

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 4 February 2021

Present:

Members: Councillor L Bigham (Chair)
Councillor F Abbott
Councillor R Bailey
Councillor M Heaven
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor J Mutton
Councillor S Walsh

Other Members: Councillor G Duggins (Leader of the Council)
Councillor P Hetherton (Cabinet Member for City Services)
Councillors J Lepoidevin (for Minute 21 below)
Councillor G Lloyd (Deputy Cabinet Member for City Services)

Employees Present:

S Elliott, Waste and Fleet Management
G Holmes, Law and Governance
U Patel, Law and Governance
L Shannon, Waste Recycling
A Walster, Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services

Apologies: Councillor M Ali

Public Business

18. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020 were agreed and signed a true record. There were no matters arising.

20. Regional Materials Recycling Facility Update

The Scrutiny Board received a comprehensive presentation on the Regional Materials Recycling Facility. The presentation provided an update on the project which was approved by Planning Committee in January 2021.

Councillor P Hetherton, Cabinet Member for City Services, introduced the presentation and reported on the meticulous detailed planning and consultation that had gone into the project to date. Extensive consultation was undertaken with local groups and Ward Councillors and concerns raised by local residents were taken on board.

The presentation provided further details in relation to planning, project evolution, procurement update, process contractor and next steps. In addition, the presentation responded to concerns in relation to potential increase in traffic and air pollution and the impact on the biodiversity in the area. The Board noted that the facility would be developed using the most advanced technology and revolutionary robotic optics which would make it one of the most advanced facilities in the world.

Members questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Government legislation in relation to recycling plastics
- How would the company be operated, as a private operator and would there be there be dividends?
- The Traffic Management Plan to better understand how the facility was to be accommodated on site and the impact on the local infrastructure, including neighbouring wards
- What plans were in place to promote the facility, both locally and nationally?

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4):

- 1. Welcomed and noted the presentation and thanked officers for a very informative presentation.**
- 2. Requested that a location map and the proposed traffic management plan be circulated to members to enable them to better understand how the facility would be accommodated on the site and the plans for traffic management in the area to reduce impact on the surrounding areas.**

21. Waste Collection Services - Christmas 2020

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation on the waste collection services over the Christmas 2020 and New Year period.

Councillor P Hetherington, Cabinet Member for City Services introduced the item and praised the staff and crews for working under exceptional circumstances to ensure that waste collections were completed in a timely manner. She expressed disappointment at the complaints given the unprecedented circumstances presented by the pandemic and the adverse weather conditions.

Every year, collection arrangements for the Christmas and New Year period differed according to how the Bank Holidays fell. Since the introduction of alternate weekly collections in 2017, collection requirements had changed in order to minimise disruption to residents and to ensure collection capacity was maximised. Collection arrangements for the 2020 Christmas and New Year period were as per the following:

- Garden/Food – Collections suspended over the Christmas and New Year period to allow for staff to be utilised elsewhere in the service. Collections to commence week beginning 18 January 2021.

- Domestic – No collections between 25-28 December and 1st January 2021. All households received an extra collection to ensure that the green bin was collected the week before and the week after shutdown week.
- Recycling – No collections on Christmas Day or between 29th December and 1st January. Clear sacks were delivered to each household to allow for extra recycling to be put out and collected after Christmas.

Any households that were scheduled for a collection of their green or blue lidded bins on Friday 25th December had their bins collected on Monday 28th December.

The Board were informed that working arrangements for staff over the Christmas period are voluntary. Last year, this, coupled with difficulty of recruiting agency staff caused numerous problems. This year, as the Bank Holiday fell on 28 December, the financial incentives were far higher and as a result, staffing levels were up, and all rounds were completed successfully. Waste collection statistics were attached to the briefing note at Appendix A.

The calendars detailing Christmas collection schedules and the clear sacks for additional recycling were delivered by Royal Mail this year with a total cost for production and delivery of over £75k. This was the last year that calendars would be delivered, instead, they would be made available on request.

The announcement of the third lockdown meant that collections proved to be challenging and with many staff having to shield or self-isolate, which resulted in huge implications on the service. Additional resources had to be drafted in and diverted to focus on bin collection rather than the clear bags, which meant that some bags were left uncollected for longer than envisaged. Future provision of the clear bags was under review given the challenge and disruption caused by the non-collection of the bags this year.

The Board noted that the provision of the waste collection service over the Christmas and New Year period was due to be considered corporately with the trade unions which *may* have implications for the service.

Members commented and questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Missed waste collections continued to be an issue over the Christmas period
- Consideration should be given to outsourcing the service
- The need for clear bags, especially given cost and the problems caused
- Consideration needed to be given to alternative methods of communication on bin collections as not everyone has access to a computer
- Members to be given access to the most up to date information which could be shared via social media sites to ensure that the information is out in the community

Officers undertook to circulate a separate note on the communications channels available for members to access up to date information which could be shared via social media, should they wish to do so.

Councillor G Duggins, Leader of the Council, was present at the meeting stated that the waste collection crews and the service should be unequivocally thanked on how they had performed over the last year. He added that outsourcing the service was definitely not an option for consideration. And he agreed that waste collections over the Christmas and New Year needed to be considered and would be reviewed.

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4):

- 1. Notes the presentation and placed on record their appreciation of the work undertaken by the staff during the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic.**
- 2. Notes that a review of the service was due to be undertaken in relation to staffing of the service over the Christmas period and requested that the Board be provided with an update on the outcome of the review.**
- 3. Recommends that the use of clear plastic bags for recycling waste over the Christmas period be included in the above review.**

22. Cov Clean Streets

The Scrutiny Board received and noted a presentation on the Cov Clean Streets programme in readiness for the City of Culture. £2.1million has been allocated for a city-wide cleaning project to 'spruce up' Coventry ahead of the City of Culture.

Councillor P Hetherton, Cabinet Member for City Services introduced the item and reported that work had already started in some areas. The Board were shown a short video clip of some of the teams in action and the remarkable before and after footage of what could be achieved. Councillor Hetherton encouraged councillors to share photos of their ward on social media to raise awareness and to encourage public engagement.

The programme included:

- The establishment of Cov Clean Street Teams who had been tasked to:
 - Deep clean the arterial routes and main roads
 - Clean up alleyways (which was previously undertaken by the probation service, but stopped due to COVID)
 - Clean up key city centre areas and routes and tackle problematic hot spots across the city
 - Engage with residents and advise them on how they could get involved with cleaning and maintaining their street scenes.
- Neighbourhood Enforcement - more officers on the streets, not only to provide a visual presence, but to increase monitoring, recording and escalating problems and enforcing.
- Bespoke email address for councillors to send information to on areas where problems existed

- Bulky Waste Collection Service – funding available to provide half price collection from 1 February to 30 April 2021.

The Board noted that a bespoke web page would be developed to showcase the work of the Cov Clean Streets Teams. It was hoped that this would provide momentum and leave a lasting legacy which would enhance and improve pride for those who live and love Coventry in the lead up to and beyond the City of Culture.

Members questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- What measures were in place to tackle the issue of fly-tipping, which had increased during lockdown?
- Increased monitoring and enforcement - how would this be communicated to the residents?
- Half price offer on bulky waste was a good idea, but what about those who were struggling financially?
- Were partner agencies such as Citizen on board with the programme?
- What was being done to clean up areas/roadsides once work had been completed? For example, sand bags and signage which was often left on the road side or dumped into bushes

Members recommended that consideration be given to revamping the 'litter' page on the Council's website to make it more appealing and encouraging to potential community groups/schools/residents who may want to clear up litter in their areas.

23. **Work Programme and Outstanding Issues**

The Scrutiny Board noted that the issue of residents parking permits was still outstanding and received assurances from the Cabinet Member for City Services that this would be ready for consideration shortly.

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) note their Work Programme for 2020/21.

24. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as a matter of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items for consideration.

(Meeting closed at 12.10 pm)