



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane,
Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL on Tuesday 21st October 2014 at 7.00 pm.

The Members of this Committee are:-

Cllr Chilton (Chairman)

Cllr Davison (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Aaby, Apps, Bartlett, Buchanan, Burgess, Feacey, Hodgkinson, Mrs Hutchinson,
Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Sims, Yeo, Conservative vacancy.

Agenda

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Nos. |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Apologies/Substitutes – To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii) | |
| 2. Declarations of Interest:- To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document: | (i) |
| a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) | |
| b) Other Significant Interests (OSI) | |
| c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests | |
| See Agenda Item 2 for further details | |
| 3. Minutes – to approve the Minutes of the Meetings of this Committee held on the 23 rd September 2014 | |

Part I – Matters Referred to the Committee in Relation to Call-In of a Decision made by the Cabinet

None for this meeting

Part II – Responses of the Cabinet to Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

None for this Meeting

Part III – Ordinary Decision Items

None for this Meeting



Part IV – Information/Monitoring Items

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| 4. | Mid Kent Partnership: Recycling, Waste and Street Cleansing Contract: One Year On | 1-6 |
| 5. | Budget Scrutiny Task Group – information report - scrutiny of the council's draft 2015/16 budget | 7-9 |
| 6. | Future reviews and report tracker. | 11-17 |

JV/VS
13 October 2014

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Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)

- (a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)** under the Localism Act 2011, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting for that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

- (b) **Other Significant Interests (OSI)** under the Kent Code of Conduct as adopted by the Council on 19 July 2012, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares an OSI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting before the debate and vote on that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted). However, prior to leaving, the Member may address the Committee in the same way that a member of the public may do so.

- (c) **Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests** not required to be disclosed under (a) and (b), i.e. announcements made for transparency reasons alone, such as:

- Membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items, or
- Where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person, or
- Where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position.

[Note: an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc; OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc, would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI].

Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG’s Guide for Councillors, at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/240134/Openness_and_transparency_on_personal_interests.pdf plus the link sent out to Members at part of the Weekly Update email on the 3rd May 2013.
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, with revisions adopted on 17.10.13, and a copy can be found in the Constitution at <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/part-5---codes-and-protocols>
- (c) If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **23rd September 2014**.

Present:

Cllr. Davison (Vice-Chairman in the Chair);

Cllrs. Aaby, Apps, Bartlett, Buchanan, Burgess, Clokie, Hodgkinson, Mrs Hutchinson, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Sims, Yeo.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillor Clokie attended as Substitute Member for the Conservative Vacancy.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Chilton, Miss Martin.

Also Present:

Cllr. Galpin.

Head of Finance, Policy & Performance Officer, Senior Scrutiny Officer, Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

151 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 22nd July 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

152 Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group – Informing the Next Five Years

The Vice-Chairman in the Chair asked Councillor Mortimer to introduce the report as a Member of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group. He said that the Task Group had been invited to scrutinise the 'Informing the Next Five Years' report and report back prior to the detailed budget build in the Autumn. He said that the Task Group broadly supported the report but there had been two additional recommendations made and he outlined the reasons for those. There was concern that new capital projects were being agreed by the Cabinet before O&S had had a proper opportunity to scrutinise them which gave the impression of them being a *fait accompli*. Such scrutiny would also give Cabinet the benefit of an extra check and balance and proper research, exploring all of the facts, before committing to a major project. He noted the Portfolio Holder's comments opposing the recommendations but hoped that the Committee would support them.

Another Member who had been on the Task Group said that the Portfolio Holder had mentioned Member Working Groups as the opportunity to provide feedback and challenge on major projects, however having sat on one of those Working Groups in particular, he knew that new details had emerged in the course of those meetings which could not have been appreciated by all Members and could not have been known when the original decision was taken. It was important that all of the facts were on the table. There was a general feeling that the Working Groups and the knowledge and experience of the Members on them, were not being used to their full potential. In addition, meetings had often been cancelled at short notice with no real reason given, when updates on the current situation would have been useful.

