

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Monday 21 October 2013

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage SG1 1HN

Present: Councillors: J Hollywell (Chair), L Bell, P Bibby, J Brown, J Mead and J Gardner (Portfolio Holder Environment and Regeneration).

Also Present: Duncan Jones (Hertfordshire Waste Partnership)
Craig Thorpe (Dacorum Borough Council) – ‘Critical Friend’

Start/End Time: Start Time: 6.00 p.m.
Ended: 7.30 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Parker CC, P Stuart and B Underwood.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – 30 SEPTEMBER 2013

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 30 September 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. INTERVIEWS FOR THE REVIEW INTO REFUSE AND RECYCLING

Introductions were made and the Chair welcomed the three interviewees to the meeting.

The Committee then asked a number of questions relating to waste and refuse service delivery in Dacorum Borough Council which were answered by Craig Thorpe.

With regard to the service provided by Dacorum during periods of inclement weather the Committee was advised that during periods of adverse weather, collections were made in whole or part where possible. Use of the Bartech system allowed management to determine which areas had been covered on a real time basis.

To inform residents of the situation the refuse collection service maintained close links with the Customer Service Centre and updated the website regularly. Additionally there had been a higher take up of text messaging / alert service than in Stevenage.

In reply to questions regarding cardboard recycling the Committee was advised that cardboard had yet to be removed from green recycling although it was planned to mix all dry recyclables together in the near future. This facility was also offered to those living in flat blocks although there was often difficulty in deciding where the recycling collection points should be located.

With regard to a 'Missed Bins' policy the Committee was advised that missed bins were tagged justified or unjustified, the latter tag being applied where bins had been put out after the collection had been made. New technology enabled collection staff to report back to the Customer Service Centre in real time and unjustified missed bins were collected when time allowed rather than as a matter of priority.

The Committee was advised that unlike SBC there was no dedicated disposable nappy collection service and reward vouchers were offered for the use of terry nappies as was by SBC.

Craig Thorpe concluded by saying that he believed that there were more opportunities for joint working between authorities in areas such as procurement services.

The Committee then interviewed Duncan Jones from the Herts Waste Partnership.

In reply to questions concerning the framing of the cardboard recycling contract the Committee was advised that there was pressure from the processing site to remove cardboard from materials sent for composting.

Responding to comments that the contract had not met its design requirements Duncan Jones agreed that there would be a need to scope out exactly what was needed for future contracts by taking input from all partners.

In reply to a question concerning partnership authorities that had made changes the Committee was advised that feedback from 2 of the 3 authorities that had made changes to their cardboard collection regimes had made improvements which had been reflected in their assessment scores. The third authority had introduced the changes on a phased basis with a minimal impact on recycling scores and the view was that the PR and advertising of the changes to the collection regime in that authority had been poor.

In reply to a question concerning avoiding landfill Duncan Jones was of the view that the planning case for avoiding landfill was well made but that ultimately the decision would rest with the Secretary of State, bearing in mind that transport costs are the largest determinant in refuse disposal.

In reply to further questions concerning the methods to encourage further recycling the Committee was advised that authorities that had used micro chipping, using systems such as Waste Dataflow, had seen some increases in recycling rates, but typically these rates remained below the levels already seen for Hertfordshire authorities. One way to increase recycling would be to reduce the size of the bin for residual refuse (eg non recyclables) from 240 litres which would have the effect of further encouraging households into using the recycling bins provided.

Ultimately though Duncan Jones believed there was a reluctance to engage in joint working in some quarters and that evidence and a robust business case was essential before making changes to any collection / disposal contract, which included measures to increase the levels of recycling.

Duncan Jones concluded by saying that he believed an incinerator was the most efficient means of waste disposal and that a recycling rate of 75% was realistic and achievable

Finally the Committee interviewed Councillor John Gardner for his views.

He said that an aim of the Council should be to minimise the amount of waste collected and people should be encouraged to generate less, but not forgetting that industry generated more waste than households. To do this benchmarking with other authorities would be essential to investigate more effective methods of bin collection and he was interested in Dacorum's missed bin policy.

In terms of the cardboard / composting contract he believed that the contract required scrutiny at County level and that the County Council should be looking to send less waste to landfill. Ultimately home composting was the most economical method of dealing with some waste and should be encouraged if possible.

Other points covered included a belief that new developments should allow plenty of room for bin storage / collection vehicles and that the thought that collection of disposable nappies was a desirable service and he would wish to see incentives for the use of terry nappies continue.

Overall Councillor Gardner said that he saw the Herts Waste Partnership as 'a force for good' although his belief was that Outsourcing to private companies as suggested by Duncan Jones would prove to be more costly in the long term.

Actions

The Scrutiny Officer undertook to circulate possible dates for the next meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the comments and suggestions of the interviewees be noted for future reference and incorporated into the recommendations to the Portfolio Holder as required.

The Chair thanked the interviewees for their input into the meeting.

4. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

PART II

6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR