



Dorset Waste Partnership Joint Scrutiny Group

Minutes of the meeting held at on Friday, 10 February 2017

Present:

Councillor Daryl Turner (Vice-Chairman – in the chair) (West Dorset District Council)
Councillors Janet Abbott (Christchurch Borough Council), Ronald Coatsworth (Dorset County Council), Jane Somper (North Dorset District Council) and Gill Taylor (Weymouth and Portland Borough Council)

Councillors Belinda Ridout (North Dorset District Council) and Steven Lugg (Dorset County Council) – both substitute members, also attended.

Officers Attending: Paul Ackrill (Finance and Commercial Manager), Lisa Mounty (Service Development Manager) and David Northover (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

Note - These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Group to be held on 3 April 2017.)

Apologies

1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Jones (Chairman) (Christchurch Borough Council), Simon Tong (East Dorset District Council), Mike Wiggins (Purbeck District Council) and from Karyn Punched (Director of the Dorset Waste Partnership)

In the absence of the Chairman, David Jones, the Vice-Chairman, Daryl Turner, chaired the meeting.

Code of Conduct

2 There were no declarations by members of any disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

3 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2016 were confirmed and signed.

Public Participation

4 There were no public questions or statements received under Standing Orders 21(1) and (2) respectively, nor any requests to address the Group.

Minutes - Dorset Waste Partnership Joint Committee

5 The minutes of the Dorset Waste Partnership Joint Committee meeting held on 16 January 2017 were received and noted.

Scrutiny Guidance for the DWP Joint Scrutiny Group

6 The Group considered a report by the Director of the Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) which recommended the adoption of the recently agreed host authority guidance relevant to the Group's scrutiny function and that this should be applied to the provisions of the Group, as necessary. This was designed to ensure a consistency of approach across the work of the Group and between what the group was doing and the host authority's procedure and guidance, and to ensure that scrutiny work was focussed to achieve the objectives of the DWP Business Plan and meet the DWP's needs. The Group agreed that the guidance should be endorsed and used as the basis for their scrutiny work.

The Group were also being asked to note the Partnership's business plan for 2017/18 and were provided with an opportunity to make observations on what this entailed and to give consideration to the how the service was proposed to operate and the way in which it was doing this.

The Committee's attention was drawn to what was being measured and monitored and what benefits this would bring in the future delivery of services. Monitoring of the plan provided the opportunity for feedback to be made on a 6 monthly basis. The Group asked that the Action Plan should, in future, provide an indication over a period of time, to indicate trends and the progress being made.

Members then took the opportunity to ask a series of questions about the Plan. In asking why there was simply a commitment to maintain customer satisfaction rather than strive to improve it, officers explained that this had been a conscious decision taken by the Partnership's Senior Management Team (SMT), who felt that the overriding message from all partners was to save money rather than increase performance/service levels, assuming that it would cost money to do so. It was also felt by the SMT that customer satisfaction was already at an acceptable level.

Officer's explained how parish and town councils would be able to request increased levels of services should they be inclined to do so under the project that was currently in Development - 'Street Cleaning – Menu of Services' - and if they were prepared to meet the financial cost of this.

The Group asked how staffing levels were being budgeted and what provision there was for sickness absence, agency work and the covering of shifts. Officers explained the arrangements for this and some members expressed concern that there appeared to be no budget for agency staff. Officers acknowledged the point being made, explaining though that this was taken into consideration in how staffing levels were budgeted in terms of FTEs and that each operations manager, as a budget holder, was free to employ staff via the payroll or via agency as they saw fit, but remained responsible for delivering the service within budget.

The Group asked what opportunity there was to revisit cost sharing between authorities in light of Local Government Reform. Officers confirmed that the current arrangements would apply for the foreseeable future having been recently fixed by the Joint Committee.

Resolved

That sections 3, 5, 6, and 8 and Appendices 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Guide be adopted as the basis for the Group's scrutiny arrangements.

That DWP Business Plan 2017/18 – incorporating the Action Plan for 2017/18 - be noted.

Reason for Decision

To ensure consistency of approach within the Group and with Host Authority's procedure and guidance, and to ensure scrutiny work is focussed to achieve the objectives of the DWP Business Plan and meet the DWP's needs.

Vulnerable Customers: background

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The Group considered a report by the Head of Service (Strategy) which reviewed how the DWP provided their services to vulnerable customers - with a specific focus on the DWP's Service Policy and the overall complaints logged to DWP for Quarters 1-3 of the current financial year.

The report clarified what arrangements had been put in place by the Service to meet the needs of vulnerable users of the Service, which took into account the age; mobility; and physical and mental capability of the customer as well as what physical constraints there were at an individual property which meant that the conventional

means of waste collection was not necessary appropriate in those particular circumstances.

