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## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 13 FEBRUARY 2023

(7.15 pm - 9.00 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Stuart Neaverson (in the Chair),  
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor John Braithwaite,  
Councillor Caroline Charles, Councillor Dan Johnston,  
Councillor Stephen Mercer, Councillor Martin Whelton and  
Councillor James Williscroft

Adrian Ash (Interim Director, Environment and Regeneration),  
Charles Baker (Waste Strategy and Commissioning Manager),  
John Bosley (Assistant Director Public Space Contracts and  
Commissioning), Matt Burrows (Head of Communications and  
Customer Experience), Zoe Church (Head of Business Planning)  
and Roger Kershaw (Interim Executive Director of Finance and  
Digital)

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Anthony Fairclough (with Cllr MacArthur as substitute)  
Cllr Victoria Wilson (with Cllr Dresselaers as substitute)  
Cllr Gill Manly (with Cllr Slawek [Szczepanski](#) as substitute).

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting, with one addition as below.

“The Panel requested Cabinet identify timescales for the Idverde recommendations. Cllr Natasha Irons, Cabinet Member for Local environment, agreed to return to the Panel in June with timeframes for these, with the caveat that the timeframes presented back could change”.

### 4 WASTE AND STREET CLEANSING (Agenda Item 4)

The item was introduced by Cllr Natasha Irons, [Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change](#).

Paper focuses on delivery model, not spec (that will be the next phase). Current satisfaction rates are 63% satisfaction rate for waste collection and 30% for street cleaning.

Various options were considered – insourcing, outsourcing, joint venture, arm's length. All options were analysed based on BAU (business as usual) and the recommendation is to split the service. Contracting out collections will give us more resilience and the opportunity to use the technical know how of the wider industry. Also, we don't have the capacity to bring that service in house. This recommendation will also enable us to take control of street cleaning.

The Chair invited questions on the review in general - so looking at how the review was put together, the considerations in the choices of services put forward to scrutinise etc. In response to Panel Member's questions, the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces, and Climate Change gave further information:

- We will ensure we develop a long transition period and a robust exit plan from Veolia, ideally beginning ten months before the end date of the contract.
- SLWP advised boroughs to go their own separate ways and take control of services within their own boroughs. Different streets, different needs etc.
- Bulking, haulage will still be joint.
- Cheapest option is to bring in-house, but we do not have the technical capacity to do that.
- Costs may go up in the second phase (in terms of putting more resources in).
- Merton sized operation would be of interest to the open market. Commercial opportunity.
- The consultation results have shaped the approach massively.

The Chair invited questions on the assessment of the best value solutions- how the council carried out its analysis of the options put forward such as the metrics it chose to look at it etc. The Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change and the Assistant Director of Public Space provided further information.

- Reputational impact is a concern and weighted at 12%, though not as high as finance, weighted at 17.5%.
- Deliver a waste service that keeps Merton clean and tackles environmental challenges and responds to what our residents need.
- Other Local Authorities have more than one service provider for their waste and recycling services.
- The matrix needed to compare like-for-like and therefore we had to compare both services against the same set of criteria and same weighting.
- Flexibility and adaptability are great benefits of developing our own core service.

The Chair invited questions on the preferred choices put forward by the report and the financial implications/workforce etc

- We will offer an eight-year contract with a four-year break clause to offer certainty to provider.
- There will be in house robust monitoring from day one with an ambition to have the same robust metrics for both services. Merton Client team will monitor commissioned service and in house service and we will be transparent about inspection regime.
- Decarbonisation, electrification of vehicles is a hugely expensive investment.
- Government's Environment Bill still in progress. Cannot make an investment in soft plastics until we know outcomes of that legislation and the impact on the service.
- Merton terms and conditions for employees and those contracted out. – Leader and Cabinet member have met with Unison and scheduled to meet with GMB and other trade unions.
- Spec will include PROW.

The Chair invited recommendations from the Panel.

A Panel Member asked if the spec for waste collections could be presented to the Sustainable Communities Panel before going out to tender. The Assistant Director for Public Space responded that there are statutory requirements for the waste specification and the spec will need to be provided to GLA by a certain deadline. The street cleaning spec, however, could come to Panel as we have 18 months to mobilise and develop that service.

There are two separate timelines for the services and subject to dialogue with external market and Cabinet before awarding any contract, there are several interjections where scrutiny could play a role.

The Panel RESOLVED (all votes in favour) to send the following recommendations to Cabinet.

1. This Panel recommends that further details of the contract specifications for each service are brought back to a future Sustainable Communities Panel at an appropriate time.
2. That street sweeping schedules are published on the Merton website.
3. That 'prioritising street sweeping after bin collection' should be included in the specification.
4. The Council continue the work already underway in support of Net Zero by 2030, ensuring that the waste collection contract agreed will state that the vehicle fleet needs to be carbon neutral by 2030.
5. The Panel requests that performance monitoring officers come up with a process for the Sustainable Communities Panel can feed in and scrutinise contract performance.
6. This Panel recommends that the Council introduces ward-based dashboards for identifying fly tip hot spots.
7. That the Cabinet Member for Local Environment, Green Spaces and Climate Change returns to the Sustainable Communities Panel once the Environment Bill and legislation has been published.

Actions:

- Bulky Waste - The Cabinet Member agreed to return with a report/further detail on bulky waste collection when sharing the service specifications. There are cost implications and the Mobile Garth Road Scheme that we are going to pilot will hopefully bridge the gap.
- As above, the removal of graffiti will be revisited with the Panel when working on the specification.

A Panel member asked whether the Clarion Housing model to install underground waste bins in some of the newer blocks in the high path estate, could be rolled out further and extended to areas where it's suitable (flats above shops for example). The Cabinet Member explained that again, we need to see what the Environment Bill contains because it would require investment in heavy infrastructure.

The Chair brought the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for attending.

5 RESIDENT INSIGHT REPORT (Agenda Item 4a)

This was taken with Item 4.

6 EXEMPT APPENDIX A (Agenda Item 5)

This was taken with Item 4.