

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
20 NOVEMBER 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Monday, 20 November 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Ray Hughes (Chairman)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Haydn Bateman, Sean Bibby, Andy Dunbobbin, David Evans, Veronica Gay, Cindy Hinds, Dave Hughes, Joe Johnson, Vicky Perfect and Paul Shotton

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Mared Eastwood (for Chris Dolphin) and Mike Peers (for Colin Legg)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Bernie Attridge, Patrick Heesom, Dennis Hutchinson, Richard Lloyd and Aaron Shotton attended as observers

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Carolyn Thomas, Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Countryside; Councillor Chris Bithell, Cabinet Member for Planning & Public Protection; Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development; Chief Officer (Streetscene & Transportation), Waste and Ancillary Services Manager and Finance Manager Environment

IN ATTENDANCE: Environment & Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

41. THE INTRODUCTION OF GARDEN WASTE CHARGES

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) introduced the report to set out how the proposal to introduce a charging policy for garden waste service would be implemented and to provide an estimate for the associated financial benefit to the Council from the proposal.

The Chief Officer reported that whilst recycling performance was good, the service provided to residents was not fully in line with Welsh Government (WG) Blueprint for collections in Wales, as the Blueprint recommended that Local Authorities charge residents for the provision of the garden waste collection service and that this funding be utilised to support the overall recycling service.

The Waste and Ancillary Services Manager outlined the options for how the system would operate, as detailed within the report. He explained that notifications of the charge would be sent with the Council Tax information in March 2018 and residents would have until 1st April, 2018 to register for the new service. The service would continue to be provided free of charge to all residents during March 2018.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas apologised for the need to introduce a charge for the garden waste service but commented that given the ongoing financial challenges together with the cut to the Single Environment Grant from WG which did not match the cost of operating the full recycling service, it had been necessary to implement such a proposal.

Councillor Paul Shotton thanked officers for the report. He commented on the estimated initial take up of the service and asked how this figure had been arrived at. The Chief Officer explained that experience in other counties had shown an initial take up of around 40%, therefore this figure was being used as an estimate.

In response to questions around the expected reduction in recycling performance and Landfill Tax, the Chief Officer explained that the overall reduction in recycling performance was expected to be between 2% and 3% which would take the Council's current performance down to around 64%. The Landfill Tax was collected by the Council on behalf of the WG. This was then re-distributed to Council's across Wales through the Single Environment Grant.

Councillor Mike Peers raised concerns around the fairness of introducing a charging policy for the garden waste service and questioned the WG Blueprint which had been produced by the same consultants who had previously recommended that the Council reduce the number of Housing Recycling Centre's (HRC) it had across the County. He questioned the comments made around austerity and highlighted the current Council overspend of £1.1M, funding which he said would assist residents being impacted by cuts to funding by WG. He referred to the charges currently imposed by neighbouring Local Authorities, as detailed in the report, and raised concerns that residents in Flintshire would be getting a poor deal in comparison. The Chief Officer responded that the service provided by the Council was currently operating at a reduced cost in comparison to other Council's across Wales. It was unclear whether the charges set by neighbouring Local Authorities covered the full cost of the service they provide and therefore could not be compared like for like. There would be no additional cost to the Council in implementing the charges and delivering the projects as this would be an additional duty to the day to day work of the Waste Team.

Councillor Carolyn Thomas responded to the comment around the Council's in-year overspend and explained that this was partly due to her decision to delay the review of subsidised bus routes and that work was on-going to roll-out community transport. She advised that there had been a 40% efficiency found within the Waste Recycling Service and that the service continued to find ways of being efficient.

Councillor Veronica Gay supported the comments made by Councillor Peers and stated the difficulties for some residents, if they decided not to pay the charge, in getting to a HRC site without a vehicle. She said that further debate was needed by all Member before a decision was made.

Councillor Andy Dunbobbin commented that concessions should be considered for Old Ages Pensioners together with residents who had large gardens. He welcomed the suggestions of residents being able to purchase

compost bins and also the placing of a microchip in each bin which he felt would be more cost effective than placing stickers on the bins. The Chief Officer responded that the service was always looking for better ways of working and suggestions on how the service would operate would be presented to the Committee for consideration in due course.

Councillor Mike Allport asked whether consideration had been given to increasing the collection of garden waste from 9 months a year to 12 months which he felt may be acceptable to residents if they were being charged for the service. The Waste and Ancillary Services Manager explained that it was not cost effective to run the vehicles over the winter period as very little green waste was collected.

Councillor Cindy Hinds sought an assurance that the most vulnerable residents in Flintshire would be supported. Councillor Haydn Batman sought clarification on the term 'non-statutory service'. The Waste and Ancillary Services Manager explained that the collection of general waste was a statutory service which the Council had a duty to provide. The collection of garden waste was a non-statutory service and therefore the Council did not have a duty to provide this service, however, he said that he did not want to see recycling figures reduced and was confident that a concentration on the enforcement of residual (black bin) side waste before garden waste charges are implemented would assist in minimising the impact on recycling performance.

Councillor Chris Bithell explained that the Council had not always provided a green waste collection service and that this had been introduced in 2003. He said that it was unfortunate but due to the continued austerity programme, and that other neighbouring Local Authorities had introduced charges for the same service, the Council had no alternative but to implement similar charges.

In response to concerns around increased fly-tipping, the Chief Officer explained that the experience in other counties had shown no evidence of increase in fly tipping and that fines for those caught fly-tipping are much greater than the charge being applied for garden waste collections..

Councillor Peers proposed that the decision on whether to implement a charging policy for the Garden Waste be reviewed. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Gay and when put to the vote was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the comments of the Committee on the arrangements for the introduction of the charging policy for the Garden Waste service, as part of Stage One of the budget proposals for 2018/19, be noted.

42. THE MANAGEMENT OF STANDARD AND BROOKHILL LANDFILL SITES

The Waste and Ancillary Services Manager introduced the report to outline the next steps in the long term management of the two active landfill sites at Standard Industrial Estate and Brookhill in Buckley.

The two active landfill sites were currently managed by a small team who were based in Alltami and were supported by specialist contractors and consultants who delivered a range of activities on the sites. Due to concerns regarding the resilience within the service, and in an effort to protect income levels in the future, the Council's Cabinet approved a report in May 2015 to outsource the operational management of the sites and the report explained why no viable tender was presented.

Details of the Gas sim model, recent income from electricity generation and future income projections for both sites were outlined by the Waste and Ancillary Services Manager as shown within the report at appendices 1 – 3.

Councillor Mike Peers welcomed the installation of PV panels on the two landfill sites and asked if the income generated by the engine, as detailed in section 1.09 of the report, covered the cost of running the Brookhill site. He also asked for further information around the tenders not prepared to take on the risk of guaranteeing levels of income at both sites. The gas engines are expected to generate an income of about £170,000 during 2017-18. Regarding the question around the tenders, whilst the 2 tender returns were prepared to operate the sites, they required the risk of guaranteeing levels of income to remain with the Council. The managements of the site would be covered in the day to day work of the team and the environmental risk would be mitigated by the agreed closure plan and ongoing site monitoring work.

RESOLVED

That the Committee recommend that Cabinet approves the proposal to continue to manage the landfill sites within the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio.

43. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the public and one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.03 pm)

.....

Chairman