

Minutes of Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

**Friday 11 February 2022 at 5.30pm
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Moore (Chair);
Councillors S Gill, Hughes, Jalil, Kaur, and C Padda.

Officers: Alice Davey (Director of Borough Economy).

13/22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Abrahams (Vice-Chair), Gill and Owen.

14/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting

15/22 Urgent Additional Item of Business

There were no additional items of business to consider.

16/22 Scrutiny Review of the Performance and Management of the Waste Partnership Contract

The Board received the draft report following the completion of its review of the performance and management of the Council's waste partnership contract.

A working group of the Board had gathered evidence over seven sessions between October and December 2021,

which included a visit to the borough's Waste Transfer Station and the Household Recycling Centre.

The review had acknowledged the impact that the covid-19 pandemic had had on the delivery of the contract, however many of the issues explored, particularly in relation to contract management, governance, street cleanliness and the modernisation of the vehicle fleet pre-dated the pandemic. Members also acknowledged that, since the commencement of the review, there had been some improvements however, the delivery of the contract still remained unsatisfactory.

It was noted that the waste contract had been a key line of enquiry in the recent Value for Money Governance Review undertaken by external auditors Grant Thornton and the Board's work complemented this.

The Director of Borough Economy welcomed the review and the proposed recommendations as a mechanism to drive further improvements.

The Board thanked officers from Democratic Services for their hard work in supporting the review.

The Board considered the draft recommendations now presented and agreed that the following recommendations be submitted to the Cabinet:-

1. That Serco sets out within its Service Delivery Plan 2022/23 how it will increase recycling rates, including options for recycling in communal living areas.
2. a) That Serco provides a contractually compliant communication and engagement plan and that this is aligned to the Council's functions;

b) that the plan is monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board.
3. That arrangements for the reintroduction of food waste collections in 2022 be shared and agreed with the Authorised Officer by end of March 2022.

4. That Serco works with the Director of Borough Economy to develop a plan for the promotion of re-use options (i.e. for furniture), including working with voluntary sector partners.
5.
 - a) That Serco reviews its approach to street cleansing, and submits a Street Cleansing Improvement Plan to the Director of Borough Economy by end March 2022, setting out a revised approach that moves away from the current and ineffective zone based approach and takes into account population density, seasonality and data on areas of highest need;
 - b) that the Plan is monitored and improvement progress/delivery/KPIs is reported and monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board.
6.
 - a) That Serco completes an audit of Sandwell's street litter bin stock and its condition by end of March 2022;
 - b) that Serco submits plans for consideration of a pilot scheme to implement smart technology linked to suitable locations for street bins.
7.
 - a) That the progress made with the Fleet Replacement Programme is maintained and that Serco submits the delayed Fleet Replacement Programme, which should be aligned with operational requirements and the Street Cleansing Improvement Plan, and include options for a more sustainable fleet, to the Director of Borough Economy by end of April 2022;
 - b) that the delivery of the Fleet Replacement Programme is monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board.
8. That both Serco and the Council consider reviewing the resources and funding provided to Litter Watch, with a view to increasing these if possible.
9. That Serco informs the Authorised Officer of any changes to its senior management teams, in

connection with the contract, within 10 days of the new post-holder's start date.

10. That the constitution and terms of reference of the Waste Partnership Strategic Board are reviewed, and consideration is given to including the relevant scrutiny Chair as a member of the Board.
11. That the Director of Law and Governance ensures that the Joint Consultative meets regularly (e.g. quarterly) to enable any staffing issues in relation to the contract to be addressed in a timely manner.
12. That the Director of Borough Economy reviews the structure of the Waste Client Team to ensure that it is sufficiently resourced to support a higher level of oversight and contract monitoring.

In light of the likelihood of confidential contractual matters being discussed in relation to a small number of the proposed recommendations, the Chair moved that the public and press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting. The motion was seconded and put to the vote and the Board:-

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to the financial and business affairs of any person, including the authority holding that information.