The Committee considered that whilst the existing Call In procedure was sound, there was still a danger of missing the opportunity to call major projects in for scrutiny given the proximity of Cabinet/Council meetings and the complexities involved in analysing all of the data and reading all of the reports. Additionally, the process of Call In could appear to the public that one part of the Council was contradicting what another part was doing. The general consensus of the Committee though was that the Call In function was something that O&S did not currently use nearly enough and perhaps not enough Members had a proper understanding of the process. It would be important to address that through more and improved training for the new Council. Members also considered it was wrong to compare the roles of the Member Working Groups, which should be purely technical and have specific interest in the detail of a project, and O&S which could provide more of an overview. It was considered that O&S was a more reliable, regular and substantial vehicle to ensure that the Council was spending the public's money in the right ways.

The Portfolio Holder said that his comments in the report had been given following considerable thought. He wanted to assure Members that the Cabinet took Overview & Scrutiny very seriously and that was one of the reasons they had referred this particular matter to the Budget Scrutiny Task Group in the first place. O&S had the right to call any issue in for scrutiny, but Members also had the opportunity to address questions directly to the Cabinet, and in his view that would sometimes be the most efficient route to getting an answer and something that perhaps could be taken more advantage of. Additionally, any Member could attend any meeting, and their input would be welcomed. If O&S wanted to call something in and it did not fit neatly in to the cycle of meetings, then Cabinet would happily hold that item in abeyance to a future Cabinet or Full Council meeting. In terms of the major projects, he noted that two of the 'Big 8' were already on the O&S Work Tracker, and perhaps the others should be added too. He accepted that the Working Groups could be used better and that was something the Committee may wish to add to their recommendations. In terms of the particular recommendations in the report, his reason for opposing them was that in his view there was a danger that O&S could start to scrutinise large projects before they were enacted and there could be a 'cart before horse' scenario.

A Member moved that instead of the proposed recommendation (ii), there should be a recommendation to the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee seeking to extend the Call In process, allowing Group Leaders the facility to call in major issues or issues of concern before these had got a position to be placed on the Cabinet Agenda. Other Members considered that was too much of a compromise and the original recommendation, which called for all new Capital Projects to be referred automatically to the O&S Budget Scrutiny Task Group, should stand. Given

comments about the sometimes short time span between Cabinet and Council meetings it was also recommended that there should be at least a three week gap between Cabinet meetings and Council meetings held to approve Cabinet decisions. This could come into effect from May 2015, and the new Council, to allow for proper diary planning, but would be in order to ensure that Overview & Scrutiny had a proper opportunity to exercise its duties and functions.

Recommendation (i) and the alternative recommendation (ii) were then put to the vote and carried.

Recommended:

- (i) That having considered the report the Cabinet be advised that the O&S Committee broadly supports Appendices A, B, C and E of the 'Informing the Next Five Years' report but would like to make one addition: -**
 - (a) Appendix F (projected New Homes Bonus receipts): any surplus should be applied to balances, not new expenditure.**

- (ii) That the Committee recommend to the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee that the Constitution of ABC is changed so that: -**
 - (a) Group Leaders (or Deputy Leaders when acting for a Leader), can call matters in to Overview & Scrutiny when the greater number of them require greater scrutiny of a project on its merit.**
 - (b) In order to ensure that Overview & Scrutiny has a proper opportunity to exercise its duties and functions, Council meetings held to approve Cabinet decisions are not less than three weeks after the Cabinet meetings, from May 2015.**

153 ABC Business Plan Performance Report – Quarter 1 2014-2015

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report. He explained that the report sought to update Members and the public on the performance of the Council during the quarter. This included information on what the Cabinet had achieved through its decision-making processes, key performance data on the Council's frontline services, and consideration of the wider Borough picture which impacted on the Council's work. Following feedback from a number of Services, the Portfolio Holder and this Committee, the report had been updated to include some additional performance metrics and comparative data, alongside a 'Technical Annex' of all numerical information included within the report which provided comparison and trend data against performance over the previous four quarters.

