be required to deliver the service, and the Waste and Environment Manager said that this was under continuous review but there were no current plans to increase staffing levels.

The Lead Member for Public Services asked how the service was responding to the increasing number of offices being converted to residential properties. The

Waste and Environment Manager said two vehicles currently dealt with domestic and trade waste and the arrangement worked well.

A Member requested that a progress report be made available in six months' time, rather than wait an entire year as was proposed. The ESM said it would be possible, and the Lead Member for Public Services said that a clearer picture would be available after six months, and that an interim report would be beneficial.

RESOLVED:

1) Agree the actions as outlined, with a progress report being made available in six months; and.

2) That the Appendix be noted and that public access to the Appendix be denied until the Year 1 tasks in paragraph 2.2.11 of the report were completed.

GPS 07/17 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee was asked to agree the content of the work programme, to which was added the provision of an interim review of the trade waste collection service in six months' time.

In response to a question on the You Can Project featured in the work programme, the Lead Member for Community Safety explained the project was run within Community Partnerships and unfortunately it was likely to end due to a shortage of funding.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's work programme be agreed with the addition of the above item.

GPS 08/17 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

"that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act. It has been decided by the Council that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information."

GPS 09/07 TRADE WASTE SERVICE REVIEW

The Committee considered the Appendix to the report at Item 6.

The Lead Member for Public Services asked whether the preferred option for the development of the trade waste service was option two in the Appendix. It was confirmed that the service would comprise many elements shown therein as well as several others, per the agreed recommendation in the Trade Waste Report presented by Officers under Part I.

RESOLVED:

That Appendix be noted and that public access to the Appendix be denied until the Year 1 tasks in paragraph 2.2.11 of the report were completed.

CHAIRMAN