

# MINUTES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 JANUARY 2021

## PRESENT:

### Members of the Committee:

Councillors Mahoney (Chair), Mrs A'Barrow, Cade, Eccleson, Gillias, Mrs New, Mrs O'Rourke, Picker and Roodhouse

### Officers:

Dan Green (Deputy Executive Director), Aftab Razzaq (Legal, Electoral and Democratic Services Manager) and Linn Ashmore (Democratic Services Officer)

## 7. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2020 were approved.

## 8. REVIEW OF MANAGING ARREARS

The Committee considered a draft one-page strategy (Part 1 – agenda item 4) that had been circulated prior to the meeting.

A call for interested non-executive members to volunteer as members of the Task Group had been made.

**RESOLVED THAT** – the one-page strategy be approved for the Task Group to commence the review.

## 9. RESOURCES AND WASTE

The Deputy Executive Director gave the Committee a brief presentation including an overview of the Waste and Resources Strategy and highlighting areas where scrutiny could add value.

During the presentation, the following key points were made:

A Cabinet working party had recently been established. Its remit covered some areas linked to the Waste and Resources Strategy, but that work would not be duplicated by scrutiny.

The Waste and Resources Strategy was introduced by DEFRA in 2019 as part of the Governments 25-year Environment Plan.

The Strategy was a significant piece of work looking at waste management systems, the circular economy, and the economic drivers behind waste.

The key highlights of the Strategy were:

- Manufacturers being made responsible for the disposal of waste.
- Introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme targeting consumers of waste products.
- Consistent collections across all local authorities including materials, frequency and costs of collections.

- A commitment for additional financial burdens to be met.

There had been three separate public consultations carried out and Rugby Borough Council responded as part of the Warwickshire Waste Partnership in April 2019.

Implementation of the Strategy was due in 2023.

The most relevant areas of the Strategy included:

- How to improve recycling rates by ensuring a consistent set of dry recyclable material is collected from all households and businesses.
- Weekly separate food collection.
- Improve urban recycling rates by working with businesses and local authorities.
- Improve working relationships between upper and lower tier local authorities.
- Drive greater efficiency from energy waste plants and best use of materials that cannot be recycled.

Some of the key themes within in the consultation included the following proposals:

- Proposal 1 – all local authorities should be required to collect a core set of dry recyclable materials at kerbside.
- Proposal 2 – clarify the core set of dry materials collected. This should be glass bottles and containers, paper and card, plastic bottles, plastic pots, tubs and trays, and steel and aluminium tins and cans – similar to the current arrangements.
- Proposal 4 – local authorities to provide kerbside food waste collection.
- Proposal 7 – consider whether households should be entitled to free fortnightly garden waste collections.

Varying responses were made by local authorities to the Government consultation and these were published in July 2019. The key outcomes were:

Having a consistent set of dry recyclable materials was supported. This would be periodically reviewed by Government.

Government would legislate that householders would receive free food waste collection, preferably a separate collection and not mixed with garden waste. This would require significant consideration with respect to local circumstances, including the financial requirements.

Government faced significant opposition to the premise of providing free garden waste collection. Its view was this was the most effective way for the collection and use of garden waste. However, Government made a commitment to the consideration of costs and benefits of this measure before making a final decision. This would be a key part of any review work undertaken.

The DRS has implications. Government has pledged to introduce a scheme by 2023. This could result in a reduction in the levels of higher value material available for collection at the kerbside resulting in further financial implications through loss of income for local authorities.

Government has not confirmed which DRS model would be implemented. This could be all-in which would be much broader with larger items, or on-the-go materials only for items purchased while out and about.

It was suggested there were three areas that warranted further exploration:

- Weekly food collections. There are several potential models with varying costs and benefits associated with each.
- Risk of loss of value of recycling - to understand and mitigate that risk, or benefits from the DRS.
- Community leadership. This was a key area with a view that as a society there was a need to make better considered choices and environmental decisions linked to the climate change agenda and looking at how the council could support residents in that.

During further discussion, the Committee raised the following points and questions:

*Q. Why is more pressure not being put on Government to force producers to take responsibility to reduce waste and avoid local authorities having to deal with the end product?*

A. This was a key part of the Strategy for producers of waste to be financially responsible. It featured a circular economy around waste and a financial incentive for producers to reduce waste and deal with it responsibly.

*Q. Are there any costings available in relation to food waste collection?*

A. There are no figures at present. This would be dependent on the type of model, particularly if investment in a separate fleet of vehicles was required. Environmental credentials were also a factor to consider. Daventry District Council acquired split pod vehicles that collect green waste and have a separate pod for food waste. There was a high capital cost for that example, but ongoing revenue costs were lower.

*Q. Is the Material Recycling Facility project still viable?*

A. In-depth discussions were held with colleagues across the sub-region and a specific piece of work was carried out to look at the DRS. The project was still viable. There may be opportunities in relation to the DRS as the items would still need to be processed and could drive commercial benefits.

It was noted that Parliament were due to debate packaging issues as part of the Environment Bill.