The Policy and Performance Officer and Portfolio Holder drew particular attention to a number of issues set out within the report which included: - general performance remaining strong; pressure in areas affected by welfare reform such as benefits beginning to ease or level off; the continued reduction in terms of the number of households in B & B accommodation; the fall in the number of residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA); and the high level summaries of the work of the Business Plan and front line services.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were covered:

- It was suggested that the statement that 99.9% of properties had a current gas safety certificate, should be re-worded for clarity as only 90% of properties were on mains gas.
- A Member said she had requested a number of times for a more detailed breakdown of figures for those people claiming JSA in terms of the reasons why that number was falling (finding work, moving to other benefits, moving away etc.), but that had never been forthcoming. The Portfolio Holder said that they did have such figures as part of the Council Tax & Welfare Reform Task Group papers and he would ensure they were forwarded to the Member.
- Some questions were raised over the robustness of the statistics and a Member said that she did have concern about whether the published figures always reflected the true picture. In terms of homelessness and benefits there were people who were not on the Council's radar. The Portfolio Holder said he was confident in the robustness and accuracy of the figures. It was the best data available and provided the realistic snapshot that the Council needed.
- In terms of town centre footfall and car park usage, a Member asked if figures for County Square, Park Mall and the NCP car parks could also be obtained and included. Whilst he understood there may be some commercial sensitivities, if obtained they would help provide a clearer indication of the true picture in the town centre.
- In relation to the unemployment figures, a Member mentioned the new warehouse development at Junction 10 of the M20 which purported to be offering 2100 new jobs to be filled by people from Ashford. Looking at the number of people currently unemployed the numbers did not add up so he wondered how concerned the Council should be about the economic validity of the figures given as part of the proposal. The Policy & Performance Officer said that the JSA figures were collected by the Office of National Statistics and some benefit claimants fell outside those figures. There was more detail in the Council Tax & Welfare Reform Task Group papers mentioned earlier and he would ensure that they were forwarded to the Member as well.
- A Member said he welcomed the reduction in the unemployment figures but asked if the Council had any figures for the number of people working on zero hour contracts. The Portfolio Holder said there was not a way of capturing that data at present as it related to private contracts between individuals and their employers. The annual national labour market survey might be the only vehicle for that in the future.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

154 Future Reviews and Report Tracker

The Vice-Chairman in the Chair asked the Committee whether there were any comments on the Future Reviews and Report Tracker.

A Member said he was frustrated that the update on the Conningbrook project had been deferred until further notice. If there was nothing further to report he considered both this Committee and the Members Working Group should be told the reasons for that and given an opportunity to scrutinise those. The Committee agreed that there should be an update and this should be added back in to the tracker for the November meeting.

Resolved:

That subject to the addition above, the Future Reviews and Report Tracker be received and noted.

Agenda Item No: 4
Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date: 21st October 2014

Report Title: Mid Kent Partnership: Recycling, Waste and Street
Cleaving Contract: One Year On

Report Author: Kevin Basford – Interim Waste and Street Scene
Manager
Julie Rogers - Environmental and Customer Service
Manager; Customers, Homes and Property

Summary:	This information report provides Members with a high level review of the first year of the new Mid Kent partnership contract which commenced in April 2013. Members are invited to raise any questions, discuss and note the report
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Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Overview & Scrutiny Committee are invited to discuss the report, in particular noting the introduction of new policies, and to report accordingly.

Policy Overview: N/A

Financial Implications: None resulting from this report.

Risk Assessment N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment None

Other Material Implications: Noted in the report if applicable.

