



MINUTES OF THE ONE COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 14 September 2011 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Colwill (Chair) and Councillors Beckman, Chohan, Lorber, Mitchell Murray and Sheth.

Also Present: Councillors Butt (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources) and S Choudhary.

Apologies were received from: Councillor Ashraf

1. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None declared.

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 July 2011

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 July 2011 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

None.

4. Waste and Street Cleansing Review - Waste Collection Implementation

Chris Whyte (Head of Environment Management, Environment and Management Services) introduced this item and updated Members on the progress of implementing the new arrangements for the waste collection service. The committee heard that the issuing of new bins was now in its second week, with most households receiving larger 240 litre bins, although smaller ones were being issued where there was insufficient space. In addition, around 30,000 homes were being provided with food waste bins. The issuing of new bins was slightly ahead of schedule and was due for completion in two weeks. Four to five distribution crews were issuing on average around 1,000 new bins per crew each day. There was also a crew dedicated to providing bins to properties that had been missed and they were operating on a twice weekly basis. Chris Whyte confirmed that the new waste collection service would commence on 3 October. In the meantime, additional temporary staff had been recruited at the Call Centre to answer queries from residents about the new service and there was also an e-mail address they could send their questions or comments to. Overall, the feedback from residents received to date was largely positive and they understood what changes were being made

and the reasons why. The main concern that had been raised was that some residents felt that the bin provided was too large and officers were visiting these properties to assess what bin size would be most appropriate.

David Pietropaoli (Waste Policy Manger, Environment and Neighbourhood Services) then provided details of the communications and community engagement plan to support the household waste collection strategy. He explained that that there were three phases to the plan, with the first phase being a 'teaser campaign' over the summer which sought to change residents' expectations and to prepare them for the change in service on 3 October, whilst reassuring them the current arrangements would remain in the place up until then. Articles were appearing in the Brent Magazine and its Green Pages section and leaflets. Phase two of the plan involved the first stage of the aim communications campaign starting in September and would include information on the new waste collection arrangements in greater detail, again through articles in the Brent Magazine, its Green Pages section, and distribution of a 12 page explanatory leaflet and a colour-coded collection calendar. A Frequency Asked Questions section based on type of property was also available on the council's website. David Pietropaoli added that there was also various intranet articles for staff and e-mails sent to councillors explaining the changes. Phase two of the main communications campaign would commence in June 2012.

During Members' discussion, Councillor Beckman enquired whether clear sacks were provided in respect of battery recycling. Councillor Mitchell Murray suggested that the leaflets remind residents that the council offered a free bulky waste removal service, whilst the disused grey bins could be put to other useful means such as collecting rain water to use in the drier summer months. She also enquired whether the green boxes that were no longer to be used would be offered to other organisations such as schools and what were the arrangements in respect of nappy disposal. Councillor Harrison sought clarification with regard to colour of bins and suggested that stickers be placed on them explaining what materials could be deposited. Councillor Sheth commented that other London boroughs that had introduced fortnightly waste collections had experienced problems such as litter build up and an increase in fly tipping. He asked if the council had considered such implications and were there were additional resources to address these.

Councillor Lorber commented that there was a large population turnover in Brent with a significant proportion of rented accommodation and therefore if information about the new waste collections arrangements was only provided when the new service started, those who moved to the borough later may be confused as to what the arrangements were. He suggested that labelling the green bins to clearly state what could be put in them would therefore be a worthwhile investment. Councillor Lorber asked what proportion of residents' waste collection day would change under the new arrangements. He sought clarification with regard to replacing bins after collection and cited an example of his own bins being replaced inappropriately on consecutive occasions. It was suggested that refuse collection crew members be given clear instructions with regard to replacing bins and it was emphasised that the bins be replaced with due consideration to residents in order to gain their support. Councillor Lorber suggested that a one-off exercise be undertaken by refuse crew to empty bins that contained waste that should not be in them as there were a number of bins that were overflowing and had not been emptied for a long period. He observed that there were a number of households that had acquired

additional grey refuse bins and he suggested that efforts should be made to retrieve these to encourage recycling. Councillor Lorber also suggested arrangements should be put in place to allow recycling of small electrical appliances as residents were unlikely to be willing to travel to collection points to deposit them.

