

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 3 March 2022

Present:

Members: Councillor L Bigham (Chair)
Councillor R Auluck
Councillor R Bailey
Councillor A Hopkins
Councillor T Jandu (substitute for Councillor M Heaven)
Councillor J Mutton
Councillor S Nazir

Other Members: Councillors P Heatherton (Cabinet Member for City Services)
Councillor P Akhtar (Chair of the Domestic Abuse Partnership)

Employees:

Adult Services J Crawshaw
Health and Wellbeing R Chapman, J Ross
Law and Governance V Castree, G Holmes, M Rose, A West
Streetscene and A Walster (Director), C Hickin, M McHugh
Regulatory Services

Invited: L Winterborn – Valley House
C Pike – Valley House

Apologies: Councillor G Lloyd, R Thay, S Walsh and D Welsh

Public Business

23. Ukraine

The Board held a minute silence in respect of the current crisis in Ukraine.

24. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

25. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th December, 2021 were agreed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

26. Safe Housing and Accommodation for Vulnerable Women

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note, together with a presentation at the meeting, which provided an update on the City's response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and work on an operational basis around housing and victims of

domestic abuse. Councillor P Akhtar was invited to attend in his role as the Chair of the Domestic Abuse Partnership and officers were joined by commissioned service providers from Valley House.

Preventing harm from Domestic Abuse was a priority within Coventry and a key measure within the One Coventry Corporate Plan. Coventry's Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018 – 2025 outlined the city's approach to addressing domestic abuse, including honour-based abuse and forced marriage. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021. The Act provided for the first time a statutory definition of domestic abuse and delivered a number of significant changes to improve the protection of victims within the community and the criminal justice system. The Act had a number of implications for the local authority, including the requirement of a new statutory board, implementation of a statutory definition of domestic abuse, a duty to produce regular needs assessments and strategies, delivery of specific minimum types of support for victims within safe accommodation, the prioritisation of domestic abuse victims within homelessness applications and a requirement to annually report to the Secretary of State.

The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact on domestic abuse victimisation. Control measures put in place to limit infection had also reduced the time and space for victims to seek help, had been used as a tool for further abusive behaviours and placed a number of additional pressures on families and individuals. Other measures such as legislation to protect people from being evicted from their homes under the Coronavirus Act 2020 and changes to court proceedings, which had lengthened the wait for civil and criminal hearings, had meant that different parts of the local system had experienced differing trends of victimisation and demand. Overall, levels of reported domestic abuse continued to increase since the first lockdown in March 2020 with police reporting a further 22% increase in reported domestic abuse. Commissioned services and Children's Services all reflect higher levels of demand and an increase in the level of case complexity and risk.

The report and presentation provided further detail on:

- Key aspects of the Act and the impact on the local authority
- Types of Safe Accommodation
- Provision and support for victims
- Prioritisation of victims within homelessness applications
- Funding
- Risks
- Data
- Next steps
- Impact on the service users and case studies

The Scrutiny Board asked questions and received responses on a number of issues, including:-

- Developing training for perpetrators
- Working with schools
- Support for reducing language barriers
- Staff training

RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) note the update and thank all those involved.

27. Recommendations from the Fly-tipping Task and Finish Group

Further to minute 3/21 the Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of their Fly-tipping Task and Finish Group which provided information and recommendations which if agreed by the Board could be considered by the appropriate Cabinet Member.

At their meeting on 8th July, following a meeting on Fly-Tipping in Coventry, the Board agreed to establish a task and finish group to:

- Explore with officers the reasons why fly-tipping occurs
- Determine what further measures can be taken to improve the situation

The task and finish group met between September 2021 and December 2021, covering issues of Domestic Waste, Commercial Waste, Enforcement & Landownership, and Community & Education. At each meeting Members were provided with information about specific issues and challenges associated with, and causing fly-tipping across the city, and then considered possible solutions to those issues. Officers from Environmental Services, Waste & Fleet Management, ICT & Digital contributed to the presentations and discussions with Members.

Members were provided with a RAG rating for each of the suggested solutions on cost, ease of implementation and impact, to enable them to agree which recommendations they wanted to identify for the Cabinet Members. Some potential solutions were discarded by the task and finish groups as they were considered to be difficult to implement or would have a minimal impact on fly-tipping.

The Task and Finish Group also identified recommendations for items for the scrutiny board's work programme as well as suggesting that all Members be briefed on the enforcement process to increase understanding of a complex legal process.