Exemption Clauses: N/A

Background Papers: None

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Mid Kent Waste and Street Cleansing Contract 2013-2023

INTRODUCTION

1) A new approach to delivering services

- a) Members will recall that Ashford entered into a partnership with Maidstone and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council to procure and enter into a new contract for the provision of recycling and waste collection, street cleansing and associated services.
- b) Principal drivers for the new contract and services therein included the need for Ashford to:
 - i) Introduce comprehensive recycling services to move Ashford BC recycling performance from around 12% in 2012/13 (the lowest nationally) to 50% by 2020;
 - ii) Divert biodegradable waste (food and green waste) from landfill or other treatment and disposal in line with national requirements;
 - iii) Introduce efficiencies into street cleansing whilst retaining a focus on high profile and town centre areas; and
 - iv) Make overall savings and provide more expenditure certainty going forward in line with the Councils financial and budget strategy.
- c) The contract was awarded to Biffa Municipal Waste Services and runs from April 2013 to March 2023 (10 years) with an overall core value of £8.62M. The Ashford BC elements of the contract have an annual value of £3.132M (2014/15)

2) What's in the Contract?

- a) The principal service components within the contract are:
 - i) Household recycling collections: mixed dry recyclables including paper and card, glass bottles, mixed plastics, steel and aluminium cans/containers.
 - ii) Residual waste collection
 - iii) Food waste collection
 - iv) Clinical waste collection
 - v) Bulky household waste collection (some service cost recovered via customer charges levied)
 - vi) Optional green waste collection (via subscription payment)
 - vii) Street cleansing: Borough wide (including village and parish/town centres) and including some weed control, dog and litter bins and shelters
- b) Members will be aware that the new contract introduced some major service changes which are summarised below:
 - i) A move to alternate week residual waste collection supported by the introduction of weekly food waste collections;
 - ii) Volume limits on the amounts of residual waste that will be collected in support of b(i);
 - iii) The introduction of a comprehensive alternate week dry recycling service collecting a substantially expanded range of materials; and
 - iv) The provision of wheeled bins for the majority of residents
 - v) A move away from set frequencies for street cleansing to one based upon cleansing according to need against a set standard to be maintained in line with the Environment Protection Act 1990: Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse.

- vi) A resident friendly approach by offering a more bespoke service to cater for differing physical situations, which saw a marked increase in the “Assisted Help Scheme”.

THE FIRST YEAR

3) The Contract Mobilisation and Service Roll Out Challenge

- a) Members will appreciate that the challenges associated with introducing such range of new services, including under a new contract service provider and partnership arrangement, were considerable.
- b) The challenge for Ashford was particularly acute since it was chosen to be the first of the three partner councils to roll out the new services with a target commencement date of July 2013.
- i) A comprehensive communication and resident education campaign was launched and delivered predominantly in-house supported by Biffa:
- Service guidance leaflets and letters to all households
 - Face to face, phone support line and community group/event work with harder to reach and disability representative groups
- ii) Over 200,000 wheeled containers, food bins, food caddies and communal bins had to be obtained and delivered;
- iii) A new fleet of service vehicles and of a different configuration had to be obtained and put into operation; and
- iv) Collection rounds and associated arrangements were realigned
- c) At the same time the Ashford responsible service team and management of it was re-organised and slimmed down.

4) Service Roll Out: how did we do?

- a) Taking all matters into account it can be concluded that introduction of the new services went very well.
- b) It is acknowledged that there were challenges associated with customer enquiries and, to some extent the Council had to realign its resources for a period to respond to this.
- c) New collection services of such a scale inevitably take a period to settle down with all residents and collection crews being fully familiar and confident with the services.
- d) It is acknowledged that collection performance fell for a period from July 2013 and an internal audit referred to over 600 missed collections per 100,000 undertaken (a standard contract performance measure) for weeks in July 2013. This compares to an ongoing contract target of 30 per 100,000 per week across all services (residual, food, recycling, green waste). There is a performance mechanism requirement to rectify justified missed collections within one working day of report.
- e) However, and very importantly to put this in context, even 600 missed collections per 100,000 represents a 99.40% “right first time collection” during this first month (30 per 100,000 represents 99.97%). Also, during such a major change it is almost impossible to clearly determine whether the collection failure was due to contractor error, customer error in not putting out their waste as required or a combination of both.
- f) The Council were relaxed in their policies in relation to side waste, etc. for an initial period providing quality information and education for residents while they familiarised themselves with the new service.

