

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 8 October 2013

Present: Councillor M Hankey(in the Chair);
Councillors D Cassidy; A J Cummings; J Daly; L Fitzwalter;
P Heneghan; S Nuttall; and T Tariq

Public in attendance: 1 member of the public was present at the meeting.

Also in attendance: Councillor Southworth– Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Carter, Councillor James and Councillor O’Hanlon

OSC.416 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Heneghan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute OSC.421 below, Children’s Services Annual Complaints Report as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families and took no part in discussions on this item.

OSC.417 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions asked by members of the public present at the meeting.

OSC.418 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the meeting, held on 4 September 2013, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OSC.419 RECYCLING REVIEW – UPDATE

Further to Minute OSC.893(2) of the meeting of this Committee held on 26 March 2013, Councillor Southworth, Deputy Cabinet Member for the Environment, attended the meeting to provide an update on progress in respect of the following recommendations:

- i. That this Group recognises and congratulates the hard work that has been undertaken by the Council Employees across the authority and the residents of the Borough to reduce the amount of residual waste being sent to landfill and to increase the amount of waste being recycled.

- ii. That Ward Councillors are encouraged to become 'Recycling Champions' in their areas by promoting recycling wherever possible and work with the Waste Management Section to identify solutions for specific areas.
- iii. That, to assist with ongoing work in relation to contaminated bins, all new bins are numbered by the Council before being delivered to properties and households where the bins are not numbered are encouraged to do so.
- iv. That the use of enforcement in relation to contaminated bins be considered – this would only be as a last resort and for repeat offenders.
- v. That all waste operatives are regularly reminded to use the software correctly as this may assist to reduce the number of complaints received and the number of missed collections.
- vi. That Members should receive regular reports setting out targets versus actuals and highlighting where improvements need to be made and how this can be done.
- vii. That the possibility of carrying out specific exception reporting or analytical research is considered to look at trends and highlight where improvements can be made.
- viii. That complaints relating to missed bin collections are monitored by area to highlight any patterns.
- ix. That something similar to the interactive games that were used on the visit to the recycling centre should be developed locally to be rolled out to schools across the borough. This would help to educate the young people within the borough who would then pass this on to the rest of their families.
- x. That all Councillors are encouraged to attend a visit to the Customer Contact Centre.
- xi. That all funding opportunities in relation to the promotion of recycling are researched and applied for.

Questions and comments were invited and the following issues were raised:

- Members of the Committee referred to the plans to enhance the Educational and Regulatory Team through the appointment of 8 new posts. The role of the new staff was explained and it was reported that the 2 year pilot scheme had been approved as an invest to save opportunity, with posts ultimately funded through savings achieved from diverting waste from landfill.
- With regard to the issue of enforcement, the Head of Waste Management stressed that the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices would be a last resort and efforts would continue to educate and engage with residents in order to encourage increased levels of recycling. Councillor Cummings requested that future updates include examples of enforcement actions by other Authorities, with an analysis of whether they had been successful.

- Councillor Fitzwalter highlighted the importance of maximizing recycling from schools and other commercial waste streams.
- Councillor Nuttall referred to the difficulties of recycling certain products due to the packaging and highlighted that manufacturers should be encouraged to package products in materials that are readily recyclable.

It was agreed:

1. That this Committee acknowledges the good progress made implementing the recommendations from the Recycling Overview Project Group.
2. That a further update report be submitted before the end of the Municipal Year.

OSC.420 CORPORATE PLAN PROGRESS REPORT – QUARTER 1 2013-2014

The Leader of the Council submitted a report outlining the progress made on the Corporate Plan during quarter one (2013-2014) for the corporate performance indicators and projects within the Bury Council Corporate Plan.

During discussion of this item an undertaking was given to provide Members with a detailed definition in respect of the indicator relating to the supply of housing sites.

It was agreed:

That Officers be thanked for the good performance highlighted in the report and a further update be submitted at the end of Quarter 2, 2013/14.

OSC.421 CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT APRIL 2012-MARCH 2013

Jane Whittam, Complaints Co-ordinator, submitted a report setting out information in respect of complaints related to Children's Services covering the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

OSC.422 WELFARE REFORM

Claire Jenkins, Head of Customer Support & Collections, submitted a report providing a summary of the impact of recent Welfare Reforms on the residents of Bury along with details of the actions being taken by the Council and its partners in relation to the reforms. A number of associated policies were appended to the report, namely, the Corporate Debt Policy; Discretionary Housing Payments Scheme; and the Poverty Strategy.

The report set out details of the main changes along with the actions taken in respect of the following specific areas of welfare reform:

- Under Occupancy Charge/Bedroom Tax
- Council tax Support

- Social fund
- Benefit Cap

Further to the report, a number of case studies were submitted which highlighted the Corporate approach being undertaken to manage debt and support customers.

Questions and comments were invited from Members of the Committee and the following issues were raised:

- In response to a question about the effect of a more aggressive sanctions regime with regard to benefits, it was explained that approximately 50% of customers accessing the Bury Support Fund was due to an element of sanction being imposed.
- With regard to the initial estimate in respect of the number of families affected by the benefit cap, it was reported that the number had reduced from 90 families to 34. The reason for this reduction was due to the fact that the original estimate did not take account of families with disabled children.
- During discussion of this item, Claire Jenkins highlighted the work of the Welfare Reform Board; the wider partnership approach being undertaken to support customers; and the importance of early engagement.
- Members of the Committee recognised the intensive support being offered to customers but highlighted the resource implications of providing this level of support. Officers acknowledged the importance of ensuring that financial outcomes were tracked to allow the effects of the interventions to be monitored.
- During discussion of this item Members of the Committee commented on the excellent work undertaken by Officers to support customers affected by the welfare reforms.

It was agreed:

That a further report, including an update on the Case Studies, be submitted to the March meeting of this Committee.

COUNCILLOR M HANKEY
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.55pm)