

**MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007 at 7.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Dunn (Chair), Councillor Detre (Vice Chair) and Councillors Bessong, Jones, Mendoza and Pagnamenta

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Butt and J Moher.

Councillor D Brown (Lead Member for Highways and Transportation) also attended the meeting.

**1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

None declared.

**2. Deputations**

None.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007 be received and approved as an accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising**

*Procurement Strategy*

Members noted that following the last meeting of the Select Committee, they had received a briefing note providing information on recent Government legislation that encouraged contracting of services to organisations that supported disabled employment.

**5. Waste Contract Performance**

Keith Balmer (Director, StreetCare, Environment and Culture) introduced the report, stating that this would be the first in a series of updates on Waste Contract Performance since the new contract had commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. He drew Members' attention to the most significant enhancements that were included in the new contract specification, including refuse, recycling and composting collections and street cleansing. Members noted that the overall target for recycling and composting performance was 25%, whilst the current performance achieved as of the end of August 2007 was 23%. It was anticipated that same day collections would have a positive impact on recycling performance. Keith Balmer advised that the total tonnage recycled was ahead of schedule, at 12.94% compared to 10.56% from

last year. Meanwhile, the amount composted had dropped slightly from the previous year, although this was partly attributable to more loads being rejected due to wetter than average loads and a higher level of contamination. The waste management contractors, Veolia, and officers had since embarked on a raising awareness campaign for residents and composting tonnage was increasing again.

Keith Balmer advised that although missed waste collections were still above the target, performance had continued to improve, whilst the performance dip on 31<sup>st</sup> September 2007 which had coincided with the introduction of same day collections had also since recovered. He stated that Veolia had acknowledged that missed collections of green box and bin collections was of particular concern and that more work was needed to reduce the number of missed collections. ENCAMS, an independent assessor, had reported good performance for street cleanliness, with the score of 23% for Tranche 1 representing a 9% improvement in last year's score. With regard to complaints received, these had increased in Quarter 1 for 2007/2008 as compared to Quarter 4 last year, although the number had began to reduce in Quarter 2, and these were mainly concerning waste collection. Complaints concerning street cleansing totalled less than 5 in the first 2 quarters this year. Members noted that the time taken to remove fly tips over the first 2 quarters was on the threshold of the target of 1 day. Keith Balmer then drew Members' attention to details regarding service implementation in the report.

During Members' discussion, Councillor Detre enquired why a target of 20% had been mentioned with regard to this year's recycling targets and whether incidences of fly tipping had increased since the introduction of the bulky waste charge. He also enquired about performance in terms of return collections where collections had initially been missed. Councillor Detre sought explanation with regard to the setting of the target of 45 missed collections per 100,000. Councillor Jones commented that there appeared to be a number of fly tipping incidences in the Willesden Green area, adding that residents were leaving bulky items in their gardens possibly due to the bulky waste charge. She felt there was a lack of visible presence of street cleaners in the Willesden Green area. She enquired whether there were plans for additional green bank sites and would these accommodate mixed plastics and also whether the contract to use the organic waste site at Harefield would be extended, bearing in mind the 12 tonnes waste limit. Councillor Jones, in noting the problem highlighted in the report with regard to Veolia's reporting of fly-tip removals, asked whether data inputting was up to the required standard. She also enquired whether trade waste recycling had improved since the last inspection and whether schools were charged for waste collection.

Councillor Bessong asked whether the Council was on target to meet the Government's 30% recycling target by 2010/2011, how much waste was going to landfill and whether the Council was already participating

in the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS). Councillor Mendoza enquired whether the incorrect data inputting explained the apparent dip in performance in Quarter 2 for fly-tip removal. Councillor Pagnamenta enquired on the extent of recycling from street bins.

The Chair sought confirmation on the threshold of landfill waste per year that would require the Council to participate in LATS. He queried whether street cleaners were aware that they should separate recycling and non-recycling waste. He also enquired whether information on street cleaning and recycling could be provided on a ward basis to inform councillors of the areas that were performing well or below target and he added that this information would be helpful to StreetCare officers. If this was not possible, he suggested that there should be enough information to indicate the general areas that were on target or underperforming. The Chair also enquired whether compressed waste could be recycled, and if so, whether the quality of the materials would be adversely affected. He agreed that the presence of street cleaners appeared inconsistent across the borough.

In reply to the issues raised, Councillor D Brown (Lead Member for Highways and Transportation) commented that it appeared that incidences of fly-tipping were occurring less frequently because of the positive effects of cleaner streets on the public and this view was supported by officers.

