

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 March 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Valerie Morris-Cook (Chair), Joycelyn Redsell (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Mark Hurrell, Cathy Kent and Maureen Pearce

Apologies: None

In attendance: Paul Southall, Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure
Paul Crick, Chief Operations Lead- Place
Carly Parker, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Claire Dixon, Scrutiny Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

40. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

41. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

42. Clean and Green- Verbal Update

The Assistant Director of street scene and leisure provided an overview of the changes made to the operational delivery model across Thurrock. They had moved away from traditional hand sweeping to mobile sweeping.

It was decided that the service could be delivered with 14 less staff with minimal impact of the quality of the work being produced. Despite this by September 2023 there was a noticeable downturn in the quality of services. With an increase in complaints in litter and weed growth. Following a review, it was agreed to bring back 9 members of staff which impacted the quality of services and drove up improvement standards. In addition to this staff undertook training in November 2023. This covered code of practice on litter and refuse; cleansing standards, health and safety, tools, equipment PPE, and uniform. A review of cleansing schedules and rounds was undertaken to assess efficiency.

The Committee were advised that Bartec software is used to improve refuse, recycling, garden and food waste services for councils and residents. Initially the usage was poor with approximately 14% usage across the service. After a review and training on how to use the software, this increased to 89% by the

end of January 2024. This led to a reduction in member inquiries and complaints relating to the clean and green service.

Other key points raised include.

- From November 2023 to present 100% of members complaints and queries have been responded too in a reasonable amount of time and closed within 10 days.
- 4011 cleansing inspections have been carried out between April 2023- January 2024 across the clean and green services. 97% of inspections were graded B or above. 51% were at grade A. 46% were at grade B, 2.7% grade C and 0.7% at grade D.
- 3,996 service requests were received and responded too.
- 661 litter bins on the highway have been emptied regularly.
- 2405 fly tips have been removed.
- 8 remembrance memorials were thoroughly cleaned in preparation for Memorial Day.
- Playground inspectors have carried out 4003 inspections of play areas. As a result, 302 defective pieces of equipment have been repaired throughout the borough.

The committee were advised that work is being carried out to meet Thurrock's corporate objectives an update will be provided once further progress is made.

The Chair raised concerns about the litter on the A13. Advising the area is often resident's and visitors introduction to Thurrock, however its is unknown that Thurrock does not own this. The Chair questioned whether anything could be done to get the highways department to abide by Thurrock's cleaning standards. The committee were advised a 3-mile section of the A13 has been handed back to Thurrock. It's not in the best condition, however work is being completed to address this, with a 30-day work cycle that started last week.

Action: Assistant Director of Street Scene and Leisure to provide the exact 3- mile location of the A13 that has been handed back to Thurrock to councillors.

The Vice Chair praised the work done around the play areas, however questioned why the football pitches were not being used to their full extent. Advising that there is a mound of earth that has been dumped possibly fly tipped on Heath Road. Therefore, the sports field cannot be used.

Action: Assistant Director Street scene and Leisure to investigate any issues with the sports fields and pitches and feedback to the committee

Councillors questioned the frequency of street cleaning and weeding. They were advised most roads are cleaned every two weeks; however, this is dependent on schedules. In addition to this the barrow sweepers carry a bottle of weedkiller that they use when sweeping the roads.

Councillors questioned whether there was a cleaning team for maintaining signs. It was confirmed there was one and it applied to the cleaning of graffiti.

Members questioned the frequency of training. They were advised there was no evidence of regular training due to absence of records, however a training matrix is being drafted and going forward annual refresher training will be provided.

The committee were reassured that they can review performance through the Bartech software. As well as reviewing why refuse has not been collected and address any issues in real time.

The Vice-Chair questioned whether Thurrock should consider roadside drains due to the large puddles of water around drains in Tilbury. The Committee were informed the drains will be added to a roadside programme.

Action: Road drainage cleaning schedules / frequency to be clarified and feedback to the Committee.