The Chair commented that residents seemed happy with the new bins to date and he had only received a few comments in respect of the bins being excessive in size and a query with regard to arrangements for disposal of glass. He also enquired whether the bin collection service in respect of residents with disabilities and older persons would continue.

In reply to the issues raised, Chris Whyte advised that in some areas, the landfill bins were green as opposed to grey, however this was clarified in the leaflet and queries would be responded to on a case by case basis. He acknowledged that bins could be labelled if deemed necessary. Members heard that some properties' refuse collection day would change under the new arrangements, however every effort had been made during the planning stages to minimise this. Every household would receive a collection calendar clearly showing on what day their waste would be collected. Chris Whyte explained that the Veolia crews were instructed to collect bins from where they could reasonably see it and replace it within the curtilage of the property and these had been the requirements since the beginning of the contract. He acknowledged the concerns expressed by Councillor Lorber and informed Members that crew members had been instructed not to replace bins in a hazardous location or to be blocking access, however the individual operatives concerned would be approached where a problem had been brought to officers' attention. It was confirmed that the bin collection service in respect of residents with disabilities and older people would continue for those who had registered for this service.

Chris Whyte advised that contamination rounds were undertaken every Friday in respect of recycling bins that also contained landfill waste, however he stressed that educating residents about what can be recycled still needed to be undertaken and refuse crews were leaving information with residents where this had been a problem. The cost of clearing all overflowing bins with mixed waste was likely to be excessive. Members noted that no more grey non-recycling bins were now being provided by the council and it was felt that as the rate of recycling increased over time, the number of grey bins would steadily reduce. Chris Whyte acknowledged that other local authorities had experienced problems when introducing fortnightly collections and phase two of the scheme would attempt to address such concerns as promptly and as effectively as possible. Additional resources had been provided for the Call Centre to handle queries during the changes and Members noted that the saving targets were net of all costs expected. The leaflets distributed to residents included suggestions for alternative uses for green boxes and some may be recovered at a later stage. Chris Whyte confirmed that nappies had to be placed in the non-recycling bins as there was no recycling provision at present. There was also no recycling provision for small electrical appliances and these still needed to be taken to collection points, and although being able to recycle these products would be desirable, attention needed to be focused on materials that could be recycled in large quantities.

David Pietropaoli added electrical appliances often contained hazardous materials which made recycling more difficult and he was not aware of any local authority that

offered kerbside collection of these items. However, consideration of expanding collection sites could be considered in future. He also advised that grey bins had been removed where it had been deemed that there was insufficient space, particularly in respect of properties containing more than one household where liaison with residents would take place to seek the removal of bins.

The Chair thanked the presenters and felt that the suggestions in respect of labelling bins could be worthwhile exploring further.

RESOLVED:-

that the report on waste and street cleansing review - waste collection implementation be noted.

5. Performance and Finance Review, Quarter 4, 2010-11

Cathy Tyson (Assistant Director – Policy, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) introduced the report and advised that although the Local Area Agreement had been abolished, the report still included some partnership indicators as these were important measures by which the council's performance with its partners and its objectives could be considered. The report's format continued to evolve, however financial data now appeared alongside performance data and work continued with regard to how these would be presented. Cathy Tyson stressed that the council continued to face challenging circumstances with very large savings targets to be achieved. In addition, the council faced rising demand in many areas, such as benefits, children's social care, school places and Special Educational Needs and these were all difficult to forecast demand for. Overall, the borough continued to face rising unemployment and low income levels, whilst the introductions of the Housing Benefit Cap and limit to Universal Credit would impact significantly. However, despite these considerable challenges, the council was committed to improving performance and efficiency.

Turning to the 2010/11 outturn, Cathy Tyson advised that the overall forecast had improved due to overspends in some areas being outweighed by underspends in the Central Services, leaving the council's balance at £7.5m. This represented a considerable achievement in view that the council had lost around £6m of in year grants. With regard to performance, Members heard that 56% were on or just below target, 24% significantly below target and 20% having insufficient information which was attributable to some council partners reporting processes. Cathy Tyson advised that the council was taking a more robust approach to insufficient information.

