

Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
held at Riverside, Lowestoft on **Thursday, 1 November 2018 at 6.00pm**

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members Present:

Councillors A Cackett (Chairman), D Beavan, P Byatt, L Coulam, T Gandy, L Gooch, K Robinson, J Smith, M Vigo di Gallidoro and N Webb

Cabinet Members in attendance:

Councillor G Catchpole - Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships

Officers present:

R Atkins (Project Manager for the Easy Green Bin Scheme), H Forster (Waveney Norse, Operations Director), S Mortimer (Waveney Norse, Operations Manager), H Slater (Head of Legal and Democratic Services) and K Bonning-Schmitt (Democratic Services Support Officer)

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies were received from Councillors J Murray and C Topping.

Councillor P Byatt attended as substitute for Councillor J Murray.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**3 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO ANY REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OR REPORTS OF ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET**

There were no announcements on this occasion.

**4 POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR THE COLLECTION OF GARDEN WASTE**

The Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships presented the report which was for the post implementation review of charges for the collection of garden waste. The Cabinet Member introduced both the Director and Manager of Operations for Waveney Norse who were attending the Committee to answer any questions regarding the report.

The report set out the performance of the Easy Green Bin (EGB) scheme for the year 2018. 2018 was the third year of the EGB scheme (previously referred to as the Garden Waste Scheme). The paid scheme replaced a previously free collection service and was put in place as part of a Suffolk wide initiative to review the way green waste was processed and charged.

It was noted in the report that in year 1, there was very good performance with around 50% of eligible households opting into the paid scheme. This was the highest level of sign up in the county, when compared with all other Suffolk local authorities. It was also noted that high points for 2018 included higher than expected sign up from new householders and continued growth in online sign ups, both in terms of online applications but also in the form of email rather than 'in person' contact.

It was noted that there was a mistake in the first line of paragraph 3.1 of the report;- 2424,482 should read 24,482.

At this point the Chairman invited questions from the Committee on the report.

### **Questions from Members**

A Member stated that the 50% take up of the EGB scheme was a success, however he would like to see a continued increase in take up. The Member queried how Norse Planned to increase the percentage of take up of the scheme in the coming year and also questioned what would be done about the high levels of food waste. It was pointed out by the Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships that food waste was not for discussion by the Committee at this particular time. The Project Manager for the EGB scheme confirmed that the take up of the EGB scheme had increased, compared to the last year, and this was mainly due to the information that had gone out to the public. It was explained that rolling subscriptions had been introduced which, in turn, removed a barrier to the public because having to continually re-sign up for the scheme was putting off members of the public from signing up.

Several Councillors reported that an increasingly popular option was for neighbours to share their green bin thereby sharing the cost. The Project Manager commented that the suggestion of sharing green bins had been previously published. The Chairman indicated that she shared her bin with her neighbour and that she had found this a good way of breaking down the cost barrier and allowed more members of the public to have access to a green bin.

It was suggested that many members of the public misunderstood what could go in the green bin, for example vegetable peelings could not. The Cabinet Member agreed with the Member that the information provided to the public regarding what could go in the green bins could have been better. For example, more information could have been provided on a leaflet similar to the leaflets given out at Christmas time. The Project Manager explained that this was a nation-wide issue and that there were few schemes in the country that were identical in terms of what could be put into a green bin, and there were no national guidelines. The Chairman advised the Committee that members of the public were sensible and queried why similar leaflets to the ones distributed at Christmas, with the differing collection dates on, could not be created with information on about what could go in the green bin. The Project Manager confirmed that the leaflets at Christmas did include information about what could be recycled, including what could be put in the green bin.

Clarification was sought on whether there had been issues with food contamination since the scheme had started. The Cabinet Member confirmed that there had not been any issues with this. The Member responded that they thought this was commendable but stressed that the major issue was with the recycling of plastics.