43. Waste Strategy- Verbal Update

The Assistant Director of Street scene and Leisure provided a summary. Advising that changes to legislation brought in new reforms. Some of the key things include a common-sense approach to recycling, meaning people across England will be able to recycle all materials and put an end to any confusion. Weekly food waste and green waste will be offered to residents at a charge by March 2026.

The Following objectives were discussed.

- Objective 1- Eliminate unnecessary use of single waste plastics and unnecessary packaging from the waste stream. A ban on single use plastics has been enforced. Working with communications team for targeted waste minimisation.
- Objective 2- Minimise the reduction of waste and create awareness amongst residents about the impact of waste. Looking into re-use options for bulky items. Waste minimisation will form part of the role of the new recycling officer. Service change booklets will be sent out to residents.
- Objective 3- Increase Thurrock's recycling rate to 50% by 2025. This includes weekly food waste collections from 2024. Moving to alternate weekly collections for general waste. Community engagement recycling officer will start in May 2024 and lead this.
- Objective 4- Waste collection and disposal carried out in the most efficient way. Maintain landfill targets. Currently 0.007% of waste is

sent to landfill. Move to alternate weekly collections to reduce carbon impact.

- Objective 5- To become an authority that sends zero waste to landfill. Review the re-use of material and bulky waste.

To meet these challenges the council have completed the following.

- Roll out of flats recycling programmes and integrated them into the collection service.
- Re-tendered and procured waste disposal contracts.
- Carried out a comprehensive re-optimisation of all waste collections.
- Introduced and roll out of a weekly food collection service.
- Introduced a subscription service for the collection of garden waste.

The committee were advised that the waste strategy will be completed by the end of quarter three and an update will be provided. The garden waste leaflets were completed. The Uptake for the subscriptions is just under the 20% target and Orsett; Little Thurrock, and Grays are the top subscribers.

Councillors raised that the garden waste leaflet does not identify a contact number for those who don't have access to the internet.

Action: Assistant Director Street scene and Leisure to discuss garden waste subscriptions communication with the communications team. Making it clear that residents can call the council to subscribe and get the information out in libraries, local shops, and other local hubs.

The Vice- Chair raised that some young families may struggle with the fortnightly collections particularly if they have small babies in nappies or dog mess. The Committee were reassured in these instances where families are struggling with this, they can contact Thurrock for an additional bin, however Thurrock is one of the last boroughs to change to fortnightly collections.

Councillors questioned how residents in flats will share the cost of garden waste collection. The committee were advised residents are responsible for their own bins, however they can discuss this with their landlord to negotiate and possibly make it part of the communal charge.

The Chair raised that there is no way to pay the charge via direct debit and this may be off-putting for some residents. More work is essential to get residents to invest in composters. The Committee were reassured this was included in the leaflets and is on Thurrock council website. The Assistant Director of street scene advised that work is being carried out to provide direct debit and instalments as an option to cover the cost.

The Chair questioned what assurances can be given to residents whose bins are missed for collection and potentially left for a month due to the move to

fortnightly collections. The committee were reassured that failures would be corrected within 48 hours. Residents will need to call Thurrock to complain, however it will be addressed as soon as possible.

Councillors raised concerns around safety of staff and questioned what was being done to protect frontline workers. The Committee were advised there is a 'No excuse for abuse' campaign in Thurrock as well as cameras on vehicles. Colleagues are encouraged to report verbal assaults and or altercations, however it was noted that verbal assaults have reduced.

The Chair requested an update on the funding used to community infrastructure including parks in the borough and wanted to know more about whether they were fit for purpose and accessible for children with disabilities. The Committee were advised that an audit will be carried out and parents/carers will be signposted should they require it.

44. Work Programme

The work programme was not reviewed.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director of Street scene for his very helpful updates. Councillors were advised this was the last meeting and thanked members for their time.

A full recording of the meeting can be viewed from the following link:

[Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 19 March 2024, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

The meeting finished at 8.20 pm

Approved as a true and correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**