

Improvement and Review Commission Minutes

Date: 18 October 2016

Time: 7.00 - 8.50 pm

PRESENT: Councillor R Gaffney (in the Chair)

Councillors Mrs S Adoh, Miss S Brown, H Bull, A D Collingwood, G C Hall, A E Hill, Ms C J Oliver, R Raja, and L Wood*.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: K Ahmed, Mrs L M Clarke OBE, C Etholen, M Harris, M E Knight, D Knights and R Newman

* Denotes Standing Deputy

Guests: Councillors Mrs J D Langley (Cabinet Member for Housing), A Lee (Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing) and Mrs J E Teesdale (Cabinet Member for Environment).

14. CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed Officers and Members, especially two of our Cabinet Members – Councillor Mrs Jean Teesdale and Councillor Mrs Julia Langley, to this unscheduled special meeting being held in unusual surroundings.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

16. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement & Review Commission held on 14 September 2016, be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

17. HOUSING PORTFOLIO UPDATE

The Meeting was given a comprehensive presentation on the work of the Housing Service currently and planned for the next 12 months. Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Mrs Langley assisted by Brian Daly (Housing Services Manager) referenced the recent Housing Regeneration Seminar that it was hoped Members had been able to attend. The presentation added to the information given at that seminar.

Reference was made to a specific **Assured Shorthold Tenancy Scheme** that the Council had initiated in partnership with Bucks Housing Association on 4 properties. Financed by the sale of some lower quality temporary accommodation stock elsewhere, this sort of scheme, , could be the first of many across the District.

The availability of some £2m **funds from Section 106 agreements** for affordable housing was referenced, Registered Housing Providers were being engaged in negotiations via the various Forums the Housing Service operated and a number of options were being evaluated. An Individual Cabinet Member Decision in respect of this expenditure was planned for the end of next month.

The Council's 5 year **Homelessness Strategy** continued to be reviewed by way of the Action Plan. A Red/Amber/Green coding in respect of the Plan, showed only 2 of the 57 points current with Red markers.

In respect of the **Private Housing Sector**, the long awaited results of the Houses in Multiple Occupation consultation had been received from Central Government that very morning, this was to be digested and a way forward referencing the Commission's invaluable work on the subject would be determined and considered shortly.

The introduction of a requirement for private landlords using agencies, to ensure agencies were registered with reputable professional bodies (NLA (National Landlords Association) or Housing Ombudsman) was noted. The shortlisting of the Council with 10 other partnering authorities for the National Award for Public Sector Energy Champions was commended.

Saunderton Lodge was referenced; the report on the feasibility of options was currently being considered by officers prior to a recommendation being made to Cabinet. Options to be considered were a complete re-build, complete refurbishment of the current buildings and a part re-build / part refurbishment.

The increases in **Bed & Breakfast and Temporary Accommodation** (the referenced red warnings on the Homelessness Action Plan) were outlined, these being mainly due to an overall national increase in demand.

Private Sector Leasing and additional temporary accommodation schemes with Registered Providers were being worked on, along with work to attract private landlords. The difficulties of competing with the London Boroughs who were placing tenants in the District with far more funding available was referenced. Continued work internally regards Council owned sites and with **Red Kite Housing** to ensure the promises made for 5 years at the outset of the organisation were delivered (the 5 year period ends December 2016) was noted.

Members raised a number of points and received clarification on the following issues:

- BCC (Buckinghamshire County Council) as the Highways Authority had been consulted at length regarding re-modelling the difficult right turn out of

Saunderton Lodge, but to no avail. Their experts had been unable to find a solution. As a result increased capacity at the Lodge was not an option.

- An estimation of 10 to 11 rough sleepers currently in Wycombe was referenced; there was a constant turn over. Members were encouraged to report / refer anyone homeless to the Service. Wycombe DC part funded the Wycombe Homeless Connection and almost totally funded the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme, both much used in combatting homelessness in the District.
- The assured short term tenancies were explained, set at 2 years maximum, plans to direct tenants to shared ownership and use of M4Money Credit Union to build up deposits for rent or ownership were explained.
- Estimates of the number of units that could be provided by the £2m Section 106 monies were discussed.

The Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member were thanked for their attendance and informative update along with the Housing Services Manager, on what was an important if not the most important service provided by the Council.

18. UPDATE ON WASTE CONTRACT

Cabinet Member for Environment; Councillor Mrs J Teesdale was welcomed to the Meeting along with her Head of Service Caroline Hughes (Head of Environment), again a comprehensive presentation was given on the Joint Waste Contract operated by the Service in Partnership with Chiltern District Council and contractors Serco.

Background to the establishment of the Joint Contract was given along with details of the service provided. Considerably decreased customer contact numbers for the last full year 15-16 in comparison with those since the introduction of the contract were commended, whilst similar reductions in missed collections were noted.

Recycling performance above the National recycling rate was noted, figures over 50% compared with a paltry 19% prior to service changes a number of years previously were referenced, however the aspirational 60% longer term as envisaged at the outset had not been attained, Wycombe had flat lined just over 50%. Factors for this, of reduced packaging, reduced newspaper sales, more flats (where recycling historically reduced due to bulk bin usage) than in higher performing Districts and higher rejection rates had all contributed.

The need to prevent rejected bins where contamination of recycling occurred was stressed. Refresher training for crews had been carried out, new recycling guides and calendars along with the use of bin stickers, bin tags and monitoring.

DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) funding of £800K (admittedly across all Bucks authorities) was to be used to educate and increase recycling those this was part ring fenced for food waste recycling in particular.

Fresh initiatives on the educational front at primary schools were planned, recent successful stalls and quizzes at BNU (Bucks New University) Freshers Fairs were noted. Members noted the gap in respect of secondary age pupils.

An element of confusion amongst the public existed, the public lacked confidence which bin to use and often then plumped for the residual landfill as much as contaminating recycling.

£1m savings per annum between the two authorities was referenced, the success in emptying some 385,000 containers across the District each week was commended. Overall customer service satisfaction of 85.5% was outlined, though street cleaning did let down this figure, more work was needed on this aspect of the contract.

Again Members raised a number of points and received clarification on the following issues:

- It was confirmed that the vehicles used by Serco were not leased but part of the contract arrangements.
- Penalties for offending contaminators had been considered, the bad publicity that could ensue could be very damaging; the Cabinet Member preferred an 'educational' approach.
- 'Educational' work in respect of our 'Educational' community i.e. students was planned, and with landlords I.
- In comparison to other neighbouring Bucks authorities Wycombe/Chiltern were doing well , however South Oxfordshire/ Vale of the White Horse were up into the 60's percentage-wise, though they did have far less urban areas and as a result less flats/apartments.
- It was confirmed that the partnership was looking to the inclusion of South Bucks into the scheme to afford further economies of scale.
- The reduction in packaging had not reduced targets, though nationally the aspiration of 60% recycling, was not being stressed as much as previously.
- Planned leaflets / calendars would feature items NOT recyclable.
- Officers agreed to update the members on the value lost due to rejection re contamination.
- The need to engage at a local level in respect of particular rounds where problems occurred was noted and plans were afoot in this respect.
- Vouchers and incentives would need 'chips in bins' to be effective, which had not previously been supported.

- Members were invited to visit the landfill waste incinerator plant at Greatmoor in the north of the county which was now successfully powering some 30,000 homes with the electricity generated.
- It was noted that the batteries and textiles collection system, whereby once collected replacement bags are left, was not working that successfully, work was needed to refine this service.
- Clarification in respect of street cleaning responsibilities was requested; it appeared a street could come under the Highways Authority, Bucks County Council, the District Council under this waste contract or even the Community Grounds Maintenance parks contracts, or the local Parish / Town Council. Clarification was required along with details of weed-killer usage.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member and Head of Service and also commended the Waste Service Manager Sally Gordon who worked out of Chiltern for her helpfulness and efficiency particularly in dealing with their specific queries.

The Chairman thanked all the Members for their comments, questions and positive contribution and stated that it had been a very pleasant meeting to chair.

Chairman

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting:

Brian Daly	- Housing Services Manager
Peter Druce	- Democratic Services
Caroline Hughes	- Head of Environment
Catherine Whitehead	- Head of Democratic, Legal & Policy.