

**Notes of a meeting of the Waste Service Review Working Party  
held on Monday 13 May 2024 at 10:00am, via Teams**

**PRESENT**

Cllr Julia Huffer (Chair)

Cllr Mark Inskip

Cllr Kelli Pettitt

**OFFICERS**

Isabel Edgar – Director Operations

Ian Smith – Director Finance

Catherine Sutherland - Waste Development & Support Manager

Jane Webb – Senior Democratic Services Officer

**34. APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies received.

**35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**36. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Notes of the meeting held on 15 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

**37. STREET CLEANSING MODELS - Presentation**

The Waste Development & Support Manager presented the Street Cleansing Models and set out the Options for consideration.

The following comments and questions were raised:

- Street cleansing inspections had not been previously conducted but had been introduced in 2023 therefore not enough data was available to access the current methodology. Inspections were now factored into the service and would ensure that the Council were clear on the quality and the resources for this needing to be considered going forward.
- Urban v Rural Road – Urban roads were the residential roads (housing developments). Rural roads were the non-curbed and less populated roads which did not accumulate litter as frequently but were still monitored.
- Village high streets are currently on a 6-week cleanse, with smaller roads being inspected 6-weekly/quarterly.
- Service delivery is based on the output (what should be achieved) rather than specifying the resources required (how to achieve it), An input specification can be appropriate for services that are predictable, and

which are capable of expansion or contraction on an easily evaluated, unit-cost basis (e.g. refuse collection). For street cleansing, which can be subject to unpredictable fluctuations in demand, it can be too rigid. Organising the service to achieve particular outcomes can provide a more customer-focused and more flexible basis for service provision, with the emphasis on the result attained.

- A digital management system would be introduced on all options to enable effective monitoring and control of customer requests.
- It was acknowledged that Members require more information on when a street is due to be cleansed, and therefore the options presented were developed to address this. However, the more predictability you design into the service, the more input based it becomes and the more cost it requires due to having resources available.
- Formal inclusion of litter picking the full length of the major A roads in the district in the service specification (twice per year), and layby cleansing into zone 3 (weekly).
- Formal inclusion of cleansing Market Place in Ely following routine market days.
- Formal inclusion of weekly emptying of dog bins rather than every six weeks in the current specification.
- The service level agreement for clearing large fly tips (those deemed as requiring a lorry with a grab arm) be extended to ten working days to allow for its efficient use. Dangerous fly tips are excluded from this and still require immediate removal.
- Option 1: retain the existing approach but improve the response to clearing fly tips and graffiti with the provision of a rapid response team. Flexibility is maintained in the service as all crews can be deployed to unscheduled work. More information added to the website around the zones (for residents they would know that their road would be cleansed every 6 weeks). The digital management system would enable the effective management of this, i.e. a road would not be cleansed in week 1 of the first cycle, and week then 6 of the second cycle.
- Option 2 – As Option 1, but zones be re-mapped and assigned a crew so that each village would be aware of the week their cleanse would take place within a 6-week schedule. An extra crew would be required to ensure the completion of unscheduled work as the other crews would have to visit every single street and possibly clean 'clean' streets. Inefficiency has had to be designed into the service; if the crew completes their scheduled work in less than a week, work on the next village would be unable to take place since its scheduled completion was in the following week. However, as this is unpredictable, equally if it has taken a whole week to complete their work, then there is no additional capacity to complete the unscheduled work.
- Each Option outlined showed the difference between increasing the certainty around what the cleansing schedules were and the impact this had on resource. scheduling was. The more prescriptive the service was the less flexibility it gives and therefore increased inefficiencies.
- All dog bins were currently emptied weekly by a dedicated team.

- There is currently no monitoring of how full these bins are each week, however on the occasion that a dog bin is not emptied each week, there are subsequent complaints to the Council. Data would be gathered over the next 12 months to determine if all bins need to be emptied weekly or if these can be scheduled more cost effectively.
- Proposal for Parish Councils to pay for new dog bins being collected at a cost of £5 a collection.
- There has been an uncontrolled growth of street bins since the MoA was written. Last year ten new dog bins were installed. A large number of bins were in place in the area compared to other authorities of a similar demographic.
- Any new dog bin/litter requests would need to be justified. E.g evidence of foot fall/litter issues etc, as additional bins added a cost to the local authority.
- The street cleansing service should consider communicating to the public that dog waste could now also be placed in a standard litter bin, as it was all disposed of in the same way. (Cost saving as street litter bins were £200 less expensive than dog bins.)
- Included in this communication should be that dog waste would not make standard litter bins smelly as the smell would be in an open bin and the odours would be blown away. Concern was raised that the public would not have this understanding.
- With regard to new developments in a village increasing footfall in public spaces and park areas/footpaths being created, the developer would be charged for the bins via a S106. The collection costs of these would fall to the Council – this would need to be considered.
- Some efficiencies may be found when fully costing the service – the bin delivery crew were costed individually with the waste service modelling, but the reality is likely to be that this can be utilised across the service.

