

Place Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 20th September, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Mohammad (Chair), Begum, Gill, Grewal, M. Malik and Sandhu

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Anderson, Gahir and Nazir

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Wright, Cheema and Minhas

PART 1

10. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

(The Panel re-convened the meeting that had commenced on 8th September 2022 but had been adjourned following the announcement of the death of Her Majesty The Queen.)

11. Waste and Recycling (Task and Finish)

The Lead Member for Transport and the Local Environment introduced a report that set out the recommendations that were being put to Cabinet on 21st September 2022 in relation to waste and recycling.

The Panel was also recommended to establish a scrutiny task and finish group on waste and recycling to look at options for reducing the cost of the Council's waste and recycling service whilst increasing the uptake of recycling in Slough.

The report to Cabinet was included as an appendix to the report and the Panel scrutinised the proposed decisions to reduce the frequency of waste and recycling collections and to generate new income by using fees and charges for waste related services. The Lead Member explained the rationale for the proposed changes and it was noted that:

- The Council currently had one of the lowest recycling rates in the country.
- The Improvement and Recovery Plan approved by Council included a commitment to produce a recycling strategy.
- The Council's financial position meant that it had a duty to consider all viable savings options.
- A majority of local authorities had already moved to fortnightly or less frequent waste collections.
- Adopting fortnightly collections for general waste and recycling for most street level properties and some flats would save approximately £705k per annum once the scheme was established.

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- It was forecast that fortnightly collections would increase the percentage recycled from circa 28% to between 35%-40%.
- The introduction of fees and charges for new and replacement wheeled bins and for disposing of certain items of domestic waste at Chalvey Household Waste and Recycling Centre was expected to deliver income of approximately £40k per annum which would offset costs and bring the authority into line with neighbouring councils which already had such charges.

The Panel asked a number of questions of the Lead Member and the Executive Director of Place & Community in relation to the proposed changes. These included the motivation for reducing the frequency of waste collection given the fact that recycling rates had been low for many years; the restrictions on the types of items that could be recycled; performance issues and the number of missed bins; and the arrangements for collecting from flats. The practical and operational challenges of increasing recycling rates in flats and HMOs were recognised and Members felt that more targeted work was needed to increase recycling from such properties. It was also commented that many other authorities recycled a wider range of items and opportunities to extend the items that could be collected in the future should be explored such as food trays, yogurt pots etc..

The Panel reviewed each Cabinet recommendation in turn and concluded as follows:

Cabinet Recommendation A: "The charges for provision of new and replacement wheeled bins and other containers set out in paragraph 2.3 to come into effect on 1 November 2022."

The Panel did not support the proposed introduction of charges for new or replacement grey and red bins, as it considered that this cost should be met from existing Council Tax. Members particularly felt it would not be fair to charge residents to replace bins lost or damaged through no fault of their own. It was noted that there was a turnover of bins of approximately 2%-3% each year.

The Panel also agreed that charges from green bins under the new charging scheme should include an exemption or discount scheme for those on basic pensions and certain other people on low incomes.

Cabinet Recommendation B: "The charges for acceptance of certain items of waste for disposal at our Chalvey Household Waste & Recycling Centre set out in paragraph 2.6 to come into effect on 1 November 2022."

The Panel agreed with the principle of the introduction of charges for non-household waste items which would bring the Chalvey HWRC into line with sites in neighbouring authorities. However, it was commented that to ensure the charges were introduced fairly, Officers should review the list as at 2.6 of report so that the level of charge was consistent and proportionate for the

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items being disposed of, and the definitions and quantities were sufficiently clear for residents to understand.

Cabinet Recommendation C: "Reduce the frequency of general waste collection (grey wheeled bin) for the majority of residents from weekly to fortnightly from Monday 26 June 2023 with food waste to remain within the grey wheeled bin as part of general waste, rather than being collected separately, pending a review of options to separately collect food waste."

The Panel supported the recommendation noting that it brought the Council into line with the majority of other local authorities.

Cabinet Recommendation D: "Reduce the frequency of recycling collection (red wheeled bin) for the majority of residents from weekly to fortnightly from Monday 26 June 2023."

The Panel supported the recommendation noting that it brought the Council into line with the majority of other local authorities.

Cabinet Recommendation E: ""The waste collection & disposal policies set out in Appendix 4 – Frequently Asked Questions which will become the published response on the SBC website."

The Panel did not have any specific comments on the documents in Appendix 4.

Members then discussed the proposal to established a task and finish group on waste and recycling. Several Members queried the purpose of the task and finish group and commented that it was not clear what value could be added by a Member working group when the Council had professional officers to examine options, ideas and good practice to increase recycling rates.

The Panel therefore decided not to establish a Task & Finish Group on recycling, although it agreed it would be prepared to scrutinise any policies or procedures developed by the Cabinet and Officers.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Panel's comments in relation to the proposed changes to waste and recycling services be put to Cabinet on 21st September 2022.
- (b) That it be agreed not to establish a scrutiny task and finish group on waste and recycling but that the Panel carry out scrutiny of any future proposals developed by the Cabinet or Officers to improve recycling.

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12. Members' Attendance Record

Resolved – That the Members' Attendance Record be noted.

13. Date of Next Meeting - 3rd November 2022

The date of the next meeting was scheduled to be 3rd November 2022.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.30 pm)