

MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 December 2020
(7:00 - 9:10 pm)

Present: Cllr Jane Jones (Chair), Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah (Deputy Chair), Cllr Donna Lumsden, Cllr Olawale Martins, Cllr Simon Perry, Cllr Ingrid Robinson, Cllr Paul Robinson, Cllr Bill Turner and Cllr Phil Waker

Also Present: Cllr Cameron Geddes and Cllr Syed Ghani

Apologies: Cllr Toni Bankole

26. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

27. Minutes - 4 November 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 were agreed.

28. Progress update on Improving Household Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Scrutiny Review Recommendations

The Council's Director of My Place (DMP) delivered an update on the 'Improving Household Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning' Scrutiny Review Recommendations. The scrutiny review had previously been agreed by the Committee at their 4 September 2019 meeting (minute 15 refers).

Progress had been made against many of the 10 recommendations originally put forward by the Committee, however others had been put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The DMP also updated the Committee as to future plans to continue to respond to the recommendations, such as through the SMART Street proposal, which was a cross-council initiative set up to make visible, measurable improvements to the high levels of waste and low levels of recycling in the Borough, as well as improve its cleanliness and appearance.

The Chair stated that one of the major points to arise from the original scrutiny review was that a lot of waste was being produced by HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation) and landlord properties, highlighting the need for more collaborative work to be undertaken. A further update on Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 was also scheduled to be presented at the 12 May 2021 Committee meeting and the Chair thanked the Waste, Enforcement and Communications teams for their work so far.

In response to several questions, the DMP stated that:

- A daily report as to the locations of missed bins was received and the team would then need to pick these up within 24 hours. The team had recently begun work to track missed bins on a monthly basis, to gain an insight as to whether these missed bins were occurring at the same property or street and it was envisioned that this work would be developed further in the long-

term;

- The Council needed more evidence that they had gone back to a resident to tell them if they had not been able to collect their bin due to contamination. Whilst the Council could write to the resident, this work was a longer-term enforcement issue that the team wished to address after the pandemic. It could often prove difficult to tackle the problem, as the Council would receive phone calls from residents to say that their bin had been missed, with the binmen then stating that they had not been able to collect due to contamination. The DMP also stated that the team was currently procuring in-cab technology for the Waste Crews, which would provide real-time bin collection information that could then be fed back into the Contact Centre once the IT was set up. This work was due to be completed in 2021; and
- The team had requested tenant information (to be distributed by managing agents to new tenants with refuse and recycling information) from the Private Licensing team and that the team needed to monitor how the landlords passed this information on. The DMP did not yet have the evidence that this had been done. The Waste Minimisation team had been asked to undertake this task, but landlords had not been forthcoming with this information during the pandemic.

The Head of Regulatory Services advised that the Regulatory Services team conducted a compliance inspection on the respective property when they received a licence application from a landlord. As part of the information that the team provided with the licence, the team informed the landlord and tenant of their responsibilities in relation to waste provision and collection dates. Compliance Officers had also been instructed to go through the conditions of the licence when they visited tenants and conducted inspections, highlighting what good tenants looked like, collection dates, how rubbish should be disposed and information around bulky waste and flytipping.

In response to several questions, the DMP stated that daily missed bin updates were currently shared with the Contact Centre. If a resident was to telephone the Council, their missed bin information would be checked and it would be added to the system if it was not already present.

Members noted that the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBB) still provided weekly recycling collections, whereas many other boroughs did not. LBBB bins were much larger than those in other local authority areas and that in these other areas, some of the positive behaviour change that had arisen had been due to having smaller bins, along with fortnightly collections, which had led more people to recycle.

29. The Reviewed Corporate Plan and Single Performance Framework 2020-22

The Director of Policy and Participation (DPP) delivered a report on the Council's Reviewed Corporate Plan and Single Performance Framework 2020-22.

In response to several questions, the DPP stated that whilst there were a lot of deliverables in the Corporate Plan, these had been tested to ensure that they were achievable through existing resources and time. A commitment had been made by the Senior Leadership Team to the Cabinet that these could be achieved and that this was part of the reason why officers had wanted to come back to a revision of

the Corporate Plan six months after its approval at Assembly (minute 9 refers, 13 May 2020).

