

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Thursday, 1st August, 2024 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

## **Voting Members**

Cllr Halleh Koohestani (Chairman)  
Cllr Nadia Martin (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllr S. Trussler (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Leola Card  
Cllr P.J. Cullum  
Cllr C.P. Grattan  
Cllr G.B. Lyon  
Cllr Bill O'Donovan

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr A.H. Crawford, Cllr Thomas Day and Cllr M.J. Tennant

Cllrs Sarah Spall, Jacqui Vosper and Ivan Whitmee attended as Standing Deputies.

## **7. APPOINTMENT OF STANDING DEPUTY**

**NOTED:** The appointment of Cllr S.J. Masterson as Standing Deputy for the Committee for the 2024/25 Municipal Year in place of Cllr M.D. Smith.

## **8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th June, 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

## **9. DELIVERY OF KEY ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL & SERCO IN PARTNERSHIP**

The Committee welcomed Ms Ruth Whaymand, the Council's Environmental Contracts Service Manager and Mr Aaron Straker, SERCO Contract Manager who were in attendance to present SERCO's 2023/24 Annual Report. Also present was Cllr Becky Williams, Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder, who had been invited to attend for this item.

Ms Whaymand set the scene and explained what would be covered during this session. She recapped the process by which the contract had been awarded in 2017 and provided an overview of the service areas involved. It was stressed that the relationship between the Council and SERCO was a very close one, with a 'one team' approach to service provision. A number of changes had been made to the

contract since 2017, including the introduction of weekly food waste collections and alternate weekly collection for rubbish and recycling.

Mr Straker started by setting out background information about SERCO and how the company operated. In relation to the services delivered at Rushmoor. These could be set out under three headings:

- Collections
- Street Cleansing
- Ground Maintenance

The Committee was provided with data in relation to domestic collections, including various performance measures. It was confirmed that such information was discussed between SERCO and the Council at monthly performance review meetings. Mr Straker admitted that the missed food collection rate was higher than he would like and steps were being taken to address this. The Committee discussed the collections section of the presentation and made the following comments:

- Important that residents eligible for the assisted collection scheme know how to access this – confirmed that this should be arranged through the Customer Services team
- Currently an issue around the replacement of broken food waste bins – ensure SERCO made aware on every occasion
- Will be interesting to see how the development of AI impacts on this service area
- Explained that the Council uses Portsmouth City Council for internal audit as the Council's internal auditor does not have capacity to carry this out
- Publicity needs to be clearer on the disposal of vapes
- Discussion around collections from properties where bins are unavoidably stored permanently on pavements and collections from HMOs and flats
- Clarified that a 3% pay rise would result in £35,000 increased expenditure
- In relation to the Megaskip proposal, SERCO have quoted for a pilot involving regular collections from high-risk areas using a box van
- Confirmed that missed bin stats rely on resident reporting on every occasion

In relation to street cleansing, Mr Straker explained that SERCO provided four cage teams, responsible for cleansing specific sites such as shop fronts, parks and car parks, along with emptying the 800 litter bins in the Borough. In addition to the cage teams, there were two town centre barrow beats that were aimed at keeping

Aldershot and Farnborough town centres clean and tidy. The Hit Squad was a team of streets operatives that cleansed roads across the Borough using one large and two small mechanical sweepers. Finally, a team of public toilets operatives was responsible for the opening, closing, cleansing and restocking of public toilets. The Committee discussed the street cleansing section of the presentation and made the following comments:

- Excess litter on the A331 was discussed – this was acknowledged but explained that this was a complex situation with SERCO working jointly with two County Councils and a total of three district councils in respect of this section of road
- Weeding in parks was discussed – explained that spraying of weeds no longer takes place and manual weeding not part of the current contract
- Explained there is a leaf clearance schedule that started in November and is publicised on website
- It has been noticed that toilets around parks and fields no longer open – explained that this is a cost saving and to reverse would have a cost implication

**AGREED** – that the Cabinet be informed that the Committee considers that environmental factors are important when making decisions about the budget.

In relation to grounds maintenance, Mr Straker explained that the variable climate brings challenges and, this year, this has led to falling behind with grass cutting. Members heard that grounds maintenance was monitored and managed closely by the Council with a partnership approach. The Committee discussed the street cleansing section of the presentation and made the following comments:

- Clarified that grass cuttings were never collected and always mulched
- In relation to wild verges – confirmed that these were not specifically seeded with wildflowers/plants but allowed to develop naturally
- No assessment made yet of any biodiversity gain from development of wild verges and reduced cutting of grass
- Asked if grass cutting schedule could be shared with ward councillors
- Queried whether SERCO had the ability to scale up operations now to catch up with grass cutting – SERCO doing best to do this
- Confirmed that no weeding was a policy decision and forms part of the contract – there is a small budget available to deal with hot spots
- Members were invited to submit any further questions or comments via email

In rounding off his presentation, Mr Straker provided information to Members around contract management and compliance, on board vehicle technologies that assisted operatives, health and safety, SERCO employee wellbeing and innovations, including the potential future use of electric freighters. It was confirmed that the current contract was due to expire in July, 2027. In discussing this final section, the Committee made the following comments:

- Would be helpful for residents to be informed of the reasons for recycling being rejected due to contamination – to be investigated, perhaps use of different stickers
- Confirmed that, if contract renewed, it was likely that existing vehicles would be replaced

The Chairman thanked Ms Whaymand and Mr Straker for their presentations.

## 10. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan and that there would be two meetings in September, with the CIPFA report being considered on 12th September and, on 19th September, Chief Inspector Cox and the Council's Community Safety Team would be in attendance.

The Progress Group was due to meet on 15th August to plan the Committee's future activities.

The meeting closed at 9.42 pm.

CLLR HALLEH KOOHESTANI (CHAIRMAN)

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