

**WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL/EAST HANTS DISTRICT COUNCIL
JOINT ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

18 November 2013

Attendance:

Councillors:

Chairman: Clear – Winchester City Council (P)

Winchester City Council

Pines (P)

McLean (P)

East Hampshire District Council

Branch

Denston (P)

Onslow (P)

Officers in Attendance:

Mr S Tilbury – Corporate Director (Operations), Winchester City Council

Mr R Heathcock – Assistant Director (High Quality Environment), Winchester City Council

Mrs J Batchelor – Executive Head of Environment & Neighbourhood Quality, East Hants District Council

Mr H Bone – Head of Legal Services, Winchester City Council

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN**

It was suggested that chairmanship be alternated between Winchester City Council (WCC) and East Hampshire District Council (EHDC), similar to the arrangements for the Joint Environmental Services Committee. In addition, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman should be from different Councils. This was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Clear be elected Chairman and Councillor Onslow be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the 2013/14 Municipal Year.

2. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee discussed the proposed terms of reference of the Joint Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee (JESSC), which had been set out on the agenda for the meeting.

Mr Heathcock drew the Committee's attention to Paragraph 1 which outlined how the JESSC could raise issues with the Joint Committee, and if appropriate their individual parent Scrutiny Committees and Cabinets.

He also highlighted Paragraph 6 which related to scrutiny of the Project Integra Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's terms of reference be agreed as set out below:

1. The following principles will apply to the work of the JESSC:-
 - a) The JESSC may raise any issues directly with the Joint Environmental Services Committee.
 - b) The JESSC may also raise any issues with the parent Councils. Each Council will determine its own procedures as to whether the report back will go to the Council's appropriate parent scrutiny committee or direct to their respective Cabinets or portfolio holders.
 - c) An annual report will be produced by the JESSC and reported to the parent scrutiny committees of each Council.
 - d) Any matters of concern will be referred to the parent Councils if requested by resolution of the Committee or at least 2 or more Members from either authority.
2. The role of the JESSC will be as follows:
 - a) To have a general remit to scrutinise any executive decision made by the Joint Environmental Services Committee.
 - b) To have the right to review Joint Environmental Services Committee policies insofar as the policy concerned relates to the delivery of Environmental Services.
 - c) To have authority to require any member of the Joint Environmental Services Committee or any Officer of the Joint Client Team to assist in its work by attending at a meeting of the Committee, by supplying information or by other means.
 - d) To have an overview of performance and use of resources in respect of the services within the responsibility of the Joint Environmental Services Committee including but not restricted to
 - The Joint Client Team;
 - The Contractors;
 - Implementation of work programmes;

- Performance against national and local performance indicators;
 - Identification of risks and monitoring action taken to mitigate those risks and responsibility for the monitoring and implementation of action plans.
- e) To monitor developments within the Project Integra Partnership and scrutinise its performance and policy development in terms of the impact upon the work of the JESSC.
- f) To hold the Joint Environmental Services Committee and relevant Portfolio Holders at each authority to account for the services within their areas of responsibility.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. **ORAL REPORT FROM JOINT CLIENT TEAM MANAGER ON CURRENT POSITION WITH THE DEPOT CONTRACT SERVICES**

The Committee noted that, as background information to the above, an extract from the minutes of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Winchester City Council held on 28 October 2013 had been circulated, but not notified for inclusion on the agenda within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept the item onto the agenda as a matter requiring urgent consideration, in order that the contents of the minutes could be considered alongside the oral report.

Mrs Batchelor and Mr Heathcock gave a presentation on the current position with the Depot Contract Services.

It was noted that the contract was in its third year and in summary, the following points were raised:

Biffa

- After some initial difficulties at the start of the contract, performance was now generally satisfactory;
- Collection rounds were reaching capacity and the issue of providing sufficient additional capacity for new housing would need to be addressed;
- Despite the performance being satisfactory, Biffa continued to fail against the contract performance indicator. This was due to the indicator being set at a very high level and this might require further consideration.

The Landscape Group (TLG)

- Ongoing issues with unsatisfactory performance, particularly in the Winchester District (for example on leaf clearance and grass cutting);
- There had also been particular issues regarding maintenance of shrub beds within the Winchester District
- Increasing complaints from Winchester City Council Housing tenants who were informally monitoring the standard of performance within their estates;

Biffa and TLG Contracts

- At the end of the first year of the contract, a Contract Specification Group had been established.
- Some of the areas of complaints about the standard of service were not covered by the Contract (for example, the company were not failing on grass cutting, but the Councils were receiving a high number of complaints in this area);
- A review of the TLG contracts had highlighted that some of the detailed schedules of work were unclear. Work was ongoing to address this, whilst maintaining standards of service.
- A report on the revised contract proposals would be submitted to the Joint Environmental Services Committee in December for approval.
- In response to questions, Mr Tilbury advised that in hindsight it was apparent some mistakes had occurred at the contract specification stage and the Councils were now seeking to address this. However, it was highlighted that significant savings had been achieved for both Councils in the letting of the joint contract.

Superclean

- Performance on cleansing of Public Conveniences was inconsistent;
- This service was awarded on a four year contract. Therefore work would begin next year on the retendering process;
- Some parish councils had previously expressed an interest in taking on the responsibility for cleaning public toilets in their areas, subject to an appropriate adjustment to the precept. This possibility would be examined further as part of the option appraisal.

In response to questions, Mrs Batchelor advised that she considered the number of contract monitoring officers was adequate, once the current issues outlined above had been addressed. However, it might be necessary to consider adjusting the balance of work of these officers between the two Districts. In addition, Mr Heathcock stated that different methods for monitoring the services under the contract were being considered, for example making better use of Housing Tenant Champions to monitor grass cutting or Parking Enforcement Officers to check leaf clearance in car parks.

5. **FUTURE TOPICS FOR THE JESSC SCRUTINY PROGRAMME**

Following discussion, the following topics were raised as items for future meetings:

- Project Integra – invite the new Executive Officer to a future Scrutiny Committee meeting;
- Output from review of Contract specification;
- Report on effective monitoring arrangements for the contract

It was agreed that the next meeting focus on the contract specification review, together with the monitoring arrangements.

6. **DATE AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The dates for future meetings were agreed as follows:

13 January 2014 – 2.00pm

7 April 2014 – 2.00pm

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm and concluded at 3.35pm

Chairman