

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Council **Date:** Tuesday, 23 June 2015

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.05 pm

Members Present: E Webster (Chairman), J Lea (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, R Bassett, N Bedford, A Boyce, W Breare-Hall, G Chambers, K Chana, D Dorrell, R Gadsby, L Girling, A Grigg, L Hughes, J Hart, R Jennings, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, Y Knight, A Lion, M McEwen, H Mann, L Mead, A Mitchell MBE, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Neville, A Patel, J Philip, C P Pond, C C Pond, C Roberts, B Rolfe, M Sartin, G Shiell, D Stallan, S Stavrou, B Surtees, T Thomas, L Wagland, G Waller, S Watson, S Weston, C Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, D Wixley and N Wright

Other Councillors: -

Apologies: N Avey, H Brady, R Butler, T Church, S Jones, J Knapman, S Murray and B Sandler

Officers Present: D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), C O'Boyle (Director of Governance), R Palmer (Director of Resources), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer) and S Kits (Webcasting Officer)

Also in attendance: L Edwards and C Pasterfield (Consultants)

15. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Assistant Director of Governance and Performance Management reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 May 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

18. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman highlighted the Summer Activities 2015 Programme, and commended all members to share it with their residents.

The Chairman reminded all Members that they were welcome to take part in the Chairman's Charity Golf Day, to be held at Chigwell Golf Club on Tuesday 21 July 2015.

19. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman sought the leave of Council to bring forward the item concerning Emergency & Urgent Expenditure for the Waste & Recycling Contract into the public session.

RESOLVED:

That the item of business concerning the Emergency & Urgent Expenditure for the Waste & Recycling Contract be considered as the next item of business and before the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

20. EMERGENCY AND URGENT EXPENDITURE - WASTE AND RECYCLING CONTRACT

Mover: Councillor W Breare-Hall, Environment Portfolio Holder.

(a) The Environment Portfolio Holder, Councillor W Breare-Hall, made the following statement to the Council, concerning the recent problems with the refuse collection service:

"Chairman, I'm grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to update Members and residents on the latest position of our waste, recycling and street cleansing service.

Following my statement to Cabinet on the 11th of this month, a meeting was held with the Managing Director of Biffa Municipal and other senior Biffa managers. It left them in no doubt of the need for urgent action to improve the unacceptable level of service experienced by a substantial number of our residents. The action plan Biffa prepared has now been in operation for a week, and I'm pleased to report tonight that there are encouraging signs it is having the desired effect.

If I may, Chairman, I will briefly highlight some of the key aspects of the action Biffa have taken over the past week.

The workloads of five crews who collect our black bins and five recycling crews have been reduced, and two additional crews have been created for each of those collections. This has generated additional capacity to help cope with any unforeseen problems.

Similarly, the seven food and garden crews have had some of their workload removed and three additional crews have been created. It's important to note that the 'original' crews have been kept together and that all the additional crews have at least one permanent member of staff with them, to provide the local knowledge they need.

Adjustments to the existing routes, together with the creation of new routes, have increased the efficiency of the service, with paper maps being used as backups to the PDAs. New missed collection reports are being issued back to the crew that missed them, taking advantage of their reduced workload, which creates an incentive for them to avoid missed collections in the first place, and helps ensure the crews are learning their routes effectively.

Six additional vehicles were required to fulfil Biffa's plan but eight were arranged, to ensure they were able to deal with any problems that arose.

All of this means we're moving toward a position where the right resources are in the right place at the right time. Improved communication, both within Biffa and between Biffa and the Council, is a positive by-product of this, as is the ability Biffa now have to implement a coherent strategic approach to delivering the service efficiently and effectively.

Naturally, the only real test of the success of these measures is to be found on the pavements, driveways and front gardens of our District. I'm pleased to report that the number of missed collections reported to the Council has fallen significantly and, as of today, stands at 75. I'm also pleased to report that this improvement is borne out by a reduction in the number of phone calls being received by the Customer Contact Centre, which now averages around 260 a day from a peak of over 550. Reference to the Customer Contact Centre gives me another opportunity to highlight and praise the dedication and commitment of the Council's staff, who have worked so incredibly hard over the last seven weeks on behalf of our residents. I'd like to publicly thank them for everything they have done, and endured. I'm personally extremely grateful to them.

Chairman, the signs of improvement we have witnessed over the past week are welcome and long overdue, but it is still too early to say that the problems some of our residents have faced are behind us. It will take some weeks yet before we can be confident the service has fully stabilised and is operating at a level we and our residents are happy with. Accordingly, until that point, the Leader and myself, together with the Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods, will continue to meet with Biffa's senior management. I shall, of course, keep Members and residents informed of our progress."

(b) The Environment Portfolio Holder, Councillor W Breare-Hall, then proceeded to make a second statement to the Council concerning the emergency and urgent expenditure authorised by the Portfolio Holder for the Waste and Recycling Contract:

"As Members will be aware, following their introduction in early May of new vehicles and technology, their switch to a new depot site in Waltham Cross, and the introduction of the four day collection week, our waste management contractor, Biffa, has experienced a number of problems.

I've detailed these problems in previous statements, so I won't repeat them now, and I've made it clear throughout this difficult period that we were doing all we could to both assist Biffa to resolve the problems they faced and to minimise disruption to our residents.

It was to those ends that, when it was clear that Biffa would be unable to complete on their own the catch-up collections needed to stabilise the service, I took the decision to authorise the hiring in of additional waste collection vehicles, to be managed directly by Council Officers. These vehicles focused on addressing the most long-standing problems, dealing with those properties that had experienced repeated missed collections.

As this expenditure is outside the current budget framework I am required by the financial regulations to report it to the Council, but I also believe it's important that members are fully aware of the proactive steps we have taken to rectify the problems we faced.

To date, the expenditure in question amounts to £13,274.

This can be broken down into vehicle hire and staffing costs. Vehicle hire has cost £5,432, which covers 2 vehicles for 4 days. Staffing costs, made up of the additional hours worked by waste management staff and the customer contact team, amount to £7,842.

The extent to which these costs will rise will be dependent on Biffa's future performance, which I'm pleased to say is now improving. Nevertheless, I estimate that over the next 6-8 weeks we will incur additional monitoring costs of up to £1,500 per week, with the potential for some further use of external contractors.

Accordingly, I wish to advise Council that the overall expenditure outside of the current budget framework is likely to be in the region of £25,000 to £30,000.

Naturally, I am anxious to reclaim from Biffa any money spent by the Council on providing the service we pay them to deliver. Accordingly, legal advice has been sought and we are currently investigating the options available to us.

As with so much of what has happened over the past seven weeks, this is not something I take any pleasure in informing Members of. However, I hope Members will agree with me that this additional expenditure has been incurred in the interest of serving our residents, and with the clear purpose of minimising the disruption and inconvenience they have experienced."

The Portfolio Holder informed the Council that regular updates on the service had been issued to residents as press releases, but the Portfolio Holder would be happy to issue Members with further information to release to their residents. It was the responsibility of Biffa Municipal Limited to deliver the service and the recent extra resources were a temporary measure designed to stabilise the service. Last week, every collection route had been completed but there were still a number of missed collections reported by residents. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that there were still issues to resolve with the new service, one of which was to educate the crews as to where all the bins were. Some of the existing communal bins for flats were too large for the new freighters, but these would be replaced by Biffa at their expense. It was emphasised that only a small proportion of such bins needed replacing.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the due diligence undertaken during the tendering process for the Waste Management contract was very thorough. The Council's external auditors were involved, and the Council had engaged WYG Environmental as consultants to assist throughout the whole tendering process. The Council was reminded that the service had worked well for six months under Biffa, and that the current problems only began when the schedule had changed from a five-day collection service to a four-day collection service. There were no plans to revert to a five-day collection service, as the four-day collection service was deliverable and would produce cost savings for residents.

The Portfolio Holder accepted that there were lessons for the Council to learn from the way it had communicated the changes to residents. However, the Council had informed residents of the facts as they believed them to be, and more information had been disseminated as it had become available from Biffa. The Portfolio Holder was also happy to provide Town and Parish Councils with further information for onward transmission to residents.

The Council had consistently been one of the top ten recycling Councils in the country, and the Portfolio Holder hoped that the recent troubles had not jeopardised

the recycling efforts made by residents in recent years. Although any possible shortfalls in recyclables would be addressed by the Council. Side waste would be collected by Biffa as they were responsible for both kerbside collections and street cleansing. The Portfolio Holder also undertook to provide information concerning the kerbside collection of textiles and other recyclables which had been included in the new contract.

The Portfolio Holder stated that, following his recent request to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, he was sure that a thorough review of the implementation of the four-day collection service would be undertaken. However, it was for the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee to determine the level of Member involvement in this review. Councillor Sartin, who had been appointed to chair the Review Panel, reminded the Council that all Members could attend Scrutiny Panels and contribute to the discussion. Members were advised to make notes concerning the implementation of the four-day collection service during the previous seven weeks, as it was now unlikely that the review would begin until September 2015.

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that the additional urgent expenditure was relatively small, but the Portfolio Holder had considered it vital to authorise the extra expenditure in order to stabilise the service and lessen the impact to residents from missed collections.

Report as first moved ADOPTED.

RESOLVED:

That the emergency and urgent expenditure in the sum of £13,274 for the Waste and Recycling Contract authorised by the Portfolio Holder be noted.

21. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the item of business set out below as it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act indicated and the exemption was considered to outweigh the potential public interest in disclosing the information:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Paragraph Number</u>
6	Epping Forest Shopping Park	3

22. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK

Mover: Councillor A Grigg, Portfolio Holder for Asset Management & Economic Development.

The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management & Economic Development, Councillor A Grigg, presented a report requesting a capital supplementary estimate for 2015/16 in the sum of £30,636,280 to be approved.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the requested expenditure would enable the Council to buy out the interest of Polofind Limited in the Epping Forest Shopping Park site, which would leave the Council as the sole developers. Following on from

this, the bulk of the requested expenditure would enable the Council to construct the Shopping Park itself, and then market the units to potential tenants prior to its opening.

The Council's Development Consultant from Colliers International presented the latest Development Appraisal for the project to the Council, and answered a number of questions from Members regarding the development. The Council was also given details of the Project Development Team that had been assembled, and Members were reminded that there would be regular project monitoring reports presented to each Cabinet meeting until the development was completed.

Report as first moved ADOPTED.

RESOLVED:

That a capital supplementary estimate for 2015/16 in the sum of £30,636,280 be approved, to enable the Council to:

- (a) buy out the interest of Polofind Limited in the development of Epping Forest Shopping Park;
- (b) construct the Shopping Park; and
- (c) let the units within the Shopping Park prior to its opening.

CHAIRMAN