### Actions

- A clear distinction needed to be made and defined between a sweep and a litter pick and what was listed on a 6-week schedule and litter pick schedule.
- A cost saving and a no change option to be provided showing impact on quality.
- An explanation be provided for the summary resources slide.
- Adapt Annual Service Cost to show (%) Quantum of percentage – 9% = approx. £126k for Option 1 + capital expenditure of £50k resulting in approx. £176k for Option 1.

### **38. POLICIES AND CHARGING**

The Waste Development & Support Manager presented the draft Service standards and Policies and highlighted this was a working document which need to be made more resident-friendly to be used on the website etc.

The following comments and questions were raised:

- The group was asked to decide on whether to issue caddy liners to residents. Liners were proven to increase participation in the food waste service as participants had a perception that collecting food waste was messy and liners reduced this. Liners did not need to be compostable as the food waste treatment plant disposed of all liners in the same way. Plastic liners were cheaper. Providing any liners to over 40,000 households would be costly, however and DEFRA has yet to confirm if new burdens revenue funding would cover this – it is felt it would be unlikely. Annual costs would be approximately £40,000 excluding delivery. An option could be to provide them only in the first year of service.
- Larger households would automatically receive an extra recycling bin.
- Other households that produced more recycling waste but not the room for two bins – could apply for a larger 360lt recycling bin to meet their needs. £20 to £25k revenue is currently received from blue bins; this revenue would be lost if the Council decided to issue free recycling bins.
- The brown lidded bin (additional garden waste bin would be maintained as a subscription service).
- Members were happy with the enforcement stages proposed.

### Actions

- Decide whether to provide caddy liners for food waste, and if so, for how long.
- An extra food caddy to be able to be requested by larger households added to the policy but this would be after advice on food waste prevention was given by the Council. Food waste has a significant impact on climate change and most of it is avoidable. Avoiding it can also help save money and so the Council will try to work with residents in the first instance to reduce it.
- Cost of penalty/enforcement to be added.
- Members would discuss the impact of free bins and loss of income with their respective group.

### **39. SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL**

The Waste Development & Support Manager explained the Service Delivery Model and highlighted that whatever regardless of delivery model chosen, the service was still seen as a Council run service, and that while operational risk could be contracted out at cost, it remained a risk to the Council in terms of reputation.

The following comments and questions were raised by members:

- Consultation would incur significant unplanned cost and take 4 to 5 months on a procurement exercise and we currently have a good working relationship with ECSS.
- Commercial firms would rather pay fines than improve the service and the reputation of the Council therefore there was a need to stay in control and this would be lost with a commercial company.

## Agenda Item 10 - Appendix 2

- Some members proposed their preference was to continue working with ECSS.
- Time and money would be wasted by conducting a procurement exercise and the Council may be undesirable for bigger companies and therefore cost more.
- The Council enjoys a positive relationship with ECSS. Some tidying up of the MoA was required, but it worked, and the Council had control.
- Previous outside companies did not improve performance even though they needed to pay a fine for £35k for missed bins only; the Council were one of many contracts.
- Surrounding districts were not contracting commercial firms.
- Insourcing was also an option to be considered.
- Outsourcing was the highest risk with the lowest reward. ECSS created a balance to this.
  
- Outsourcing considerations:
  - pushed against time and if procurement failed it was high risk to complete. Would lock the Council out of ever implementing a commercial waste service.
- Outsourcing would allow the Council to evaluate the costs, compare with other models, and give the Council more financial predictability but no option to implement a commercial service
- Insourcing implications:
  - Good alignment to Service areas
  - Costs would likely increase due to increased pension contributions, approx. £150k
  - Council would have complete control
  - Ability to implement commercial service to offset costs

To remain with ECSS and have a more robust performance/contracting process would give the council more financial predictability

- There would be no issue with the council providing a commercial waste service; any profit from this would be offset to the domestic waste service.
- If ECSS provided a commercial waste service, then the return would be seen in a reduced management fee.
- Certainty over costs – last few years there was lack of certainty as the service had grown with no adjustment and then had to play catch up – the service was now not underperforming; it had tried to save money and not increase fees. Those costs would have affected the Council regardless due to fuel costs and sickness costs. ECSS had now rightsized itself.

The strategic options had been presented and officers required a clear steer on delivery model asap.

### Actions

- Final decision needed in July therefore preferred option would be needed asap.

- Conservatives were happy with ECSS continuing the service
- Decision from the Lib Dems by the end of the month
- Figures to be provided on pension impact if insourcing and the overheads of having a trading company (IS Action)

**40. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**41. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for 10 June at 9:30am via Microsoft Teams.

The meeting closed at 11:50am