



EASTSUFFOLK
COUNCIL

CABINET

Tuesday, 7 December 2021

Subject	Review of Waste Management
Report by	Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Stuart Bird
Supporting Officer	Sarah Davis Democratic Services Officer Sarah.davis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
Wards Affected	All Wards

Purpose of Report

A proposed scoping form for a review of all aspects of waste management was submitted, jointly, by several members of the Scrutiny Committee, for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in December 2020. This was agreed at that meeting.

The primary purpose of the agreed review, and therefore of this report, was, in summary, a comprehensive review of all aspects of waste management in the district, to include litter, fly-tipping, recycling, waste education, penalty impositions etc.

The review was originally scheduled for the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be held in March 2021. However, following concerns raised by the Head of Operations in January 2021 that the range of topics was too wide to be of use to the Committee and, also, that a formal report could not be prepared in time, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee together with the joint authors of the original scoping form agreed with the Officers' proposal for the review to be split over two meetings, the original date in March and in June 2021.

The first report, received in March 2021, specifically dealt with issues relating to fly-tipping and enforcement. The second report, received in June 2021, covered contamination, collection issues, littering, the public realm, and civic pride.

Both reports, when published, had as their appendices written questions submitted by the Committee's members in advance and the written responses that Officers, in agreement with the Cabinet Member, had subsequently provided. Both reports and their appendices are available on the Council's website.

This report sets out, in summary, the Scrutiny Committee's findings following its in-depth review across the two meetings. In addition to the two appendices of written questions and answers as mentioned above, the detail of the oral questions raised by Members at both meetings, the oral responses received, and any matters raised for debate at the two meetings, is provided in the sets of minutes from the March and June 2021 meetings. These form appendices to this report.

Options

The Scrutiny Committee having considered the contents of both reports, the responses to its questions and the matters raised in debate, formulated the following recommendations: no other options were considered relevant.

When Cabinet receives this report, it is asked that, where it is proposed that a recommendation be accepted, Cabinet provides a clear commitment on its delivery and to what timescales. Similarly, where it is proposed that a recommendation is not accepted, Cabinet provides its detailed and substantive reasons for refusal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That, within six months of receipt of this report, Cabinet seeks the creation of a more integrated approach to waste management by closer working between Norse Commercial Services and the Council's Environmental Enforcement Team.
2. That, within three months of receipt of this report, Cabinet reviews the current staffing level of Waste Management Officers and consider increasing the establishment by a further three Officers.
3. That, within one month of receipt of this report, the Cabinet Member for The Environment lobbies the responsible Government Minister to seek a fully digitised and traceable waste management service.
4. That, within one month of receipt of this report, the Cabinet Member for The Environment lobbies Highways England to seek a review of its current policy so that electronic anti-littering message signs can be displayed again on the overhead gantries on both carriageways of the A14 between Ipswich and Felixstowe.
5. That, within one month of receipt of this report, the Cabinet Member for The Environment lobbies the Port of Felixstowe to seek improved and affordable facilities for drivers at the Port (to minimise littering in lay-bys and potential health hazards).
6. That, within three months of receipt of this report, Cabinet seeks a review of the current schedule of lay-by clearing to ensure it is operating at maximum efficiency.
7. In welcoming the trial of sensors on bins, the Committee recommends that, within three months of receipt of this report, Cabinet seeks trials of the following additional measures to aid the reporting of full bins – (a) a Quick Response (QR) matrix barcode (or two dimensional code) on bins that identifies specific locations and when the bins are nearing capacity; and (b) that the Council's current online reporting system be enhanced, perhaps to mirror the reporting system of Highways at the county council, so that it tells a user if an incident of fly-tipping has already been reported.
8. Having considered the fly-tipping initiative implemented in Northamptonshire in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the Committee recommends that, within six months of receipt of this report, Cabinet seeks exploration of the replication of this initiative, including funding contributions from

the PCC (which aids private landowners to deal with fly-tipping and receives funding from the PCC for the tackling of littering issues as anti-social behaviour)

9. That, with three months of receipt of this report, Cabinet explores the possibility of financial assistance/grants to residents on low income or in receipt of Universal Credit towards the cost of collection of large and bulky items
10. That, within two months of receipt of this report, Cabinet authorises the Fixed Penalty Notice for littering to be increased to the maximum amount permissible and, in addition, that those being sent a FPN also receive a leaflet explaining the impact of their actions on the environment (rather than an ashtray)
11. That, within two months of receipt of this report, Cabinet seeks a communication campaign to advise residents of how to find reputable waste management carriers and what licensing documentation to seek before hiring
12. The Committee acknowledged the benefit of school visits to the Energy from Waste facility for school parties but wished to recommend that, within two months of receipt of this report, the Cabinet Member for The Environment seek the incorporation of the RSPCAs Generation Kind initiative in the curriculum (which highlights the damage done to wildlife by litter)
13. That, in general, campaigns such as that launched on 17 June to help people understand recycling requirements, be expanded beyond social media to ensure as wide an audience as possible and avoid digital exclusion
14. That, within three months, the Community Partnership Board be asked to consider providing funding towards the prevention of littering (it is suggested that this be implemented along the lines of the Local Area Committees scheme successfully implemented by Sheffield City Council)