A Member highlighted that some of the information put forward in the Corporate Plan was too vague to enable the Committee to adequately scrutinise this, emphasising a point around workforce empowerment. The DPP explained the thinking behind this: there had been a previous overemphasis on system and process and residents were often 'chunked' into sections of process for different departments to address, rather than having their whole story listened to. Work had been carried out to support employees to better engage with and thus provide more tailored support to residents.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing built on the words of the DPP, outlining how the Council's Community Solutions service had been established. This had involved questioning the workforce as to why certain processes existed and mapping out resident issues to ensure that they could be addressed by the Council in a more holistic approach. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council had also spoken to staff about remote working and the wants and needs of employees, incorporating these where possible. The DPP also stated that reports presented to the Committee for the rest of the year should try to reference back to connections in the Corporate Plan to enable this to become more of a 'living' document.

30. Working with residents affected by Capital Works

The Council's DMP, the Managing Director for BD Management Services and BD Service Delivery (MDBDM) and the Assistant Construction Director (ACD) for Be First delivered a presentation into how they worked with residents affected by Capital Works.

The Chair questioned why resident satisfaction surveys completed following works were being returned to the contractors rather than to officers within Be First, as this may put residents off from lodging any issues. The ACD stated that this would be amended going forward as a result, with surveys either being returned to Be First or having an option to be sent back to Be First. The MDBDM stated that BD Services had their own Resident Liaison Officer (RLO) who carried out satisfaction surveys with the customer, who was independent from the contractor and any staff who were delivering the work. My Place also carried out their own spot checks and as such, did not just take the word of BD Services on feedback, adding a further level of scrutiny to the satisfaction results.

In response to a question, the DMP stated that they would share a clear ward-by-ward/block-by-block understandable explanation of what the Capital Works programme was with the Committee as soon as possible. Members also noted that whilst Be First was fairly good at sending Ward Members any letters that were due to be sent out to the local community regarding capital works, that sometimes Members received these with too short notice to amend these if necessary.

In response to several questions, the ACD stated that:

- Mistakes had been made historically but that both himself and other colleagues were actively working to improve capital works programmes;
- In relation to the recording of quality, the ACD had been asked to increase

the level of Clerks of Works. He had one clerk of works out at the moment, with another two scheduled to join and that collectively they would be leading on the clerk of works process and providing feedback. The ACD's team would also be going out to speak to residents, ensuring that they were happy with any work carried out and providing feedback;

- He had been given the lead for looking at all of the Be First Freedom of Information requests and complaints, so that he would be able to see these first hand and cross-reference these against the data that the contractors had been supplying;
- All Section 20 works went through a Section 20 framework. This was a historic framework that was due to end between April and May 2021. The team went out and priced quality and it was currently the case that contracts were awarded on a price-quality basis. Whilst historically, the Council was led by price, it was now the case that the winning contractor would not necessarily be providing the cheapest option as this would need to be weighed against the quality required. Once the winning contractor was awarded the contract, the figures that would come through for any capital works to be undertaken would be assessed by a Quantity Surveyor (QS). Be First had an external QS who would analyse the prices presented and would agree or disagree to these offering the best value. There would also be a secondary check from the Be First team, as well as a QS historically from the Council. The prices would therefore go through three rounds of checks before they were finalised and charged to the resident;
- In relation to the external work team, there was a project manager who adhered to the day-to-day running of the project, a clerk of works, a portfolio lead who oversaw the team, an appointed contract administrator and a QS. The contract was being monitored at project level by the project manager, the portfolio lead, the QS and the contract administrator. These four individuals would also hold daily conversations with My Place and the contractor, discussing the contract and its contents. The clerk of works would attend the site two or three times a week;
- He held weekly meetings with his portfolio leads to ascertain progress and performance and hear more about meetings that had been held with My Place colleagues and contractors. His team did a cash flow forecast, where they dealt with the QS and the QS's expenditure from the contractor would be recorded. The ACD also had meetings with BDMS to discuss strategies and share information; and
- If a contractor fell short of delivery, the ACD would discuss this with the Managing Director of that contractor within a week and they would have meetings on site.

31. Work Programme

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed Members of two changes that had been made to the Work Programme:

- The Committee had been due to receive an update on Recommendation 22 of the Ambition 2020 Scrutiny Review in March 2021, which was regarding 'Officers investigating how we can hold developers to account in relation to impacts on air quality'. As the Committee would also be receiving an update

on the implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan in June 2021, it had been decided to move this item to the 9 June 2021 Committee to enable both items to be discussed together; and

- An update on the progress of recommendations 3, 4 and 5 of the 'Improving Household Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing' Scrutiny Review had been added to the 12 May 2021 Committee, following discussions with the Director of My Place.

The Committee also agreed to revisit item 6 ('Working with residents affected by Capital Works') at a future meeting, with the date to be agreed by the Chair.

The Work Programme was noted.