Keith Balmer acknowledged that fly tipping occurred more frequently in some areas. He explained that the missed waste collections target of 45 per 100,000 applied to the combined average of missed collections for domestic refuse, green box and organic bin collections and reflected the number of properties that received each type of waste collection. Keith Balmer confirmed that arrangements were made to re-visit properties where waste collections were missed as soon as they had been reported. The Select Committee noted that the 20% recycling target for 2007/2008 was set by the Government, whilst the Council's was 21% and Keith Balmer felt that the recycling target of 30% by 2010/2011 would be met, although the aim would be to comfortably exceed it. With regard to landfill waste, approximately 75 – 80,000 tonnes of domestic waste was deposited annually and the Council was not yet needing to participate in the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS). However, participation in LATS would increase waste disposal costs, hence the contract's specification to increase recycling. It had been suggested that the threshold level of waste before needing to enter into LATS would be around 100,000 tonnes and it was likely that a uniform figure would be set for members of the West London Authorities (WLA).

Keith Balmer confirmed that data had been inputted incorrectly with regard to removing fly-tips and that this could explain the performance dip in this area for July/August 2007. He advised that information concerning street cleaning could be collated on a ward basis, however

waste collection was more problematic because collection rounds often involved multiple wards and were also frequently changed. With regard to street bin waste, this currently went to landfill, although the ability to recycle would be considered as a longer term project. However, road sweepers had split barrels which would allow them to separate landfill and recyclable waste. Irfan Malik (Assistant Director, Environment and Culture) added that discussions with the contractor would take place to encourage sweepers to undertake this role.

Chris Whyte (Head of Environmental Management) advised the Select Committee that the contract with the previous recycling site contractors had not been extended as they could not ensure provision of recycling of mixed plastics. However, Veolia had been requested to identify alternative recycling sites and increase capacity of existing sites, whilst the organic waste limit had not yet been reached and a contract extension for these sites was feasible. The issue of data inputting and integrating the Council and Veolia's systems was being addressed. With regard to trade waste, changes to regulations introduced on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2007 would require all such waste to be treated. Consultants would be bought in to work with traders in town centres to provide advice on dealing with waste, however a large proportion of this waste still went to landfill. However, investigations and possible enforcement action would be taken where traders had used street facilities for their waste, although the transient nature of a lot of businesses would sometimes make tracing difficult. Chris Whyte confirmed that the Council did not charge schools for handling trade waste. Members noted that the advanced technology made separation of recycling materials from compressed waste possible.

The Chair, in acknowledging the report, commented that representatives from Veolia would be present at the next meeting to respond to Members' queries.

RESOLVED:-

that the report on the Waste Contract Performance be noted.

## **6. Waste Policy and Compulsory Recycling**

Chris Whyte advised Members that this was a draft report which when finalised would seek approval from the Executive to formally adopt a Waste Policy that would enable the Council to meet the requirements of the proposed new Waste Strategy for England. One of the proposed recommendations was to introduce compulsory recycling. Chris Whyte stated that Brent was required to improve its recycling rate from the current 21% to 33% by 2015/16 as set by the Government's Waste Strategy. The Council had set an internal recycling target of 25% for this year. Chris Whyte drew Members' attention to the proposals for the Waste Strategy for England as set out in the report.

Chris Whyte then detailed the results of the consultation carried out in October 2007 in respect of the draft policy, which had received a 36% response rate. Amongst some the key findings were that 97% of respondents regarded recycling as important, 88% agreed that there should be a zero waste policy and 78% agreed that a compulsory recycling scheme should be introduced. It would be recommended that the compulsory recycling scheme be introduced to households that were part of the green box recycling scheme from March 2008, with temporary staff employed to monitor this. Members heard that similar schemes were already in place or being considered in a number of other London boroughs, with Barnet experiencing an 18% increase in recycling since introducing the scheme. Chris Whyte advised Members that improving green box recycling performance would both increase the level of recycling and significantly reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. He then drew Members' attention to further background detail of compulsory recycling as set out in the report.

Members then discussed this item. Councillor Detre sought clarification that those taking part in the consultation understood what they were being asked. In acknowledging the potential effectiveness of compulsory recycling, he suggested that the scheme be trialled in one area initially prior to being introduced to the whole borough to provide opportunity to refine the scheme and make any changes deemed necessary. Councillor Bessong also indicated that there should be a trial scheme before introducing compulsory recycling to the whole borough and stated that there should be more recycling facilities on estates. Councillor Mendoza did not think a trial period for compulsory recycling was necessary, especially in light of the environmental benefits that such a scheme would bring. He enquired when the costs of the compulsory recycling scheme would be known and what would be the projected savings. He also enquired what proposals there were for recycling on estates and whether there had been any targets set in relation to this. Councillor Pagnamenta enquired whether larger green boxes could be provided. Councillor Jones indicated her support for introducing compulsory recycling as currently proposed.

