



NOTE OF: Performance & Downsizing of Environment (with Highways) Task Group

FOR: Regeneration & Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

ON: 15th September 2014.

RE: Briefing on Street Cleansing and Refuse.

1. Purpose of the task group

For Members of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Committee to note the information discussed at the performance and downsizing of Environment (with Highways) task group.

2. Present

Cllrs Surve, Roberts, Whittle, Rigby, Daley, Casey and Hollings.

Also present: Sayyed Osman -Director for Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods, Tony Watson - Head of Environment, Paul Lee – Head of service support and Sonya Palmer – Scrutiny Officer.

Apologies: Cllr Entwistle.

3. Background

At the first meeting in the municipal year of the Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members agreed that they felt it would be beneficial to have an in-depth briefing on Environment and Highways to allow Members to understand the priorities of how the service will look going forward and how previous and future budget cuts have affected the performance and downsizing of the service.

4. Outcome of the task group meeting

The Vice Chair, Cllr Roberts, welcomed everyone to the second task group meeting. Cllr Roberts explained that at the task group meeting on 12th August 2014 Members agreed that the Environment (with Highways) portfolio should

be considered in 3 separate areas; Highways, Environment and Public Protection.

Members welcomed Sayyed Osman Director of Environment, Housing & Neighbourhoods and Tony Watson, Head of Environment and Public Protection to the task group meeting to provide information relating to the Environment portfolio.

Sayyed Osman, provided Members with a brief overview of his portfolio and the budget pressures within each area. He explained that Environment and Public Protection forms around £10 million of the £13.5 million budget for the service and that certain aspects of the Environment portfolio were statutory and therefore reductions to the budget would be restricted.

Members were provided with a brief update in relation to the procurement for waste management and were advised that papers had been sent to the Executive Board in August 2014 with a view to use Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority (GMWDA). New Members of the Committee were informed that last year the Committee played a major part in contributing towards the future of waste management.

Tony Watson advised Members that the Environment portfolio was split into four areas: Refuse, Street Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Cemeteries and Crematoriums.

Refuse

Members were advised that the in-house refuse collection service comprises of 9 frontline vehicles plus 3 spares (which would reduce to 2 spares for 2014/15). Tony explained that all vehicles were replaced after 5 years due to the damage (caused from going to landfill, however, once a nearby transfer station is in place this would be increased to 7 years life per vehicle).

Tony informed Members that the cost to purchase a vehicle is approximately £160,000, with maintenance costs of approximately £15-£20k per annum. He added that fuel usage is 2.5mpg but explained that the Council were currently trialling new electric lifts which has displayed an increase of fuel usage to 3.5mpg.

Tony highlighted to Members that vehicles were used for residual refuse collections Monday to Thursday with a number of vehicles used on Fridays and Saturdays to collect green waste to maximise productivity of the vehicles. Tony also reported that green waste staff were employed on a seasonal basis through the Council's Employment Agency.

It was noted that green waste was still collected in the winter months at the request of Members.

With regards to performance it was advised that 59,000 properties were serviced each week for residual collections ranging from the rural collection round, servicing 2,500 per week to an average of 7,062 properties per week for the remaining rounds over 4 days per week. 27,000 properties were serviced once a fortnight for garden waste. Members were told that this puts the Council in the upper quarter for performance in the country as per the ASPE data 2011/12.

Members were provided with the following statistics:

- Approximately 30 complaints are received each week
- There are 8,000 properties on sack collections
- There are 900 properties on assisted collections (due to elderly or infirm)
- Approximately 60 replacement bins (all colours) are issued each week
- After a number of years of landfill tonnage decrease, the last 2 years have seen the tonnage stabilise, but so far this year landfill tonnage has increased by 10%.