Following further discussion and advice from the Director of Borough Economy the Board agreed that the following recommendations also be submitted to the Cabinet:-

13. a) That Serco provides an update to the Scrutiny Board, in six months, on the progress made to improve morale and resolve workforce issues, including the establishment of the joint internal working group referred to in evidence gathering;

- b) That the Director Borough Economy ensures that Serco is carrying out its contractual requirements in relation to undertaking regular staff surveys and that the results of such surveys are acted upon appropriately.
 - c) That the Director of Law and Governance ensures that the Joint Consultative meets regularly (e.g. quarterly) to enable any staffing issues in relation to the contract to be addressed in a timely manner.
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- a) That the Governance and Constitution Review Committee is asked to recommend to the Council that an additional scrutiny board is established, with effect from the 2022/23 municipal year, to monitor the management and performance of the Council's contracts with Serco, Sandwell Children's Trust and Sandwell Leisure Trust;
 - b) That the new board considers how stakeholders and the public can contribute to its work and monitoring processes.
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- That a review is undertaken and a process established, within 12 months, to ensure that there is clarity between the Council and Serco in terms of ownership and responsibility in the public realm.

Resolved that the Board's report on its review of the Performance and Management of the Council's Waste Partnership Contract, as now submitted, be presented to the Cabinet on 23 February 2022, with the following recommendations:-

- (1) That Serco sets out within its Service Delivery Plan 2022/23 how it will increase recycling rates, including options for recycling in communal living areas.
- (2) a) That Serco provides a contractually compliant communication and engagement plan and that this is aligned to the Council's functions;
- b) that the plan is monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board.

- (3) That arrangements for the reintroduction of food waste collections in 2022 be shared and agreed with the Authorised Officer by end of March 2022.
- (4) That Serco works with the Director of Borough Economy to develop a plan for the promotion of re-use options (i.e. for furniture), including working with voluntary sector partners.
- (5)
 - a) That Serco reviews its approach to street cleansing, and submits a Street Cleansing Improvement Plan to the Director of Borough Economy by end March 2022, setting out a revised approach that moves away from the current and ineffective zone based approach and takes into account population density, seasonality and data on areas of highest need;
 - b) that the Plan is monitored and improvement progress/delivery/KPIs is reported and monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board.
- (6)
 - a) That Serco completes an audit of Sandwell's street litter bin stock and its condition by end of March 2022;
 - b) that Serco submits plans for consideration of a pilot scheme to implement smart technology linked to suitable locations for street bins.
- (7)
 - a) That the progress made with the Fleet Replacement Programme is maintained and that Serco submits the delayed Fleet Replacement Programme, which should be aligned with operational requirements and the Street Cleansing Improvement Plan, and include options for a more sustainable fleet, to the Director of Borough Economy by end of April 2022.
 - b) that the delivery of the Fleet Replacement Programme is monitored through the agreed governance structures for the monitoring of the contract, including the Waste Partnership Board.

- (8) That both Serco and the Council consider reviewing the resources and funding provided to Litter Watch, with a view to increasing these if possible.
- (9) That Serco informs the Authorised Officer of any changes to its senior management teams, in connection with the contract, within 10 days of the new post-holder's start date.
- (10)
 - a) That Serco provides an update to the Scrutiny Board, in six months, on the progress made to improve morale and resolve workforce issues, including the establishment of the joint internal working group referred to in evidence gathering;
 - b) That the Director Borough Economy ensures that Serco is carrying out its contractual requirements in relation to undertaking regular staff surveys and that the results of such surveys are acted upon appropriately.
- (11) That the constitution and terms of reference of the Waste Partnership Strategic Board are reviewed, and consideration is given to including the relevant scrutiny Chair as a member of the Board.
- (12) That the Director of Law and Governance ensures that the Joint Consultative meets regularly (e.g. quarterly) to enable any staffing issues in relation to the contract to be addressed in a timely manner.
- (13)
 - a) That the Governance and Constitution Review Committee is asked to recommend to the Council that an additional scrutiny board is established, with effect from the 2022/23 municipal year, to monitor the management and performance of the Council's contracts with Serco, Sandwell Children's Trust and Sandwell Leisure Trust;
 - b) That the new board considers how stakeholders and the public can contribute to its work and monitoring processes.

- (14) That the Director of Borough Economy reviews the structure of the Waste Client Team to ensure that it is sufficiently resourced to support a higher level of oversight and contract monitoring.
- (15) That a review is undertaken and a process established, within 12 months, to ensure that there is clarity between the Council and Serco in terms of ownership and responsibility in the public realm.

Meeting ended at 6.54pm

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