The Chair raised several issues with regard to this item. He stressed the importance in ensuring that compulsory recycling was introduced correctly and suggested that a trial scheme may afford the opportunity to ensure that any faults were dealt with prior to it being introduced borough-wide, citing the initial problems caused by same day collection as a reason for doing so. He suggested that the final report include details of such schemes in other boroughs as their experience could prove invaluable to Brent. With regard to green boxes, the Chair enquired how many households were included in this scheme and he enquired whether providing lids were possible. The Chair emphasised the need to send an educational message to residents explaining the need to recycle and the implications if this was not undertaken and he suggested that educational packs be produced for this purpose. The Chair enquired whether there was a possibility of information sharing

with other service areas, such as Revenue and Benefits, to identify more transient areas of population that may be less inclined to recycle. He also asked whether there was any possibility that commercial and building waste could be bought back under Council control, and if so, would this provide opportunity to boost performance.

In reply to the issues raised by Members, Chris Whyte advised the Select Committee that other London boroughs running area trial compulsory recycling schemes had seen residents all over the borough assuming the scheme was in place, therefore it was not thought a trial scheme in a specific area was not necessary. Chris Whyte stated that compulsory recycling could not be implemented on estates at this stage due to the lack of facilities and difficulties in enforcing, however recycling facilities would be rolled out on estates for completion by March 2009 and this would be backed by an educational message encouraging use of these facilities. In addition, monitoring officers would be employed to ensure compliance, whilst street wardens and Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) were also encouraging their residents to recycle. Chris Whyte confirmed that although larger green recycling boxes could not be provided, residents could request additional ones. Members noted that introducing a second green box could potentially hamper the separation of recycling materials process.

Chris Whyte advised the Select Committee that providing green box lids would be a costly exercise and approximately 80,000 properties were in possession of green boxes. He advised Members that a comprehensive communications strategy was being developed to inform residents of the importance of recycling and how they can be involved, stating that the message would be tailored depending on the groups of people or areas that were being addressed. He added that councillors could also participate by reinforcing this message. Members noted that the trade waste contractors provided for recycling to some extent, whilst Supplementary Planning Guidance Regulation 19 set out the recycling requirements for major developments. Members also noted that the Council's Transportation Unit encouraged contractors to recycle, whilst the legal implications would need to be considered with regard to the Council taking responsibility of trade waste.

Irfan Malik advised the Select Committee that all boroughs that had undertaken pilot compulsory recycling schemes had implemented them borough-wide and he felt that a trial in one area would unnecessarily delay compulsory recycling and there was a need to introduce the scheme promptly in light of the potential costs posed by LATS. He informed Members that the same day refuse and recycling collection had been introduced successfully with few complaints received and this was partly attributable to the information that had been gathered on other London boroughs that had introduced same day collections. Irfan Malik advised Members that the Council's Mosaic system could be used to help identify addresses that were more likely to be transient

and could require a greater communication focus to encourage recycling.

The Select Committee noted that discussions were taking place with Veolia with regard to the costs involved in compulsory recycling.

RESOLVED:-

that the draft report on Waste Policy and Compulsory Recycling be noted.

**7. Performance and Finance Review – Quarter 2 (July – September 2007)**

Cathy Tyson (Assistant Director, Policy, Policy and Regeneration) introduced the report, stating that overall the Council was making good progress, with 68% of vital signs on or close to target and 32% well below target. The quarter had witnessed 93% of actions on track to deliver the Brent Action Plan within the deadlines. Members heard that the projected overspend in Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care remained the key budget risks to achieving the Corporate Strategy's objectives, although robust measures were being put in place including invest to save projects. Cleanliness of streets, which had previously been a risk, had shown improvement following commencement of the new waste management contract.

Cathy Tyson advised that the Council was on target to deliver most of the stretch targets in respect of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and performance was on track to receive £8.235m performance grant award. Although a loss of £765K grant had been sustained because of Brent teaching Primary Care Trust (tPCT) scaling down funding of stop-smoking services, discussions with tPCT were underway to try to restate this. Encouraging stretch target performances included child participation in sport, domestic violence and efficiency targets. It was expected that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating of 3 stars would be retained in January 2008, with improvements obtained in a number of service areas. However, problems relating to scores in the Culture Block would prevent an improvement in the overall rating, despite representations to the Audit Commission with regard to the relevance of some of the indicators within this block.