- g) Although it was intended to rollout the Green Waste Collection after the main waste and recycling collection had been well established, the Council instead responded to a strong plea from KALC to roll the Green Waste out at the same time as the new service was introduced.
- h) The launch of the green waste household collection service proved popular and, along with the new recycling and food waste diversion services, made an important contribution to the council's recycling performance – see Section 5.

5) Service Performance

- a) Collection performance has settled down and is now consistently delivering at between 30 and 40 per 100,000 missed first time collections. This performance is very high and represents 99.96% “right first time collection.” In context, this needs to be considered in relation to 482,000 collections per month or 5,772,000 collections per annum.
- b) Ashford collection performance remains consistently the best amongst the three partner councils and there have been very few escalated default notices for proven contractor failure to rectify within one working day.
- c) The improvement in Ashford BC recycling performance has been exceptional:
 - i) For 2013/14, which includes only 9 months of the new services, recycling performance rose to 43%
 - ii) For the first full year of the new services (July 2013-June 2014) recycling performance has risen to over 58%
 - iii) The first full year saw a remarkable 60% recycling achieved in Dec 2013 and June 2014
- d) All aspects of the new collection services offered have been successful and supported by Ashford residents with:
 - i) Food waste diverted now averaging over 400 tonnes per month.
 - ii) Green waste contributing over 450 tonnes on average per month from over 10,000 subscribers also providing the council with a valuable new net revenue source.
 - iii) Dry recycling materials contributing over 1000 tonnes per month on average
 - iv) All of the recycling and diversion supported by an overall reduction on the amount of waste Ashford residents are generating in the first place (the waste reduction message).
- e) Customer satisfaction with the major services of waste collection and street cleansing has also significantly improved.
- f) The new contract package is currently saving the Council around £500,000 per year compared with the arrangements in 2012/13.
- g) There is an acknowledgement of the impact of rolling out the major new collection services have had on some elements of street cleansing performance in the first year of the contract. Overall standards have been very well delivered and maintained. However, there have been some issues with establishment of weed growth more than it should have. Highway weed control is also a primary responsibility of Kent County Council or Highways Agency but it does form part of the street cleansing specification especially in higher profile areas. Discussions with KCC are ongoing to address particular areas of high profile and there may be a need to invest some of the savings identified to help improve approach roads in the future.
- h) Extra teams, at Biffa cost, have been deployed since April 2014 to undertake “deep cleanse” of areas where either weeds and/or detritus have built up to a level that was determined as unacceptable. This will continue into the autumn until we are satisfied that all areas are where they should reasonably be.

- i) The new contract includes for a much improved response time to fly-tipping and costs the Council less overall as fly tips up to 2 cubic metres in volume are included in the contract. There has been no increase in fly-tipping that can be linked to the new contract services introduced.
- j) The bulky household waste service has proved popular creating a challenge for Biffa. The collection resource is a shared one across the partnership and the number of bookings has substantially exceeded that forecast when the contract was developed. While customers are using this service it reduces the propensity to fly-tip.
- k) Clinical waste collections have also exceeded those advised at the time of tender and stretched collection resources.
- l) Delivery of garden waste bins has also proved challenging both in securing timely supply and delivery within the 10 working day target. This is, again, mainly due to demand significantly exceeding that advised to Biffa at the time of tendering, for example, Ashford predicted at 7000 with actual exceeding 10,000. This has been a feature across the partnership; however, deductions have been made in line with the contract performance mechanism and 10 day target.
- m) The team have just (August 2014) completed the roll out of recycling and food waste collection services to remaining communal properties. Around 1500 properties were covered including Stanhope Estate, our last major block of properties.
- n) To support the new services, a new set of policies and procedures for recycling and waste collection were developed and agreed by Cabinet in June with full council adoption in July 2014. This is the first time that Ashford has had such policies and will be an important underpinning for the services and the Council going forward. The policies clearly state what residents can expect from the Council and what the Council requires from it's residents to ensure an equality service for all residents.
- o) The team and Biffa are now fully implementing the council's adopted policies on the non collection of residual side waste. If residents are using their recycling containers appropriately the capacity of the residual bin should be ample for most householders. In exceptional circumstances additional containers may be provided, as outlined in the policy. Residents producing higher levels of side waste for recycling will be collected if placed out in suitable containers, again outlined in the policy.

