

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 May 2012 at 4.30 pm

Present:

Councillor K J Ross.....Chairman
Councillor R P LillisVice Chairman

Councillor A M Chick
Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor P N Grierson

Councillor M O A Dewdney
Councillor J Freeman

Members in Attendance:

Councillor B Heywood
Councillor T Taylor
Councillor K H Turner

Councillor E May
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor D J Westcott

Officers in Attendance:

Corporate Director (B Lang)
Group Manager – Resources and Central Support (G Carne)
Group Manager – Environment and Services (S Watts)
Administrative Support (H Dobson)

Also in Attendance:

Steve Read, Managing Director, Somerset Waste Partnership
Bruce Carpenter, Somerset Contract Manager, May Gurney

Prior to the start of the meeting Scrutiny Questions on Waste Issues, relating to SC115, was circulated.

SC109 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M J Chilcott and D D Ross.

SC110 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 April 2012

(Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 16 April 2012 – circulated with the Agenda).

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 16 April 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

SC111 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No	Description of Interest	Personal or Prejudicial	Action Taken
Cllr P Grierson	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K J Ross	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr A Trollope-Bellew	All Items	County	Personal	Spoke and voted
Cllr K H Turner	All Items	Brompton Ralph	Personal	Spoke
Cllr D J Westcott	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

SC112 Public Participation

No member of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

SC113 Notes of Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points

(Copy of Notes of Cabinet Decisions/Action Point, circulated at the meeting)

RESOLVED that the Key Cabinet Decisions/Action Points for 2 May 2012, be noted, ~~and that the document be circulated to the Scrutiny Committee~~

SC114 Cabinet Forward Plan

(Copy of Cabinet Forward Plan No. 12, May 2012 – May 2013, circulated at the meeting).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Forward Plan No. 12, May 2012 – May 2013, be noted.

SC115 Waste and Recycling Service

(Scrutiny Questions on Waste Issues, circulated at the meeting)

The Chairman of the Committee welcomed the Managing Director of Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) and the Somerset Contract Manager of May Gurney to the meeting who had been invited to respond to concerns regarding waste issues.

The Managing Director and Somerset Contract Manager responded to the list of questions/concerns, compiled by the Scrutiny Committee prior to the meeting, and further questions put to them during the debate, as follows:

- The SWP were working with the waste hierarchy and were keen for the public to reduce waste. They were looking at collecting more kerbside recycling if possible. After avoiding waste and recovery of waste they would like to look at recovering the energy waste produces; and at options for recovering energy from black bag waste as well. They were interested in improving their customer focus and needed to make sure they were doing everything possible to get it right and to mitigate some of the impacts that the changes had brought about. Inequality implications were taken into account when the decision was taken to introduce charges at some of the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in Somerset. Visitor numbers to HWRCs have gone down and overall there has been a decline on total waste arising, in Somerset due to various factors: the public are

taking more material per visit; less commercial waste being disposed of at the HWRCs; less furniture and white goods due to the recession; changes in newspaper readership, less in the system; a big increase in cardboard due to online shopping; and supermarkets have improved light weight packaging.

- Fly tipping had only very slightly increased this year.
- For each of the HWRC sites there was a process in place where items that have clear value were put to one side to sell to an agent. They were looking into the possibility of passing items onto charity shops and putting up notices advising accordingly, and providing a reuse shop on site. However, not many sites had the space except perhaps at Chard. The staff were incentivised regarding items that could be sold on, even so, SWP tried to encourage staff to take a common sense approach when customers wish to take home an item about to be off loaded for recycling.
- A lot of technology was invested in the choice of plastic when producing a product, which leads to a range of different plastics with different chemical properties. The pure streams of good quality material that SWP collected commands a higher price and provides UK businesses with high quality bottles. Once the recycling is mixed up it is hard to un-mix it. They acknowledged that the Committee would like to be able to recycle mixed plastics, however, for the time being the best use of pots, tubs and trays (PTT) was to reuse as PTT. The Managing Director was very interested in addressing the issues concerning the recycling of PTT and hoped to move this issue forward in the future.
- Crews were trained to be as consistent as possible, and if they were aware of 'alien' plastics they should leave it in the box as a reminder to the householder that that type of plastic cannot be recycled.
- Everything in black bag waste goes directly to landfill, SWP would be looking at a plan that does recycle it further. Nationally there was a need to find a way to encourage more recycling of cartons; the current recycling banks were provided by the industry. SWP did not have the means to separate them out. SWP's big strategic priority would be to look at other ways to dispose of waste. With regard to the public recycling they were only able to encourage them to recycle; the percentage who did not had decreased over the years.
- The turnover of the waste and recycling service was much smaller than the large supermarkets so it could be difficult to influence decisions in the service. There were different factors that drive decisions: an increased elderly population has resulted in packaging that is easier to get into.
- With regards to funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government to maintain weekly collections, SWP were looking at collecting absorbent organic material, nappy and clinical waste and electrical waste, such as batteries, and would be submitting a revised bid later in the week on that basis.
- In the main missed collections were reported on the actual day of the collection but before the vehicle had arrived. Last autumn missed collections were high due to the change in the service, and it had taken time to resolve the problems and for crews to get to know the areas. May Gurney had now reached their missed collections target of ½ per 1000 collections, equating to 99.95% correct collections. In the month of April, 159 missed collections in West Somerset were logged and in the vast