Cathy Tyson then drew Members' attention to specific performance areas as set out in the report. Both Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care areas had been identified as high priority areas and performance was moving in the right direction. A large improvement had been experienced with regard to street cleanliness and this was now only just below target, although of greater concern was the level of graffiti which was expected to be significantly short of performance targets. To address this issue, a graffiti project board had been established to co-ordinate preventative actions and offender case

management activities undertaken by StreetCare, the anti-social behaviour teams, the police, Trading Standards, Parks Service and BHP. Meanwhile, improvements had been made in Complaints performance, with all service areas on or close to target with the exception of poor response times in respect of Children and Families and Environment and Culture. School places and library visitors continued to be areas of concern although action plans were in place to boost performance.

During discussion, Councillor Jones expressed surprise that there were budget concerns with regard to Legal and Democratic Services. She sought details with regard to Transport for London (TfL) spending plans and efficiency savings with regard to the domestic violence target. Councillor Jones also enquired whether children out of school were included in the annual audit. The Chair enquired whether school places were affected by immigration to the borough and also how this impacted upon other services.

In response, Duncan McLeod (Director of Finance and Corporate Resources) advised Members that the overspend within Legal and Democratic Services was relatively minor at approximately £20K. The total funding with regard to TfL for 2008/2009 was currently around £4.5M, slightly down from the previous year although it was anticipated that additional allocations would become available over the year. He confirmed that children out of school were included in the annual audit and schools were motivated to enrol such children as there were funding implications. Duncan McLeod advised Members that there was a discrepancy between the Government's estimate of the population of Brent, at approximately 271,000, and the Council's own most recent estimate in March 2007 of approximately 289,000. He felt that the impact of inward migration to the Borough could have implications for Council services and he added that population information was being submitted to the Government to support a change in methodology.

Phil Newby (Director, Policy and Regeneration) pointed out that recent migrants play a dynamic role in the economy of the borough and their personal success meant that their families were now moving in to settle. He advised that Regeneration officers were bidding for funding to assist spouses of migrants into employment. Members heard that the North West London Hospitals Trust and the tPCT had stated at recent scrutiny committee meetings that the influx of migrants from Eastern Europe had increased the use of Accident and Emergency services and there was a pressing need to encourage new migrants to register with GPs and enter into the Primary Care system.

The Select Committee then agreed to the Chair's suggestion that details be provided on immigration movement to Brent and the impact upon Council Services at a future meeting.



RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the Council's spending, activity and performance in Quarter Two of 2007/2008 be noted; and
- (ii) that details be provided on migration movement to Brent and the impact this has upon Council Services at a future meeting.

**8. Revenue and Benefits Performance**

RESOLVED:-

that the update on Revenues and Benefits Performance be noted.

**9. Performance & Finance Select Committee Work Programme**

*Performance and Finance Review Report*

The Chair invited Members to comment on the style of the Performance and Finance Review report. Councillor Detre commented that although he found the information contained useful, he felt that the report could be of even greater use if it made broader comparisons of performance over a longer period and not just from the previous quarter. He also welcomed the introduction of colour copies of reports which he felt made them easier and clearer to follow. Councillor Jones suggested that performance figures could be compiled over the period of a whole year as opposed to monthly.

The Chair felt that the reporting of this item continued to improve and he welcomed further suggestions from Members. The Chair enquired whether it was possible to include information with regard to the impact of immigration in Brent on the Council's services at the next meeting.

Cathy Tyson acknowledged the comments made and reminded Members that the targets set always exceeded the previous year's. She stated that actual comparisons with the previous year's performance could be made and she welcomed any suggestions from Members in respect of this.

Duncan McLeod stated that it was possible to include the Population Summary Report at a future meeting, although he could not confirm at this stage whether any further details with regard to the impact of migration on Council services would be available.

*Revenue and Benefits*

Duncan McLeod confirmed that a meeting with Capita representatives would take place in January 2008 to discuss collection performance and arrears in particular.

*Social Care Charges*

Councillor Jones enquired when the Select Committee could consider Social Care Charges. The Chair agreed that this should be discussed to determine what meeting this item should be considered.

10. **Items Requested onto the Overview and Scrutiny Agenda**

None

11. **Recommendations from the Executive to be considered by the Performance and Finance Select Committee**

None

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2008 at 7.30 pm.

13. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

A DUNN  
Chair