LOOKING AHEAD

6) Forward Challenges and Issues

- a) The first year of the new contract and services has certainly been challenging to all staff and management involved. Sustaining the momentum and excellent overall performance will remain a challenge going forward.
- b) The management and service team is still developing relationships and systems to most efficiently manage the contract and services. This will be assisted by the crucial but successful recruitment of the new Environment and Contract Services Manager post and which commences on 6th October.
- c) Ongoing resident communication and engagement will be needed to identify any challenges such as any fall off in recycle quality.
- d) Ashford BC, like all Councils nationally, will have to demonstrate compliance with new EU and UK waste regulations relating to recycle quality and collection systems which are effective from Jan 2015. The necessary work is

being done on this and a report will be considered by Cabinet and onto Full Council before the end of December.

- e) Working with Biffa to get the street cleansing resources and their deployment right is an ongoing process.
- f) The green waste service with over 10,000 customers is believed to have realistic potential to grow and provide a further contribution to recycling performance along with an important increased income stream for the Council.
- g) Many of the Council's litter and dog bins need considering for replacement or review of their location and effectiveness. A major review is to be undertaken in the autumn with an options report to Cabinet in due course.

CONCLUSIONS

7) Conclusions

- a) There can be no question that the changes implemented over the last 12 months have been substantial and presented a number of challenges.
- b) The new services have been, overall, enthusiastically taken up by the residents of Ashford evidenced by the sea change in recycling performance and the way in which they manage their waste.
- c) The new services have led to a substantial improvement in customer satisfaction levels.
- d) The first full year of new services (July 2013 to June 2014) has seen a substantial improvement in Ashford's recycling performance to over 58% This compares with 13% in the year before when Ashford was bottom of the national league tables:
 - i) The 2013/14 annual performance (9 months of new services) at 43% sees Ashford move from the lowest in Kent (13 authorities) to 7th place
 - ii) Should the average of 55%+ per month be sustained then Ashford will almost certainly be No 1 in Kent (next best is 47% and static) and likely in the top 15-20% of authorities nationally.
- e) Challenges remain to ensure that recycling quality and performance is sustained going forward.
- f) The green waste service is an undoubted success but with potential to grow.
- g) Recycling material quality will be a critical factor in supporting the retention of co-mingled collections and compliance with EU/UK waste regulations from Jan 2015.
- h) A focus needs to be retained on street cleansing and further progress to fine tune cleansing schedules to better reflect the cleansing needs of each area.
- i) Overall the service and management teams have worked very hard and successfully to introduce the new services.
- j) Ashford BC can be justifiably proud of the progress it has made in such a short time.

Agenda Item No: 5
Report To: Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date: 21 October 2014

Report Title: Budget Scrutiny Task Group – scrutiny of the council's draft 2015/16 budget.

Report Author: Senior Scrutiny Officer

Summary:

The O&S Budget Scrutiny Task Group will scrutinise the Council's draft 2015/16 budget and report its findings and recommendations to the O&S Committee. The O&S Committee would then report to Cabinet on the soundness of the budget.

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: None

Recommendations: **The O&S Committee note the report.**

Policy Overview: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the Council's draft Capital and Revenue budget.

Financial Implications: N/A

Risk Assessment No

Equalities Impact Assessment No

Other Material Implications: None

Exemption Clauses: N/A

Background Papers: None

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Report Title: Budget Scrutiny Task Group

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the O&S committee of the dates for the meetings to scrutinise the council's draft 2015/16 budget and to remind the committee of the set up and operation of the Task Group.

