

REPORT TO:	Streets Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub Committee 1 October 2019
SUBJECT:	Cabinet Member Q&A – Councillor Stuart Collins
LEAD OFFICERS:	Shifa Mustafa, Executive Director – Place Steve Iles, Director of Streets
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Stuart Collins Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Clean Green Croydon
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Councillor Stuart Collins

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This item has been identified by the Streets, Environment and Homes Scrutiny Sub Committee as an area of scrutiny.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To note the annual update from the portfolio holder and to take the opportunity to ask any pertinent questions.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The portfolio for Clean, Green Croydon is diverse and covers a range of key Council services. These include; waste and recycling collection, street cleansing, fly-tip removal, environmental enforcement, grounds maintenance and the trees and woodlands service. These services have a combined overall net expenditure of £28.35M.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on the key areas of progress in these areas over the past year, sets the direction of travel for the future and highlights the key challenges for the portfolio. This report provides a summary of activity within the portfolio, whilst some of the service areas are covered in greater depth in the other Scrutiny reports also on this evening's agenda.
- 1.3 The report also provides a response to the conclusions and recommendations made at the last meeting of this Committee to the portfolio holder.

2. SERVICE UPDATE – WASTE AND RECYCLING, STREET CLEANSING AND

ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

- 2.1 At the last update to Scrutiny, the Council had recently embarked on an ambitious new waste and recycling service with a view to recycling over 50% of household waste by 2020 which was a manifesto pledge. By reducing the capacity of the wheeled bins for residual waste, whilst at the same time increasing the capacity for recycling, the Council recorded a household waste recycling rate of 48%, compared with 38% the previous year. This change was not down to the change in capacity alone, it was also a result of the hard work of Croydon residents to recycle as much as possible, a comprehensive communications campaign and the hard work of officers and our contractor, Veolia in ensuring that the disruption brought about by the new service, which involved a day change for 78% of the borough's residents, was kept to a minimum and that a business as usual situation was reached as quickly as possible.
- 2.2 The new Street Cleansing service which was introduced as part of the South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) contract in March 2018 saw a move away from a frequency based specification for street cleansing to an output based specification whereby all streets are required to be maintained to a certain grade. This allows a greater flexibility for resources to be deployed where they are most needed.
- 2.3 Croydon has in excess of 750 miles of road within the borough. Approximately 270-300 street cleansing issues (excluding fly-tips) are reported each month of which over 95% are rectified within the contractual timeframe of one working day. The Don't Mess With Croydon (DMWC) App allows residents to report street cleansing issues online, creating an automatic instruction for the contractor to rectify. More work is required to promote this service as many of issues are reported through other channels and aren't properly recorded meaning they are not subject to the contractual rectification periods.
- 2.4 In the last year, there were 22,184 reported fly-tips in Croydon. The vast majority of these (97%) were cleared within the contractual timeframe of one working day. Croydon is working with residents, landlords and community groups to raise education on this issue and have issued 407 fixed penalty notices and had 8 successful prosecutions to date in 2019/20 for environmental offences. This brings the total of successful prosecutions relating to environmental offences to 225 since 2014. We will shortly be introducing a scheme whereby residents are rewarded for providing information which leads to a successful prosecution.
- 2.5 The Contract for Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing is underpinned by a series of Service Performance Indicators (SPIs) which are used to hold the contractor to account for any service failures and are reported monthly. Some of the headline SPIs include:
- A requirement for Veolia to sweep streets to a Grade A and maintain streets to a minimum of a Grade B at all other times (the grades are based on NI195 standards)
 - Any missed collections reported within 2 days of the scheduled collection will be rectified within one working day.
 - Reported fly tips to be removed within one working day.
 - Failures to meet these SPIs result in penalties being applied to the contractor