*Q. Clarify the use of the word 'free' in relation to food waste collection?*

A. Yes, this was free for residents.

The financial aspect was an area that required scrutiny. Other areas for consideration included best practice and bench marking. The Waste and Resources Action Group (WRAP) were an organisation that should be involved in the review work, particularly in relation to community leadership and education programmes. There was past evidence to suggest that education programmes had been successful in the past but once they stopped being rolled out, levels of recycling dropped.

Officers were keen to engage WRAP, and as an authority explore ways of encouraging residents to recycle better. This would benefit the council and residents.

*Q. A uniformed approach to the collection of recycling across all local authorities was expected. Is there any update on this? It was important to define what could and could not be recycled as this was very confusing at present.*

A. Yes, this is a part of the Strategy. The list of consistent materials will be uniform across the country although having uniform bin colours was not being progressed at this stage.

*Q. There was Green Shoots funding available from Warwickshire County Council aimed at community initiatives around recycling. Could this be worked into plans?*

A. The Council was unable to benefit from the funding but through WCAVA work was being carried out with community and voluntary groups making them aware of the funding.

The main challenge was stopping food waste being produced and exploring what models or business opportunities existed.

One example was a system introduced by Daventry District Council with three-weekly refuse collections, fortnightly recycling collections and weekly food waste collection. This resulted in bin capacity becoming more precious driving a significant increase in food waste.

There was a need to re-educate the public on recycling. A lot still ends up in the black bin along with other household waste.

Further detail on how the DRS will operate was needed and a review of how dry recyclables are collected. Rugby is shown to perform well in waste audits but there was room for improvement.

The DRS is not new and has been operating successfully on the continent. It can result in behaviour change where people place a value on waste and choose a more appropriate disposal route.

It was agreed that two separate reviews would be carried out:

- Community leadership and education – this would link into the climate change agenda and should include work with the community and schools, and examples of best practice.
- Models for the collection of food waste to formulate a preference.

The first topic could be completed by June 2021, but the second topic would be a larger piece of work and it was anticipated that may not be completed until February 2022, and prior to the 2023 roll out.

It was important to involve WRAP in the review work and to explore historical information from past work carried out by other groups or meetings.

If possible, there may be benefits for the same Members to be part of both reviews for continuity.

**RESOLVED THAT –**

- (1) the one-page strategy for the review on community leadership be included on the agenda for the next meeting; and
- (2) a one-page strategy for the review on a model for food waste collection be produced for consideration at a future meeting.

## **10. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR MEMBERS**

The Committee considered a briefing paper (Part 1 – agenda item 6) on Member training and development.

The Legal, Electoral and Democratic Services Manager/Monitoring Officer attended the meeting to answer questions.

Members questioned the definition of compulsory training and whether this should include other topics such as safeguarding.

Compulsory training was dictated by the Constitution. However, this was due for review in the coming months allowing for amendments to be made in line with training requirements and in consideration of the points raised.

Democratic Services maintain a record of the training undertaken by councillors and attendance but there was a need for a wider perspective incorporating the principle of training needs, skills audit, and areas where Members would benefit from further development or support.

Members commented there was a need for an understanding of the mandatory training to achieve a greater buy-in.

The approach suggested was to allow dialogue with training coordinators to look at development needs and the wider training programme. A more cohesive and structured approach would help identify training needs and clarify the areas for Members to focus on.

Councillor development was important to ensure that the right skills, knowledge, and behaviour were imbedded as part of the culture for individuals to fulfil their potential as councillors and leaders of the future.

**RESOLVED THAT -**

- (1) Quarterly meetings between appointed training co-ordinators and the Monitoring Officer/Democratic Services. This would ensure training needs are identified and these are considered in the formulation of the Member training programme.
- (2) In conjunction with Democratic Services, Training co-ordinators will be required to undertake a skills assessment with members within their political groups.
- (3) All members to have an annual training record setting out the training completed for the municipal year and overall development.
- (4) An annual standing item on the Scrutiny work programme setting out training development. This will ensure that Scrutiny retains visibility on this topic and the actions arising from this meeting.
- (5) The LGA training tools be promoted amongst all Members.

**11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

The Committee received a table outlining the current position of briefing papers, reviews, and future items (Part 1 – agenda item 7).

Due to Purdah, it was agreed that two items on the work programme would be rescheduled. Officers would seek advice from the Monitoring Officer on the content of reports and nature of the matters being considered.

It was agreed that the Crime and Disorder item would consist of an annual update report on the work of the Community Safety Partnership.

**RESOLVED THAT –**

- (1) the discussion with the Leader and Executive Director be scheduled for 8 March 2021; and
- (2) Crime and Disorder be scheduled for 19 April 2021.

**12. PROGRESS OF MOTIONS**

At its last meeting, the Committee requested information on the progress of Council Motions, and considered a table detailing the Motions and the progress to date (Part 1 – agenda item 8).

**RESOLVED THAT** – the progress of Motions be noted.

**CHAIR**