Members were briefed on the enforcement powers and limitations to the powers held by Council officers and supported taking a zero-tolerance approach by using all of the powers available, backed up by publicity campaigns to send a clear message that fly-tipping was not acceptable. Members were shown examples of name and shame campaigns run by other local authorities. The task and finish group agreed that information about the use of enforcement would be useful for all Members and recommended an all-members seminar on the subject.

The main source of fly-tipping in the city was from domestic waste. In 2020-21 Household Waste accounted for 93% of all fly-tipping incidents. This included black bags not put in wheelie bins which was referred to as side waste. Side waste accounted for 28% of all fly-tipping. These bags were not collected as part of the refuse collection service. If these bags were taken as part of the refuse collection, it would have a significant positive impact on fly-tipping. The areas in the city where there were higher levels of fly-tipping were also those areas which

were more densely populated, had higher levels of disadvantage and lower levels of car ownership. Over half of the fly-tipping incidents in 2020-21 were reported in Foleshill and Hillfields (data was appended to the report). Maintaining a subsidised bulky waste collection and reviewing the pricing structure was supported to try and reduce the incidence of domestic waste being fly-tipped.

Members discussed the lack of knowledge about the correct way to dispose of waste contributed to fly-tipping and agreed that on-going education was needed, especially in areas where there was a high turn-over of residents and agreed that there should be a permanent waste education team to support this process, as well as those community groups who litter pick in their local areas. The education programme would back up and support the zero-tolerance approach of enforcement by publicising the consequences and prosecutions arising from fly-tipping.

Members heard that currently there wasn't a fully up to date, accurate mapping of landownership across the city, which was essential to be able to get fly-tipping cleared. Members also discussed how it could be made easier to report fly-tipping for members of the public, and that information about missed bin collections was not routinely shared with other services in the Council. Members agreed that accurate and up to date information was essential for officers, partners and residents to be able to address the issues.

The task and finish group heard that issues with waste management in Homes in Multiple Occupation (HiMO's) and private rented accommodation were covered as part of the licensing schemes and could be monitored and enforced through that process. The task and finish group suggested that this could be subject to further scrutiny by adding it as an item to the Communities and Neighbourhood Scrutiny Board (4) work programme.

Where commercial businesses were not disposing of, or storing their waste appropriately, the task and finish group were informed of the various powers the Council had, through planning, street enforcement as well as the education and information for businesses from the commercial waste team. The task and finish group agreed that these powers should be used to their fullest extent. Where the activities of external organisations contributed to fly-tipping, such as clothes banks or discarded shopping trollies, Members supported action to reduce fly-tipping in this aspect.

The highest levels of fly-tipping were in areas of the city which had the highest levels of disadvantage and health inequalities. Improving the environment of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods would, help improve residents' sense of well-being as well as reducing the direct health impacts of unclean streets and open spaces. The recommendations seek to provide communities with low car ownership easier access to legally dispose of their waste. The recommendations proposed by the task and finish group would contribute to the Marmot Principles by creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities.

The Board were recommended to make the following recommendations to the appropriate Cabinet Member:

Enforcement

- 1) All fly-tipping incidents with evidence should be investigated with officers using the full force of their powers to prosecute.
- 2) Coventry City Council CCTV footage to be reviewed in a timely fashion to proactively identify fly-tippers. Where appropriate, publicise these incidents via social media to identify and deter.
- 3) Run a campaign which outlines the consequences and fines for fly-tipping.
- 4) Council Departments that deal with waste should be 'formally' consulted by the Planning Department on waste storage in new commercial or residential planning and licensing applications for change of use or new builds, and appropriate robust conditions be inserted in any permissions and be robustly enforced.

Domestic Waste

- 5) Side waste deposited next to wheelie bins to be collected by the refuse collection crews. This is more efficient than street cleansing crews having to re-visit these same streets to remove this waste at a later date.
- 6) Consider areas of the city with high density populations and introduce more regular bin collections or, additional collections at certain times of the year, potentially instead of a brown waste collection.
- 7) The 'Bringing the tip to you' model is used in more disadvantaged areas with low car ownership once or twice a year. To use this as an opportunity to engage with communities about ways to dispose of their waste correctly throughout the remainder of the year.
- 8) The Bulky Waste Collection Service is subsidised on a longer-term basis and the minimum charge for 5 items for a bulky waste collection be reduced to a lower number so that the scheme is more flexible and practical for users.
- 9) Publicise more widely that the removal of refrigeration equipment can be done through the bulky waste contract and that due to the environmental disposal requirements, scrap merchants will no longer take refrigeration equipment from the roadside.
- 10) Write to Coventry's MPs to ask that they raise in Parliament that legislation around the sale of second-hand refrigeration products is aligned to new sales with regards to the disposal of old equipment.
- 11) Consider increasing the funding for Street Pride to provide more frequent street cleansing with suitable equipment, particularly in hotspot areas of the city. Seek reassurance that street cleansing is coordinated so that it takes place after a waste collection round.
- 12) Look at reducing the wait for a replacement wheelie bin to discourage fly-tipping.
- 13) Ensure all areas of the city are assessed to enable better use of plastic bag collections in streets where there is no suitable storage for wheelie bins, or there are logistical reasons which make moving the bins difficult i.e., steep gardens with steps.
- 14) A trial is undertaken at the tip, whereby one or two weekdays are allocated for drop-in visits only, to see if this has an impact and reduces levels of fly-tipping the city. Proof of residency in the city would still be required to enter the tip.

Communication, Education and Technology

- 15) Support the development of or purchase a fully-fledged App with underlying accurate mapping software, which can be used to report not only fly-tipping but other issues including over-flowing public litter bins. Any new system should link with other information systems across the council to enable

- relevant teams, elected members and the wider public to have real time access to information on missed bin collections.
- 16) Support the work of the GIS Development Group who are developing up to date and accurate GIS mapping data which will remove the ambiguities around land ownership and its maintenance.
 - 17) Refresh the stickers applied to wheelie bins detailing how to report missed bin collections, what to put in each bin to reduce incidents of bin contamination and promote assisted collections.
 - 18) Use new technology to better organise and promote the 'assisted bin lift' for residents who are physically unable to move their wheelie bins to the curb side.
 - 19) Permanent funding is identified to create a sustainable waste education service which can:
 - a) Continuously deliver waste disposal advice in those streets in the city where waste problems occur, particularly where there are new or transient communities
 - b) Provide greater recognition and support for voluntary and community litter picking groups,
 - c) Deliver responsible citizen waste/litter education in schools
 - 20) Prohibit the depositing of charity clothes banks on public land.
 - 21) That the Street Enforcement Team write to businesses to remind them that they need to have a commercial waste contract (legal duty of care).
 - 22) Officers complete a 'due diligence' check on businesses and the major waste collection contractors operating in the city to ensure that they are appropriately recycling waste.
 - 23) Coventry should adopt a zero tolerance of commercial waste bins being stored permanently on streets.
 - 24) Promote Coventry City Council's flexible commercial waste collection contracts so that they help businesses to deal with the seasonal changes.
 - 25) Recommend to supermarkets that the £1 charge for shopping trolleys be reintroduced to encourage their return, and greater publicity of the supermarket trolley app 'trolley wise' where a company will call and collect the trolley on behalf of the supermarkets.

The Board were also recommended to request:

- 26) Housing Enforcement report back to the Board on how effective the new HMO licensing conditions have been in reducing waste issues from HMOs and shared houses.
- 27) Details of the enforcement process be shared with all Elected Members via a seminar outlining the fly-tipping prosecution process and how this is managed within the legal enforcement framework.
- 28) To receive an update from the GIS Development Group in six months.

The Chair thanked everyone involved in supporting the Task and Finish Group. The Cabinet Member for City Services agreed to look in detail at the Boards Recommendations and report back on which could be achieved.

The Board asked questions and received responses on a number of issues, including: -

- Timescales for consideration and actions
- Report back on progress for each recommendation

The Board praised the

- support from staff at the drop-off sites
- support within communities to help others access sites and dispose of rubbish
- all volunteers including 'Coventry Clean-up' for collecting litter

The Board were keen to see 'quick win' actions completed as soon as possible.

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

- 1) note the briefing and thank all those involved in the Task and Finish Group**
- 2) approve the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group as set out above and that they be referred to the appropriate Cabinet Members**
- 3) request the following:**
 - a. A report back on progress**
 - b. Thanks be conveyed to officers and staff involved in the temporary drop off sites for their assistance to residents.**
 - c. Thanks be conveyed to the 'Coventry Cleanup' group and residents in the community who have supported neighbours**

28. Work Programme 2021/2022

The Scrutiny Board noted the Work Programme for 2021/22 including the additional item for consideration on electric vehicle charging which would include on street charging as well as buses and taxis.

29. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.40 am)