A query was raised as to whether the Council had analysed the uptake of the EGB scheme by Council Tax Band. The Project Manager confirmed that there had not been any analysis of this carried out. However, in the coming year there would be a new system which would make it feasible for Norse to be able to carry out such an analysis. The Member further queried whether it would be possible carry out the analysis by parish. The Project Manager responded that this was unlikely because parishes had properties with various Council Tax Bands within them.

Clarification was sought on whether it would be helpful for the Council to promote green bin sharing in order to increase the up take further and improve engagement from the public. The Project Manager responded that bin sharing was already promoted through another agency not the Council.

Councillor T Gandy joined the meeting at 6.15pm.

The Director of Operations at Waveney Norse reported that they were fully aware of the problem of food contamination, which was an increasing issue across the UK. Members noted that the main way of dealing with such issues was through education which was greatly needed such as providing education on plastic waste in the seas. The Director of Operations also explained that they would be investing in technology that would be able to give information about individual customers so that they would be able to better target their marketing and publicity. The Chairman indicated that 'Littering and Poor Recycling in Waveney - An Analysis of Council Communications and Public Education' would be considered by the Scrutiny Committee on 3 January 2019 and Norse could also support this item if they wished. The Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships informed the Committee that the Council was working closely with the Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP) who had initiatives planned for the coming year, including various projects in areas of Lowestoft and Felixstowe which had been identified as having cross contamination in bins, for example, where nappies have been put in the blue bin. The Cabinet Member went on to explain that the need for education was increasing due to China no longer taking waste from the UK and recycling centres becoming more careful over the waste which they took.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships referred back to the previous Member's query regarding food waste and advised that there was a difference between Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils in that Suffolk Coastal was able to recycle food waste in the green bin equivalent, but there was a significant cost to this. Members noted that it cost £42K per tonne to deal with the waste from green bins with food waste in them, compared to £22K per tonne, without. The Cabinet Member indicated that, moving forwards, East Suffolk Council would need to decide how it wanted to deal with food waste.

Clarification was sought on why the leaflets issued last Christmas had stated that vegetable peelings could not go in the green bin but uncooked food could which had left people unclear. The Project Manager apologised stating that communications would be improved this year.

The Project Manager confirmed that there had been changes made this year, and the aim was to start the campaign in December 2018-see paragraph 2.3 of the Report. Last year, Firmstep was being integrated with Barstep and this process took longer than anticipated. Therefore, it was not possible to start the campaign until 11 January 2018. Because of this, the campaign had to be condensed into four weeks, not six, which in turn caused a high level of calls for the Customer Services team. It was noted, however, that despite this, the administration of the scheme continued to operate at a high level of service, and the issue of stickers for the bins went smoothly, and the number of complaints for 2018 was less than in 2017.

This year, with rolling subscriptions and changes in technology, Officers were confident that the campaign would start in December 2018, which should bring further improvements, overall, on last year.

Clarification was sought on why there appeared to be a different system for issuing stickers to bins at churches. The Project Manager clarified that it was not a different process but the Barstep System was a national property database reliant on postcodes and most churches did not have postcodes so they did not appear on the system. She added that there was a different form to complete for churches and the information was then fed back to the same system.

A Member reported that when she had received her first paid green bin the process had been quick to complete and the bin collectors provided a good service.

A query was raised as to whether Christmas trees could go in the green bin. The Project Manager confirmed that, as long as the trees were not too large, if members of the public left the trees next to their green bin they would be collected. The Chairman queried this, pointing out that additional black bags of rubbish left next to the black bin was considered to be fly tipping and she added that, at Christmas time, more consideration should be given to the fact that people had more waste than normal.

Clarification was sought on whether the Council would be distributing leaflets to be hung on the bins this Christmas. The Project Manager confirmed that there would be.

The Committee was advised that there was currently a social media campaign to use brown paper instead of wrapping paper which was hard to recycle and it was suggested that the Council could advertise this next year. The Chairman pointed out that wrapping paper from previous years could be reused.