In order to be able to identify vulnerable service users and accommodate their individual needs, the DWP's Recycle for Dorset Service Policy was used as a means of serving this purpose, in a similar way that the Property Service Register gave energy companies a reliable indication of individuals who fell into that category. This category included pensioners, those who were disabled, chronically sick or with a visual or hearing impairment. Mental capacity was also used as a criterion for where such arrangements might be applied.

In explaining the reasoning for how these arrangements were applied and how they met the provisions of the Recycle for Dorset Service Policy, officers explained that assisted collections were readily available for those who were incapacitated either temporarily or permanently which limited their ability to readily manage their waste disposal obligations by the conventional means. Furthermore, where practicable, the Partnership adapted their standard service in order to accommodate individual needs as a means of maintaining that individual's independence, rather than having to have the need for an assisted service.

The arrangements for the availability of larger receptacles for larger families, extra black sacks bags for disposable nappies and specialist containers for medical needs were provided. The numbers associated with these requests were also discussed. Efforts had been made to encourage, wherever possible, service users to continue to use the standard conventional arrangements instead of tailored services for their disposal of waste. For instance, subsidy incentives were available for encouragement of the use of real nappies instead of disposable ones, to reduce the waste this caused.

Given that from during 2017/18 charges would be made for these tailored services in order to cover the cost of providing them over and above the usual means, raised some concern by members as they considered that it was invariably the deprived and disadvantaged in society that required these services.

Concern was also raised that the main means of drawing the availability of these tailored services to the attention of the public and, for them to be able to request them, was principally on line. Once again the main recipients of such services were principally the very ones without readily having the means i.e the elderly and the socially deprived. The Group understood the importance of what on line transactions brought - in terms of cost saving efficiencies - but felt that more consideration should be given to what other more appropriate and alternative means there were of accessing information in the public interest rather than having to use eforms. They asked that thought be given to how doctors surgeries, hospital waiting rooms and other public buildings might all play their part in spreading the message. Over and above this, there was a critical part for elected members, community groups, parish and town councils and, possibly, the Dorset Partnership for Older People Programme (POPPs) to play in informing the public of the services available. The Vice-Chairman asked that the Group be provided with copies of the request form for their distribution, as necessary. The group also asked what scope there was in the policy for fees to be waived or reduced in cases where recipients of tailored services were socially deprived .

As part of the report, analysis was made on what complaints had been received, the reasoning for these and what was being done to improve the situation. This included the way in which bins were emptied, where they were left and missed collections. Each incident was investigated and addressed as necessary and if considered appropriate. To have a better understanding of what performance and trends showed so as to be able to better make an assessment of what could be done, members asked for this information in future presentations of data analysis. Officers confirmed that PI's were mailed out to the Joint Committee on a quarterly basis, including graphs showing comparisons to enable trends to be identified. The Group would also get the opportunity to see these too so that they were seen in a timely manner and remained meaningful and relevant.

The attention of the Group was then drawn to the Performance Indicators, how these were categorised and to what they related. Previously performance monitoring figures had been available quarterly but to make this more meaningful and relevant to members' understanding this would in future be made available to them by email in a more timely and by a more direct means. Members were pleased to see that waste performance was being maintained and the 'reduce, reuse, recycle' initiative was seen to be successful with the DWP joint highest in country for recycling and in the top 3 performing authorities, composting rates were 61% and waste to landfill was a low 21%.

Particular mention was made of sickness absence trends and what this indicated. The way in which sickness was calculated was explained and how sickness absence was managed was explained. The relationship between long term and short term sickness and work related and non-work related sickness was also detailed. Officers explained that sickness absence trends were benchmarked to see what relationship there was with other waste regulation authorities and what particular absences related to. This was important to ensure the process stood up to scrutiny when benchmarked against other authorities.

How fly tipping was being managed and what was being done to address it – including the part enforcement played - was also discussed, taking into account any an effect on this by the charging policy in force at household recycling centres. Officers reported that there was no direct correlation of evidence in this regard. How prosecutions could be made was understood and members felt that more emphasis should be made of what enforcement entailed and how effective this was.

Resolved

That the Recycle for Dorset Policy and what provision was made for vulnerable customers to access the Service be noted.

That the points raised by the Group in how services were provided to vulnerable customers and in how performance monitoring was managed as set out in the minute above be taken into consideration.

Reason for Decisions

So the DWP is able to continue to provide an effective service to all residents within Dorset

Forward Plan 2017

- 8 That the matters for consideration set out in the Group's Forward Plan be endorsed, taking into account the considerations of the Group about vulnerable customers and performance monitoring, with these being given due consideration at a future meeting.

It was also agreed that two additional items would be added to the Forward Plan :-

- Business Plan – Action Plan – six monthly update
- DWP Absence Management Policy and Procedure

Resolved

That two additional items be added to the Forward Plan :-

- Business Plan – Action Plan – six monthly update
- DWP Absence Management Policy and Procedure

Reason for Decision

To ensure the Forward plan remains relevant

Questions

9 No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20(2).

Meeting Duration: 2.20pm – 4.30 pm