

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 November 2021

Present: Councillor A Grimston (Chair)
Councillor J Dhindsa (Vice-Chair)
Councillors P Hannon, T Osborn, G Saffery, B Stanton and
M Turmaine

Also present: Councillor Tim Williams and Darren Harding (Veolia)

Officers: Group Head of Community and Environmental Services
Head of Leisure and Environmental Services
Contract Monitoring Officer (Waste and Recycling) (LA)
Contract Monitoring Officer (Waste and Recycling) (RY)
Senior Democratic Services Officer (JK)

42 **Apologies for Absence/Committee Membership**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Feldman and Parker.

43 **Disclosure of interests (if any)**

There were no disclosures of interest.

44 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2021 were submitted and signed.

45 **Review of the Impact of the changes to the waste and recycling service**

The scrutiny committee received the report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services. The Group Head of Community and Environmental Services introduced the report on the implementation of changes to the waste and recycling service which were designed to contribute to the council's sustainability ambition.

Darren Harding, Senior Contract Manager for Veolia Watford, made a presentation to the committee. The presentation covered the service change, how it was implemented, benchmarking and the successes of the roll out.

Copies of the presentation had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Williams, added that the implementation had been a success noting that the green waste charges had initially been controversial and had been required by budgetary constraints. Such charges had now been introduced by 90% of councils and Watford had had the highest increase in recycling levels of any Hertfordshire district in the last year. He expressed his thanks to Veolia and officers for the smooth implementation.

During discussions on the report, members raised the following points requesting additional information where relevant:

- Over 14,000 eligible households had taken up the chargeable garden waste service which had been rolled out to properties with gardens. Officers would report back on the percentage take up but it was thought to be about 60% of those eligible and about 40% of households overall.
- The households who were not eligible for the garden waste service or who had chosen not to use it, were likely to compost their waste or take it to a recycling centre. There was no evidence that it was going in the residual waste bins.
- Watford's recycling levels in 2020/21 placed the town sixth in Hertfordshire; there were plans to improve the recycling rates further but the service changes had been required first.
- The figures for quarter 2 2021 showed that the recycling levels were at 56%, placing Watford third in the county.
- Other areas of Hertfordshire had different demographics to Watford which reflected their different levels of recycling. This was considered to be the most significant variable between council areas despite the variations in how waste and recycling services were delivered.
- There was a lot of messaging around reducing the overall amount of waste which was recognised as a priority. There were also targets in the contract around waste minimisation.
- The level of the concession fees had been set following consideration of fees in other council areas and the charges in Watford were relatively modest in comparison to some places. There had not been complaints that they were unaffordable.
- The costs of additional bins for households had been reviewed in line with other authorities and were based on the collections over the year.
- The chargeable garden waste service meant that residents could choose whether to use the service and it was not being subsidised by those who did not use it. It was also noted, however, that residents with larger gardens were likely to pay more council tax.

- A recent report in the Watford Observer questioned the impact of charging on recycling rates, but it was noted that even with the charges an additional 253 tonnes of garden waste had been collected in 2020/21.
- Figures were requested about the additional income received from the scheme. The committee asked for a further update once a full year's figures were available.
- There was as communications plan which focused on contamination and overflowing bins. Households could be offered more recycling bins if needed. The number of people in the household determined the capacity of the bins provided.
- The government had a target of 65% of all waste to be recycled by 2035 and work was continuing to achieve this.
- Residents made complaints about the noise of the early morning collections; officers undertook to send out a reminder to crews.

The committee expressed their thanks to Veolia and the officers for their presentations.

RESOLVED –

that the scrutiny committee noted the update and the actions noted be undertaken.

46 **Executive Decision Progress Report**

The scrutiny committee was invited to review the current Executive Decision Progress Report for 2021-22 and consider whether any further information was required.

It was noted that there had been a change since the publication of the agenda:

- The Woodside Master Plan update would now be going to the Cabinet meeting on 7 February 2022

RESOLVED –

that the 2021/22 Executive Decision Progress report be noted.

47 **Hertfordshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee**

The council's representative on the Health Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Grimston, advised that she was pleased to report that the Health Scrutiny Committee had taken on the report of the task group on health services for the

deaf. It would be on the agenda for their December meeting. The recommendations would be reviewed on a county-wide basis.

RESOLVED –

that the update be noted.

48 **Work Programme**

Members were invited to review Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme for 2021/22 and suggest any additional items for review.

RESOLVED –

that the 2021/22 work programme be noted.

49 **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 16 December and an additional meeting would take place on Thursday 23 December at 6pm should there be a call-in.

Chair

The Meeting started at 7.05 pm
and finished at 7.55 pm