Reference was made to a black bin being filled up by someone else and it was queried whether this was a complaint received regularly from the public and, if so, what were the financial implications. The Project Manager advised that members of the public tended to be protective of their own bins and Customer Services rarely received complaints about stolen bins. It was further advised that, in the future, electronic tags were going to be added to green bins containing a postcode which would be stored in a database. This meant that stickers on green bins would no longer be required because waste collectors would be provided with a barcode scanner to check that green bins had been paid for thereby making it easier to identify any stolen bins. It was pointed out, however, that people putting waste in a bin that was not theirs came down to neighbourhood watch. The Project Manager also reported that an increasing trend was for resident associations to buy green bins together and share these across the neighbourhood according to how many they required.

Reference was made to the GDPR statement given to residents when they telephoned Customer Services and it was suggested that it was too long and off putting. The Project Manager advised that she was not responsible for this but would pass on the information to the appropriate officer.

## **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted as a summary of the progress of the scheme in 2018 and that areas of learning be explored, and any actions that needed to be carried over into the delivery of the programme in 2019 be summarised and implemented.

## 5 CURRENT POSITION OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman presented the updated report setting out the Committee's current Work Programme. Members were advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy which should have been considered by the Committee on 1 November 2018 would now go to a meeting of the Shadow Scrutiny Committee.

### Questions from Members

Clarification was sought on whether Waveney Members could raise questions at the Shadow Scrutiny Committee when the Medium Term Financial Strategy was discussed. The Chairman advised that Waveney Members who did not sit on the Shadow Scrutiny Committee would be able to attend but would not be able to take part or ask questions.

The Committee was informed that 7 Waveney District Council Members would be appointed to the Shadow Scrutiny Committee and to ensure political proportionality, 4 Conservative Councillors, 3 Labour Councillors and 1 Independent Councillor were required. The Chairman asked for volunteers for the Shadow Scrutiny Committee. The Leader of the Labour Group stated that his Group would appoint the 3 Labour Members. Councillor Webb stated that he would like to attend as the Independent representative. Councillors Cackett and Coulam put themselves forward as the Conservative representatives and any other Conservatives that were interested were asked to inform the Chairman if they wished to attend. It was pointed out that if more Members wanted to attend they could always substitute and take it in turns to attend meetings.

Members noted that the first Shadow Scrutiny Committee would take place on Thursday, 15 November 2018 and the agenda would be sent out on Wednesday, 7 November 2018.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the Shadow Scrutiny Committee would have a financial focus, including the revised housing budget (Waveney only), Capital Programme, Medium Term Financial Strategy and General Fund.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the Committee that there might also be a report to the Shadow Council meeting on 3 December 2018 regarding the possible creation of a Shadow Audit and Governance Committee.

It was agreed that Officers would let Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee know which report was going to which Shadow Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to email the Chairman if they wished to, and were able to, attend the Shadow Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 15 November 2018.

The Chairman requested that Members let Officers know of any items they wished to be added to the Committee's Work Programme for 7 February 2019 meeting.

### RESOLVED

That the current Work Programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Appendix A, be noted.

**6 INFORMATION BULLETIN – CAR PARKING**

The Chairman presented the information bulletin relating to car parking and it was noted that the Council was exploring ways in which the costs of car parking in town centres could be reduced for local businesses. The Committee was informed that Waveney were currently in the process of working up a proposal for a pilot scheme of 'Town Centre Passes' for Lowestoft and surrounding market towns which would be available at a reduced rate to the current Long Stay Parking Permit (currently priced at £350). It was noted that the proposal would come back to Members when it has been finalised. The Committee was advised that this would be a pilot and take up would be monitored as well as the impact of the scheme.

The Chairman advised the Committee that car parking had been discussed at the Policy and Service Alignment Member Working Group on 31 October 2018 and it had been clear that there were big differences between Waveney and Suffolk Coastal District Councils in terms of car parking charges, for example, car parking was free on Sundays in Suffolk Coastal market towns.

Clarification was sought on whether the car parking review had been delayed until next year and this was confirmed by the Chairman.

**RESOLVED**

That the information bulletin be noted and Members receive details of the pilot scheme once finalised.

The meeting concluded at 6.55pm

Chairman