Background

2. As set out in the Council's Constitution the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a duty to scrutinise the Capital and Revenue budgets of the Council. In the past, the Budget Scrutiny Task Group has fulfilled this function by scrutinising the Council's draft Capital and Revenue budgets, making a judgement on them, and reporting back to the main O&S Committee.
3. The report from the Task Group may make recommendations to both the O&S Committee itself and also to Cabinet. Once endorsed by the main Committee the report is then forwarded to Cabinet.

Membership, Timetable and Meetings

4. The political make up of the current Budget Scrutiny Task Group is broadly politically balanced and comprises five Members - three Conservative Members (Cllrs Apps, Burgess and Mrs Martin) and two Members from the remaining groups on the Committee (Cllr Chilton (Chairman), Labour, and Cllr Mortimer, Ashford Independent) .
5. Any interested Member of the council is welcome to attend any or all of the meetings and to ask questions. Substitutes are allowed and the Task Group may co-opt other Members (except members of the Cabinet) as non-voting members when it is considered appropriate (for example, for the budget scrutiny that took place in 2010/11 the Chairman of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group was not a member of O&S, but was elected by the Task Group members to be the Chairman (non-voting) of the group).
6. The timetable for 2015/16 is as follows:-

Report on Draft Budget Proposals to Cabinet	4 Dec 2014
Budget Scrutiny Process	After 4 Dec 2014
Task Group to report back to O&S	27 Jan 2015
O&S Budget report to Cabinet	12 Feb 2015
Full Council – set council tax	19 Feb 2015

7. In 2013/14 the Budget Scrutiny Task Group met six times between 9 Dec 2013 and 16 Jan 2014, all the meetings took place during the day. Because of the Christmas break, this is quite an intense set of meetings. The Task Group reported back to the main O&S Committee on 28th January 2014. The

final report from O&S to Cabinet made four recommendations. Three of these were agreed by Cabinet and the fourth was withdrawn.

8. With the help of Finance officers, Heads of Service and other officers, the Task Group examines all the Service budgets and reports back any areas of concern.
9. The intention is that this year there will be five meetings timetabled as follows (all meetings are during the day):-

Date	Budgets
Dec 8th	Recharges Legal & Democratic Services Cultural & Project Services
Dec 15th	Community and Housing HRA
Dec 17th	Planning and Development Communications & Technology
Jan 6th	Finance: Accountancy & Exchequer, Revenues & Benefits, Audit, Personnel, Management Team, Strategy & Partnerships General fund etc.
Jan 13th	Finalisation of report to O&S

10. Any risks identified are put into a 'risk matrix' to show the likely probability of an issue occurring and the material impact it would have on the Council's budget if it did occur.

Conclusion

11. The O&S Committee is asked to note the arrangements for the scrutiny of the Council's draft 2015/16 budget, and the following details of the Task Group :-
 - a. Membership to be broadly politically balanced (3 Conservative and 2 other)
 - b. Substitutes be allowed
 - c. Other members of the Council may attend Task Group meetings and ask questions
 - d. The Task Group elects its own chairman
 - e. The Task Group may co-opt other Members (except members of the Cabinet) as non-voting members when it is considered appropriate.

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Future Reviews and Report Tracker

November

- **ABC Business plan performance report Q2 2014-15**
- **Update on Portas Pilot Project**
- **S106 agreements**

December/January - meetings of Budget Scrutiny Task group

January

- **Report of Budget scrutiny task group**
- **Update and progress report on ABC commercial companies and the O&S Call-in recommendations**

February

- **ABC Business plan performance report Q3 2014-15**
- **Purchase of Commercial property**
- **Annual review of Community safety partnership**

New items:-

Apart from items such as scrutinising the Council's draft budget, which the Constitution requires the O&S Committee to do every year; the O&S Committee sets its own work programme for the year. Some items recur on a regular basis e.g. the yearly update from the Community Safety Partnership and the quarterly Business Plan performance report; others are of a 'one-off' nature.