Corporate Impacts

Governance:

This report has been prepared on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee. The Council is required by statute to discharge certain overview and scrutiny functions. These functions are an essential component of local democracy. Scrutiny Committees can contribute to the development of Council policies and can also hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

East Suffolk Council Environmental Policy: “Enabling communities focuses on the sustainability of community assets and households, empowering individuals to improve their own ‘green behaviours’ and support their wider communities through action which benefits people and nature while making efficient use of natural resources.”

Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Suffolk: This provides the strategic framework for the management of municipal waste in Suffolk. The Strategy is underpinned by a vision to work together to minimise the amount of waste generated and manage what is produced in ways that are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable

The **Suffolk Waste Partnership**, under the chairmanship of Councillor Mallinder (also responsible Cabinet Member for ESC), is a strategic partnership of the county which works to continuously improve waste management services throughout Suffolk

Environmental:

East Suffolk Council Environmental Policy: “Enabling communities focuses on the sustainability of community assets and households, empowering individuals to improve their own ‘green behaviours’ and support their wider communities through action which benefits people and nature while making efficient use of natural resources.”

Equalities and Diversity:

Not applicable

Financial:

The **current budget** for refuse collection across East Suffolk is in the region of £6m. In addition to this, around £1m is spent per annum on street cleansing. Therefore, the issues covered in this report have a significant impact on the Council’s finances. This is likely to become more acute from 2023, when the Government’s new Resource and Waste Strategy may require local authorities to collect and process additional materials.

The concerning **financial impact of gate rejects** due to contamination of a whole load results in lost Recycling Performance Payments which, in the twelve months ending March 2021, equated to £1,639 for the south of the district, and £50,308 for the north of the district, totalling £51,947.

Human Resources:

Not applicable

ICT:

Not applicable

Legal:

There is the potential, in 2023, that the **Government’s new Resource and Waste Strategy** may require local authorities to collect and process additional materials.

Risk:

Financial: In particular, the potential for cost inflation in the waste collection service linked to the introduction of the Government’s new Resource and Waste Strategy and its requirement to collect and process additional materials

Reputational: Waste collection and littering are issues of key importance to residents. The service is highly visible and has an impact across all the Council’s communities.

External Consultees:	<p>Norse Commercial Services contributed to both formal reports received by the Scrutiny Committee and had representatives present at both the March and June 2021 meetings to respond directly to questions raised by the Committee during its review.</p> <p>The County Council was consulted in the preparation of the two reports presented to Scrutiny Committee.</p>
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Strategic Plan Priorities			
Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal:			
T01	Growing our Economy	Primary	Secondary
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk		
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment		
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk		
P04	Business partnerships		
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure		
T02	Enabling our Communities	Primary	Secondary
P06	Community Partnerships		
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most		X
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District		
P09	Community Pride		X
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability	Primary	Secondary
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services		
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets		
P12	Being commercially astute		
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities		
P14	Review service delivery with partners		X
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation	Primary	Secondary
P15	Digital by default		
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services		
P17	Effective use of data		
P18	Skills and training		
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure		
T05	Caring for our Environment	Primary	Secondary
P20	Lead by example		X
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	X	
P22	Renewable energy		
P23	Protection, education and influence		X
XXX	Governance How ESC governs itself as an authority	Primary	Secondary

How does this proposal support the priorities selected?

Waste collection and littering are issues of key importance to residents. The service is highly visible and has an impact across all the Council's communities.

1 BACKGROUND FACTS

A detailed draft remit was submitted by several members of the Committee and received at the meeting in December 2020 for consideration; it was agreed. The remit sought the opportunity for members to discuss issues which had been subject to media coverage in the last six months of 2020, some of which were also long-standing having first been suggested to the Scrutiny Committee of Waveney District Council in 2018, and which may have been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic.

The remit suggested these issues included environmental crimes, the complexities of the Environmental Protection Team of the Council and the Environment Agency in this regard and clarity about who was responsible for what and how; the contamination of land, air and/or water by individuals through the instigation of informal waste disposal or storage; illegal dumps and increases in offences of fly-tipping, if there were 'hot spots' and what were the true costs to private land owners and local authorities; the RSPCA Generation Kind anti-litter campaign in schools in order to prevent harm to wildlife and to seek an update on how this was progressing; recycling bin contamination – labelling and education programmes; how best to engender civic pride in areas of hidden need and deprivation; public spaces storage and collection; and, the impact of the pandemic on the production of PPE waste, restricted hours at recycling centres and beach cleans.