Members were also provided with information relating to the 2014/15 refuse collection budgets costs:

- Employee costs £1,139,900
- Premises costs, services and repairs to storage facilities £2,700
- Transport costs £947,400
- Supplies and Services
 - Equipment and materials – replacement bins and sacks £43,400
 - Protective clothing £12,400
 - Communication expenses radios and phones £3,100
 - Miscellaneous expenses – balance if more bins are needed £6,600
 - Contributions to provisions and funds insurance £30,900

As a result of questioning from Members Tony advised that the Council currently use the Whinney Hill Waste Disposal site in Accrington. He added that if there was a facility in the borough it would significantly reduce time. It was also advised that the Council have gone out to tender for the transfer station and companies such as SITA and Neales have both shown an interest.

It was established through further questioning from Members that the complaints received by the Council focus on two main areas, resident's bins have not been emptied or bins have not been returned. Members were advised that since the vehicles have been fitted with CCTV and tracking devices the Council have been able to resolve the complaints quickly.

The cost of replacement bins was queried and Members were informed that the Council charge £20 for the replacement of burgundy bins (residual waste bin).

Members and officers held a discussion about the amount of time spent resolving whether a bin had been emptied or not. Sayyed informed Members that moving forwards in the future the Council would like to see bar coded bins and an infra-red scanning system to track all refuse collections.

Members held a detailed discussion regarding winter maintenance and asked what measures have been put in place for this year. It was advised that staff members would be provided with traction for their shoes and winter tyres would be fitted on the Councils fleet of vehicles. Members were also informed that as a result of previous bad winters the Council would be more prepared to ensure residents of the borough received minimum disruption.

Members held a discussion with regards to bio fuel and questioned whether the Council have explored the process. Officers explained that it is a new process and the technology in this country is new and untested.

Street Cleansing

Tony informed Members that the in-house service for street cleansing comprises of:-

Seven mechanical sweepers which cover the borough on a rota system up to 7 days a week. The vehicles follow set area working, with the borough split into 3 neighbourhood areas with 2 sweepers in each area plus Blackburn Town Centre, which has one sweeper.

Each neighbourhood area has a team leader who supervises and helps deliver the street cleansing service in their respective neighbourhood area. In Blackburn Town Centre, there are 2 town centre caretakers (working 5 days over 6 each week) who supervise and help deliver the workload of street cleansing and grounds maintenance in the town centre. Members were told that previously there had been a night shift but this was cut due to budget savings.

Litterbins (1,100) are emptied by 2 dedicated vehicles at least weekly, some are daily in the town centres of Blackburn with Darwen. Other litterbins are emptied by refuse collection teams.

There are two caged tippers with a driver and operative on each who collect bulky waste (paid jobs) and also fly tipped waste during the weekdays. The teams work in specific areas.

The service also operates a waste transfer station at Davyfield Road, where bulky, fly tipped, street cleansing arising's and other wastes are taken for sorting and recycling, with any residual waste is landfilled. Using a transfer station cuts downs on the amount of lost time that would be incurred, by sending sweeping vehicles to tip at the landfill site in Accrington.

Members were informed that the litterbin vehicles with lifts, for the larger bins, cost approximately £5.5k extra, therefore the Council are trying to reduce the number of larger litter bins to reduce costs.

Members held a discussion regarding the frequency of street cleansing and explained to officers that residents are not aware of how often street bins are emptied.

It was advised that bulky waste collections cost £10 for up to 5 items. Members were told that previously the cost had been increased to £20 but last year the cost was reduced after an increase in fly tipping.

It was discussed that in the future, the Council would like to work with housing associations to Freecycle goods (bulky items).

As a result of discussions regarding refuse and street cleansing Members requested the following information:

1. Figures relating to bio mass and which other Councils use this process.
2. Frequency/Map schedule for litter bin/street cleansing

It was also agreed that:

1. The task group arranged for Tuesday 30th September scheduled to receive information from Tony Watson and Gary Johnson in relation to Public Protection was re-scheduled for an alternative date.
2. Members would receive additional information from Tony Watson and Sayyed Osman on Tuesday 30th September 2014 in relation to grounds maintenance and crematoriums.

5. Next Steps

That the presentation on Refuse and Street cleansing be noted

Sonya Palmer
Scrutiny Officer