With the agreement of the Chairman, items can be put on the O&S agenda following a request from Cabinet or another Committee (e.g. Audit). Members of the O&S Committee are also able to suggest items that the Chairman may wish to put on the Committee's agenda (**by putting their proposal in writing to him**) – such items must represent a Borough wide perspective and provide the opportunity to influence, to improve services or contribute to policy development.

The Chairman will then decide if the item is appropriate for O&S to consider and, if so, is there room on the work programme.

Any such item will be put to the Committee for Members to decide if they wish to add it to the work programme.

Year Plan 2014/15

Month	items	Task Group
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report (Q4) • Fly tipping 	
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call-in meeting re Cabinet Minute No. 397 	
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sickness & Absenteeism annual report. • Housing Strategy Action Plan Monitoring Report and annual review of Homelessness strategy 	Budget Scrutiny TG meeting
August	No meeting	
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report Q1 • BSTG Report back on 'Informing the next 5 Years' 	
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSTG – Information report • Update on new waste and recycling scheme. 	
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report Q2 • Update on Portas Pilot Project • S106 agreements 	
December	Scrutiny of Council's draft 2015/16 budget	Budget Scrutiny TG meetings
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of Budget Scrutiny Task Group • Update and progress report on ABC Commercial Companies and the O&S Call-in recommendations 	Budget Scrutiny TG meetings
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC Business Plan quarterly performance report(Q3) • Purchase of Commercial property • Annual review of Community Safety Partnership 	
March		
April		

O&S Committee – Report Tracker – Current position

Minute No.	Report Title	Officer	Date due	Current position	Recommended action
299/10/06	Stour Centre	Head of Cultural & Project Services	TBC – after completion of claim work	Work ongoing	Await completion of claim work.
13/05/13	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report	Senior Scrutiny Officer	May/June 2015		Timetable for May/June each year
142/09/12	3 year review of Mayoralty		Sept 2015		
431/04/12	ABC Business Plan performance reports – 2013/14	Policy & Performance Officer	May/Sept/Nov/Feb		
62/06/12	Sports & Leisure		TBA		
398/03/13	Refurbishment of the Stour Centre	TBA	TBA	Final Report from Task Group to be presented to O&S	
335/02/14	Community Safety Partnership – annual update	Assistant Health, Parking & Community Safety Manager	February 2015		
215/11/13	Update on Conningbrook Project – especially safety aspects.	Nature Conservation & Tourism Officer and Sports Projects Manager & active Ashford co-ordinator	November 2014		

216/11/13	Council play parks	TBA	TBA	Awaiting confirmation of date of report	
216/11/13	Update on progress of Focus 2013 - 15	Policy and Performance Manager	TBA		
57/06/08 199/10/11 115/08/13	Update on new waste and recycling scheme.	Strategic Environmental and Customer Service Manager	October 2014	New contract commenced July 2013.	Report on new contract one year after commencement
102/07/14	Annual report on Housing framework	Housing Strategy Manager/Head of Housing	July 2015		
103/07/14	Sickness and Absenteeism – annual report	Head of Personnel & development	June/July 2015		
104/07/14	S106 agreements & provision of Affordable Housing	Housing Strategy Manager/Head of Housing	Sept 2014	Deferred	
104/07/14	S106 agreements & CIL	Strategic Sites & Design Manager	Nov 2014		
104/07/14	Update on Portas Pilot project	Economic Development Manager	Nov 2014		
104/07/14	ABC commercial companies	Principal Solicitor Property and Projects	Jan 2015		
104/07/14	Purchase of Commercial property	Strategic Housing and Property Manager	Feb 2015		

Low Priority & other proposed reports

	Report Title	Officer	Date due	Current position	Recommended action
291/12/08 216/11/13	The effectiveness of a single O&S committee			Reconsider having a report November 2014	