The Scrutiny Committee met in March 2021 and received part one of a two-part report on all aspects of waste management. This report provided information on issues relating to fly-tipping and enforcement. The written questions submitted in advance of the meeting, together with the written responses, form an appendix to the formal report which went to the Committee. In addition, the following aspects of this topic were raised with the Cabinet Member and Officers at the March meeting – the effectiveness of the appointment system at recycling centres and future plans post-pandemic; informal dumping of bags in shop frontages and fixed penalty notices; the possibility of a trial of QR codes on bins to facilitate reporting of overflowing bins or similar trials; the approach of Northamptonshire to fly-tipping in conjunction with the Police and Crime Commissioner and whether a partnership approach had or could be explored in Suffolk; the extent of litter on highways; unscrupulous contractors being hired to remove waste and instead fly-tipping it and whether the public needed to be better informed of licensing requirements and the documentation to seek when hiring; the schedule of emptying bins in lay-bys; additional issues in the lay-bys close to the Port of Felixstowe, signage, and the need for improved facilities for HGV drivers; whether or not bins at the coast were fit for purpose in terms of the wind and seagulls; and, additional education programmes in schools.

The Committee met again in June 2021 to receive the second part of the report, and this concentrated on contamination, collection issues, littering, the public realm, and civic pride. This report provided information on issues relating to fly-tipping and enforcement. The written questions submitted in advance of the meeting, together with the written responses, form an appendix to the formal report which went to the Committee. In addition, the following aspects of this topic were raised with the Cabinet Member and

Officers at the June meeting – concerns were expressed about two collection routes in Lowestoft which saw repeated non-compliance result in the contamination of bins and noted the disparity between the north and south of the district in terms of contaminated refuse; the costs of collection of large or bulky items of waste; noted that the Council was, according to costs and data sources mid-table in its recycling rates and that to hit a rate of 60% would require significant changes in approach; noted the explanation of powers used with individuals, homes, businesses under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and which had been ‘trimmed’ by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2015 and were now more time-consuming and, it was felt, reduced in their effectiveness; explored the possibility of decentralised recycling points as in France which might also provide ‘credits’ to parish councils for local schemes etc. – it was noted that the current Bill might explore this and provide the scope to undertake this approach; how staff deployment for litter clearance was determined and if it was fully effective; noted how volunteer litter-pickers were supported by the Council and networking facilitated if so wished; explored whether the correct approach was education of individual responsibility rather than enforcement; whether a pilot of deposits on certain items could be explored and noted that this might be difficult in light of current contract commitments; issues with weeds in kerbs and pavements which was a responsibility of the county council and how best to ensure these assets were maintained by it; the current fines imposed via fixed penalty notices and whether, or not, there was scope to increase these; explored the online reporting system which, currently, did not make it clear that it could be used without registration or releasing personal information; and, noted the current pilot of solar crushers and sought the estimated costs and initial assessment by the University of Suffolk.

2 CURRENT POSTION

The current position with regard to the Council’s waste management services was stated by Officers within the formal reports received by the Committee in March and June 2021. It is not proposed to restate that position here, in this report, and for the sake of efficiency readers are referred to the two earlier reports for this information.

3 HOW TO ADDRESS CURRENT SITUATION

The Committee noted that initiatives had been employed to date to focus on key messages to better educate residents on the personal accountability they needed to take for their waste and on the enforcement options which were available. The Committee also noted the potential use of central collection points on the Council’s developments such as Deben High School, Felixstowe. Similarly, it noted that the current methods of glass recycling were likely to change because of the Government’s proposed new Recycling and Waste Strategy. The Committee also noted that the current schedule for the emptying of bins was based on expected use.

The Committee, in forming its recommendations, wished to offer a constructive friend’s view of the current situation. In conducting the review, it was, as always, the Committee’s intention to challenge in a positive way that might also add value and assistance rather than criticism.

4 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Having considered the two reports and the information provided and having had the opportunity to question the reports both in writing in advance of the meetings and, in person, to discuss matters with the responsible Cabinet Member, key Officers of the Council and of Norse Commercial Services, the Scrutiny Committee wished to make constructive suggestions on certain aspects of waste management. The Committee's recommendations fall within three main themes – organisation, finance, and education of individuals to improve their own 'green behaviours'.

ANNEXES:	
Annex A	Confirmed minutes of the Scrutiny Committee - March 2021
Annex B	Confirmed minutes of the Scrutiny Committee - June 2021

BACKGROUND PAPERS:		
Date	Type	Available From
	None, save the two published reports for the meetings in March and June 2021	www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk