

ECONOMY SKILLS TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

SCRUTINY BOARD

WASTE AND RECYCLING CENTRE SITE VISIT

21 November 2018

Sandwell Integrated Waste and Cleansing Contract – Serco Site Visit

Attending Cllr Ahmed
Cllr Allcock
Cllr Ashman
Cllr Chidley
Cllr Singh
Julia Bridgett
John Mason
Gary Smith
Dawn Shaw
Steve Wilkes
Neil Cox
Deb Breedon

Presentation – Waste Contract – In Cab Technology

Officers provided a presentation to the Scrutiny Board Members and gave an overview of the in-cab system.

Members found the systems to be quite engaging from an operational point of view. Firmstep was the Council portal, they found that from the portal to interfaces to the Whitespace system messages could be instantaneously sent while they were out on the round. Crews went out on their rounds at 6.30am.

In relation to the system:

- The lists were alphabetical rather than in route order.
- The lists indicated to the operator which houses were assisted, which addresses specific actions/arrangements existed.
- Routes were classed 1- 4 depending on type of road. This dictated collection arrangements i.e. single or double-sided collections. Not to collect after 9am as by school etc.
- The operator could pick up the house number, add detail and submit the entry, adding detail or reasons why an action had or had not taken place.
- If the bins were not put out the operator could record that detail. If there was contamination in a recycling bin they could record the detail and take a photograph. They would have to circle a reason why the bin had not been emptied on a sticker and leave that on the bin.

In response to questions:

- The refuse collectors considered around 100 kilos is the maximum weight for a refuse bin. However, it was more of an assessment as to whether the refuse collector could not move the refuse bin or if the collection truck lifting equipment could not pick it up. However, as each crew had three crew it was rare that the operators could not move the bins between them.
- If a resident complained that the bin had not been emptied the log could be viewed by them 'My Sandwell' could show the log but the photos could not be viewed because Firmstep on able to do this yet.
- In relation to MySandwell if a Councillor put an enquiry in to waste management relating to litter it would be best if they sorted it by putting an enquiry for a litter pick. Glass could be removed quickly under the 'dangerous litter' request process under 'Report it' on the SMBC website.
- Many people seemed not to understand the reasons why their recycling was contaminated, the need to mark the reason why on the labels and circle the labels and to have more discussions about the issue with plastics and polystyrene, meat trays etc. The need to recognise what was a hard plastic and what was a recyclable plastic.

Officers completed the demonstration of how the system worked, the process for issuing a notice where contaminated waste had been identified; and where excess waste had resulted, how the householder was advised that they would have to store the waste for next collection or get it to the waste disposal site. The Board was advised that the Council would not go back out and collect where contaminated waste had been the issue.

Members considered that some residents claimed that they did not know when the collection dates were. Officers indicated that the majority of residents know the date to put bins out and put things in the right bins. It was highlighted that on occasions when bins were put out overnight passers-by or neighbours may put things in other people's bins that caused the contamination and that there was very little that could be done about these rare instances.

Although the instances of contaminated waste and non-collection of waste were annoying for waste collectors and residents the knock-on effect of contaminated waste not being properly disposed of may be fly tipping, excess black bag waste on the street and or tipped elsewhere in the Borough. The longer-term impact on the Council was additional costs, to clean-up tipped waste. Although flytipping tonnages remain fairly consistent within a range over a number of years.

Officers advised that 'Waste Awareness Officers' go out into communities and make people aware of what people should put in the recycle bins, what plastic they should recycle and what they should not. There were certain requirements from the contractors that needed to be met, the Members considered that there was nothing wrong with containerisation. There was a recycling hotline was available to help anyone in need of help or advise was available on the Council Website.

In relation to 'assisted bin collection' the following was explained:

- The bins could be registered for assisted collection for up to three years.
- The criteria asked for your infirmity or disability.

The iPad was situated in a cradle in the cab, the communication for crew was essential to keep the round moving and the base informed of the current situation and of interruptions to service. The crew could see where bins were in or out and where there had been weeks where the bins had not been used, this could raise safeguarding concerns, where the relevant services could be notified. The Council where possible

encourage bin numbering, to avoid lost or misplaced bins. Some people put postcodes on the bins.

There was a discussion about food waste and food bins. It was reported that the food bin collection service was operating at approximately 18% participation. Members were advised that the food collection rate had always been low but that it had dropped and was now something that should be looked at in more detail.

Members agreed that a report relating to the future of organic food waste and the use of the anaerobic waste site should be brought to a future meeting.

Site Visit to the Hub

Members received a guided tour of the Eagle Transfer site to see the transfer facility.



There was opportunity to see the extent of the contamination discussed at the meeting and to see and hear about operations and the facilities on site.



Litter Watch

At the end of the site visit Members met with members of the Litter Watch Team who were SERCO and Sandwell Council funded. The 'Love where you live' groups get groups of people together to collect litter where they live – Councillor Cherrington had championed a litter picking project to get groups to keep their areas clean.

The litter picking teams spread the message by social media, target leafletting, through neighbourhood groups, job centres and schools.

Contact number 0121 557 6970

Actions to refer to Scrutiny Board:

1. That a report be requested to a future meeting relating to the domestic food waste collection service.
2. Agreed that Members note the recent campaign to remind people what should put in the recycle bins and what plastic they should recycle to reduce the amount of contaminated waste. How we can better inform people how to separate waste and plastics.