Cathy Tyson then advised the committee of areas that were deemed high risk and this included Adult Social Care which had been caused in part by the quality of data and was being addressed in a One Council programme project. In Children and Families, the re-offending rate and number of 18 year olds subject to a Child Protection Plan and Child Adolescent Mental Health Services where there was insufficient information were also risk areas. Serious acquisitive crime and number of active library book borrowers remained risks, as did recycling rates, however a number of measures were already in place to address this. The number of households living in temporary accommodation was exacerbated by the number of people moving into Brent from Central London reducing the amount of suitable

private accommodation available. The percentage of working age people on out of work benefits was rising especially amongst women, however Job Centre and other agencies were working with the council to address this.

Cathy Tyson then informed Members of indicators that were on target, and these included:-

- Creation of affordable homes
- Teenage conception rate
- Childhood obesity rate
- Sports visits by young people
- Reduction in first entrants to the crime system
- Reduction in complaints to BHP, the Planning Service and Housing and Benefits

During discussion, Councillor Harrison enquired whether overspends in Children and Families could be addressed through more early years intervention activities and whether the transfer of public health funds to the council would assist in this respect.

The Chair expressed concern about the performance in Adult Social Care and Mental Health and he requested that a report on these be provided at the next meeting. He also enquired whether there were plans to provide Mental Health services at the day centre on the former John Billam site as he understood that residents had previously been informed that there were no such proposals.

In reply, Councillor Butt (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources) stated that he would ask the Lead Member for Adults and Health to clarify the situation with regard to the day centre at the former John Billam site.

Cathy Tyson advised that some local authorities were working on financial models in respect of early years intervention and to see if these could make a long term impact, however children's centres would continue to face demand pressures. She added that 0-5 years intervention would remain a Central Government activity and therefore an opportunity for local authorities to tackle this issue with proactive approaches had been missed.

RESOLVED:-

that the report on the performance and finance review, quarter 4, 2010-11 be noted.

6. The Localism Bill

Cathy Tyson updated Members on progress with the Localism Bill which was due a second reading in the House of Lords this week. There had been considerable debate over the Bill and the public committees stage had been completed. Members heard that some 300 amendments had been proposed since the Bill's first draft. In particular much discussion had revolved around communities' right to challenge, changes to housing provision and shadow mayors in city areas. Another topic of debate concerned neighbourhood planning provision and a number of amendments had been agreed in respect of this, whilst a business neighbourhood

plan was also included which would allow business rate payers to vote on some planning issues and to make representations. Members heard that neighbourhood forums could be de-registered if they were not compliant and the shadow city mayor proposals had been dropped. Cathy Tyson advised that request for referendums could be declined if the costs involved were more than 5% of council tax income or if the matter had been considered in the last four years. The other provisions in the Bill had remained largely unchanged. The committee noted that a Public Services White Paper provided practical guidance on how the Localism Bill could be delivered with the intention to provide residents with greater choice and diversity.

7. Work Programme and Task Group Scope

Jacqueline Casson (Senior Policy Officer, Strategy, Partnerships and Improvement) advised that following the last meeting of the committee, there had been discussion on creating a task group on Fairtrade status for Brent and to develop its scope. The task group would look at ways of supporting the Brent Fairtrade Network to obtain Fairtrade status in Brent.

During discussion, Councillor Lorber sought further details on what the task group was seeking to achieve. He suggested that it was the responsibility of the Brent Fairtrade Network to obtain Fairtrade status and that the Network was aware that it needed to ensure that a greater number of faith groups and schools were involved as it had been informed that this was the reason it had not achieved Fairtrade status in previous attempts. He therefore suggested that the Network did not need a task group set up to support these efforts.

Councillor Chohan suggested that the task group could work with the Network and schools and other organisations to promote Fairtrade products. Although no funding was available, the council could play an important role in encouraging use of Fairtrade products throughout the borough.

The Chair invited Councillor Butt to comment, who stressed that a collective, holistic approach needed to be taken to involve as many people as possible in promoting Fairtrade products, especially schools and the task group could act as the council's representatives in providing this cause with more weight.

RESOLVED:-

that a task group on Fairtrade status for Brent be created.

8. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the One Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for Tuesday, 22 November 2011 at 7.30 pm.

9. Any other urgent business

None.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

R COLWILL
Vice Chair in the Chair