- 2.6 Generally the response times for street cleansing issues and the removal of fly-tips are within the contractual timeframes. One area the Council is working with Veolia to improve is the removal of street cleansing bags on the same day of collection. There is a contractual requirement for these to be removed on the same day they are created and whilst cases of this not happening are not separately recorded, anecdotally at least, there is a perception that whilst most bags are cleared in a timely manner, there are a number which remain on street corners, attracting fly-tipping and litter. As part of an annual review of the SPIs, officers are in discussion with Veolia about adding a separate indicator relating to the removal of these bags.
- 2.7 Following the service disruption that followed the rollout of the new waste and recycling service, missed collections have fallen. Although the overall number of missed collections represents less than one percent of the total collections (0.22%) carried out in the borough, there is still considerable room for improvement. This is also the case for rectifications of missed collections, of which currently just over 60% of cases are resolved within the contractual timescale. Officers are also working jointly with Veolia via a series of inspections in order to improve standards of care for returning containers back to residents and to eradicate practices such as the decanting of waste into transfer bins instead of lifting each bin separately.
- 2.8 The following year will see the service continuing its efforts to reach the target of recycling 50% of its waste, which it is on course to do. Croydon recently declared a global climate emergency and there are a number of initiatives planned aimed at reducing waste and in particular single use plastics, including the installation of three water fountains around the borough in order to encourage the use of reusable bottles.
- 2.9 There are also plans to install a reuse shop at one of the Household Reuse and Recycling Centres (HRRCs) whereby residents can access good quality second hand goods and furniture at affordable prices. A challenge for the service will be the uncertainty around Brexit, although both Veolia and Viridor have produced plans to the SLWP detailing how any associated risks will be managed.
- 2.10 We also plan to encourage recycling for residents living in flats above shops by giving them separately coloured bags for recycling the same materials collected via the kerbside recycling service.
- 2.11 Whilst the new services have brought a reduction in the amount of residual waste per household, some of the overall impact on waste tonnages is offset by the fact that there has also been an increase in the number of new properties leading to a growth in the borough's population.

3. SERVICE UPDATE – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE/TREES AND WOODLANDS

- 3.1 Croydon has 127 parks and open spaces within the borough. Following a manifesto pledge, the service, which was previously contracted out, came back 'in-house' on 1st February 2019.
- 3.2 Following a report to this committee shortly after the insourcing of this service, one of the recommendations was that a Service Review be undertaken by

September 2019. Unfortunately, this has not been possible due to the operational priorities of the in-house service needing to be addressed. This was exacerbated by the fact that some key personnel from the previous contract did not transfer over to the new service.

- 3.3 Generally the transition has been relatively uncomplicated and officers have worked extremely hard to ensure a new 'fit for purpose' specification is in place. Staff have a more visible presence as they now wear Croydon branded purple uniforms and the service have received several compliments about the standards of work and complaints have reduced considerably.
- 3.4 Work is currently underway for Bereavement Services, which is currently contracted out, to come back 'in-house' as part of the Grounds Maintenance Service in November 2019. Following that move, the Service Review which was originally planned for earlier in the year will go ahead.

The Trees and Woodlands service is responsible for surveying and undertaking tree works throughout the borough open spaces and is contracted to City and Suburban who have a programme of cyclical maintenance, which ranges from three to five years based on location. There are 33,000 street trees within the borough and over half a million trees in the Croydon's parks and open spaces.

- 3.5 Last year approximately 10,000 inspections took place and a range remedial works were carried out. The team were successful in securing funding from a range of sources including the Greener City Fund, a partnership between the Forestry Commission and the London Mayor for the planting of 300-400 trees in addition to the 500 that are planted each year.
- 3.6 Work is ongoing to identify the best option for procuring these services in the future, with a likelihood that some of the non-specialist work will come into the 'in house' service.
- 3.7 Plans are underway to help increase biodiversity in the borough by introducing a 'bee highway' by selectively meadowing some of the borough's grassed areas. Full details of this scheme will be announced in January.

4. RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Following the meeting in February 2019 the Streets and Environment and Homes Scrutiny Committee made five recommendations. The recommendations and the responses to them can be found below:

1. *That the immediate focus for the Grounds Maintenance Service should be on providing its core services at an acceptable level for the residents of Croydon.*

The immediate focus for the newly insourced Grounds Maintenance service has very much been about establishing a business as usual approach and putting in place a regime, particularly around grass cutting that results in the borough maintaining a uniformly attractive and visually appealing appearance. There have been increased resources for litter picking in parks at peak times, which have resulted in considerably fewer complaints than in previous years. Generally speaking the service provided by the team has been more than acceptable and an improvement on that being delivered

previously.

2. *That the business plan should be developed on a park specific level.*

Whilst the service specification contains a schedule of works which is broken down to a park specific level, work is underway to prepare a more detailed annual plan reflecting an approach which is focused around local needs.

3. *That consideration should be given to how to consult with the public in those areas without friends groups.*

Over the next year, the service will be working closely with the District Centres and Regeneration team, who have responsibility for co-ordinating and engaging with the Friends of Parks groups to ensure that wherever possible their views can be taken into account in any future planning. Consideration will also be given to how to engage others in the future of our parks, including use of social media and other platforms.

4. *That the Cabinet Member for Clean, Green Croydon be invited to attend the meeting of the Sub-Committee on 1 October 2019 to provide an update on the Service Review and future plans.*

This invitation has been accepted.

5. *That Scrutiny should be consulted before decisions are made that would change the method of service delivery, such as bring a service back in-house.*

Noted for future.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Tom Lawrence, Service
Manager, Environment and
Leisure, Place Department
Telephone: 020 8726 6000 x
52520
tom.lawrence@croydon.gov.uk

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

None