majority of cases, whether justified or not, the collection crews go back to collect the missed collections. He confirmed that there were very few problems when the lids weren't completely down, known as 'crocodile bins'. The public were asked that the lid was closed completely to prevent spillage. However, if a bin were not collected for that reason it would be considered unreasonable and the householder should call, but it should be bourn in mind that the maximum number of black bags for collection per household was four. Generally customers were asked to put waste out for collection at 7am to allow for flexibility during the day should something happen which would warrant the collection route to be changed on the day. However, customers affected by the Olympic Torch route on 21 May, in Porlock and Minehead, would be contacted regarding the collection time that day.

- The SWP's strategic risk register did take into account the Council's current financial position. SWP had a contract with West Somerset and were obliged to keep to that. West Somerset benefited greatly from being in the partnership, for example, the use of specialist vehicles, and the contract renegotiation. West Somerset Council would have a new uplift every year linked to fuel and labour costs etc and would save the Council 1.5% every year, which was more than £200k every year across the county. They were continually looking at ways to reduce costs and would continue to do so, if the service did become unaffordable SWP would have to look at it in a different way.
- A business recycling adviser was appointed to look at encouraging more recycling from businesses. As a result a business recycling directory now exists for businesses that provides relevant contact information, and commercial recycling information was contained in the SWP's website. Further, May Gurney would be seeking to appoint a commercial waste sales adviser, about July, to expand this area.
- It was noted that if wheelie bins were damaged by May Gurney they would be replaced free of charge.

With regard to the concern that in the village of Crowcombe residential waste collection operated on two separate rounds on different days, the Somerset Contract Manager advised that they tried not to split a village. However, there may be reasons such as narrow lanes etc, and he would make enquiries and advise accordingly.

Members expressed their thanks to the SWP for conducting a satisfaction survey, which showed that since changes to the service had been introduced the service had improved. Further thanks were expressed regarding the consideration of the crews particularly when operating in built up areas.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from Somerset Waste Partnership and May Gurney for attending and addressing the Committee's concerns.

The Managing Director for Somerset Waste Partnership asked that should members need anything to please let them know.

RESOLVED that the responses to concerns and issues regarding the waste and recycling service raised by the Scrutiny Committee be noted.

SC116 Verbal Update on Task and Finish Group Work

The Monitoring Officer provided an update in the absence of the Scrutiny and Performance Officer. He advised that the work of the Community Safety Task and Finish Group was progressing, with a meeting with appropriate outside partners having been arranged for 25 May 2012 and that a time would be confirmed in due course.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

SC117 Scrutiny Committee Workplan Review

(Scrutiny Committee Workplan, circulated with the Agenda).

Councillor M Dewdney raised concerns about the recent changes to how Williton Hospital operated and asked that a progress update be requested from a member of the Primary Care Trust and scheduled.

RESOLVED (1) that the Report of the Fraud Task & Finish Group be moved to the meeting on 16 July 2012.

RESOLVED (2) that the Primary Care Trust be requested to provide an update on progress regarding the recent changes to how Williton Hospital operates to be available for the Scrutiny Committee at their meeting scheduled on 18 June 2012.

RESOLVED (2) that the Workplan be noted.

The meeting closed at 18.33 pm.