

MID SUFFOLK COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

From: Councillor David Burn Cabinet Member for Environment	Report Number: CMU11
To: Council	Date of meeting: 26 April 2018

TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

1. Overview of Portfolio

- 1.1 The Environment Portfolio covers several distinct service areas. This report provides a snapshot and summary of recent work.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 This report is for information.

3. Key Activities/Issues Over the Past three Months

Waste Service

3.1 Christmas and New Year Collections

Collection crews worked over 3 weekends to catch up from the festive period. Over the 2-week Christmas and New Year period waste & recycling volumes generally increase by over 30% and an additional 220 tonnes of refuse and 50 tonnes of recycling is collected which is equivalent to over 30 extra lorry loads.

Calendars and collection changes were sent out to all parish clerks and advertised through our web site and social media channels. The message around changes to collections were well received with very little customer contact.

Our Christmas tree collection service again proved popular with residents, resulting in over 1300 trees being picked up from designated collect points across the district.

3.2 Education and Promotional Events

Our officers continue to take part in education and promotional events and attended an event at Stonham Barns on Saturday 10th February, "Potato Day", where we promoted our home composting, waste minimisation and recycling services. We had conversations with over 200 people during the event.

3.3 Joint Waste Contract – Joint Waste Contract review

We are continuing the work with Serco on their service review and round reorganisation project. Changes to collections days are planned for the later in the year. Members will receive a full briefing prior to any implementation of changes.

The Joint Waste Contract with Serco has the option to be extended for a further 7 years from the 1st April 2021 until 2028 on agreement of the contract parties. There is a review mechanism within the contract that is triggered during year 12 (2018/2019) with a 2-year notice period for the extension or termination from 1st April 2019.

With the formal review period starting from 1st April this year Serco are currently undertaking a comprehensive service delivery appraisal. This will look at two elements:

- the delivery of the service up to 2021 and the optimisation of the current collection rounds (this element is not directly linked to the contract review); and then
- a longer-term plan to deliver the service through to 2028 allowing Serco to take a view on their business model for the delivery of the service.

The review process involves capturing all collection data; current round routes, information from the vehicles on board trackers, number of bins emptied and weight of waste collected, vehicle capacities and the road network. From this information the software will produce optimised collection rounds that ensure the service is delivered in the most efficient way. For the longer term this will incorporate areas of planned growth and how this will be accommodated in the future and any additional resources required.

Following this review and any subsequent negotiations with Serco officers we will be in a position to present proposals to either extending the contract or considering future delivery options. As part of the contract review process being undertaken with Serco officers we will carry out our own value for money analysis of the waste contract, for example benchmarking the contract costs against those of other local authority waste services.

Officers will also consider other delivery options as part of the review. This would include:

- Re-tender Joint Waste Contract for a new contract from 1st April 2021 with a new provider
- Take service back in-house
- Partnership/Joint Venture with neighboring authority

The proposed service review and contract extension timetable is as follows:

Date	Action
Jan – March 2018	Review and optimisation of service rounds
Jan – August 2018	Review of service options
April – May 2018	Implementation of changes to current collection rounds
July – August 2018	Draft proposals from Serco for contract from April 2021 - 2028
August – October 2018	Negotiation of contract terms and establish final proposal

October – December 2018	Formal sign off if an extension is recommended
1 st April 2019	Start of 2 year notice period if extension is not agreed

3.4 Glass Collection

Officers submitted a glass collection transformation bid in 2016 to provide a separate glass collection service. By including the collection of glass we were able to plug a gap in our service offering and reduce the risk of clients going elsewhere. At Service launch, in June 2016, there were 52 paying clients signed up. By December 2017 a total of 353 glass bins were in place across both BDC and MSDC areas. An average of some 15 tonnes of glass is collected weekly and taken out of the general refuse stream per week saving some £63k pa in disposal costs. Overall the commercial collection service seen an increase of 15%.

Sustainable Environment Service

3.5 Environmental Protection and Environmental Management

Officers from BMSDC are leading on a project to obtain a 100% grant from Highways England to create a network of rapid-charging points every 20 miles along the A11, A14 and A12 key trunk roads, on behalf of nine other local authorities in Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex. The grant has now been awarded, which will cover all procurement and administration costs for the project (including our officer's time). Work has begun on procuring and delivering the network. A charging point at Needham Lakes is being scoped for suitability. The charging points will generate income due to the predicted exponential growth in the uptake of electric vehicles (90% of all vehicles in the UK by 2050).

BEE Anglia (Business Energy Efficiency Anglia) – Through our membership of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership (SCCP), Mid Suffolk businesses have benefited from the BEE Anglia programme to provide free support to at least 1,000 SMEs across Suffolk and Norfolk to help them become more energy efficient. The Partnership successfully bid for £6.5M of funding from the EU European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for this 3-year programme of support and grants to businesses. Since the programme began in April 2016, 35 businesses in Mid Suffolk have received free audits, which have identified measures that are projected to achieve energy bill savings of £82,079 and save 372 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.

Through our membership of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership (SCCP) MSDC together with the other Suffolk authorities has been awarded almost £2.8M from the Warm Homes Fund (a £150 million fund announced by National Grid and Community Interest Company Affordable Warmth Solutions). We will use this to further extend our offer to homeowners to deliver first time central heating systems and gas connections to 540 fuel poor households in Suffolk. Additional insulation measures, cavity wall and loft insulation, would also be delivered to these households to achieve a 'whole house' approach. We are now working with our delivery partners to implement the 3-year project.

Business as Usual – By the end of the third quarter of 2017/18 we had received and processed 3350 complaints, enquiries and consultations for Mid Suffolk and Babergh, including:

- 675 noise, smoke, odour and other nuisance complaints
- 168 litter, fly-tipping, dog fouling and other 'envirocrime' complaints
- 296 abandoned vehicle reports
- 1273 planning consultations

Planning Enforcement Service

- 3.6 The Planning Enforcement service has experienced resource issues over the past 8 months having lost two senior officers and being unsuccessful in recruiting despite two rounds of advertising. Within a team of 5.2 full-time-equivalent operational officers, two vacant posts is a significant proportion of our resource. We are considering options to recruit and train less experienced/qualified personnel and to use contractors in the interim.

The team has also experienced several issues with the transfer from the previous Accolade IT system to the new IDOX 'Uniform' IT system. The Uniform system has regularly 'gone off line' due to ongoing technical problems with the public access system. We have also been unable to access historical information because large amounts of data are yet to be transferred across from the old system, which has caused the team significant challenges. Additional staff have been recruited in the Information Management team to assist with the transfer of data and we have been assured support will be forthcoming.

Heritage Service

- 3.7 Like Planning Enforcement, the Heritage team has experienced challenges as a result of the regular downtime of the Uniform IT system and the loss of two experienced officers in a small team. Although we have been unable to recruit experienced officers, we have recently appointed two graduate conservation officers who are being mentored and have settled into the team. We have also started a system of 'triaging' of consultation requests from the Development Management team to try to streamline the process and reduce the backlog of work that has built up.

Food and Safety Service

- 3.8 Following the closure of the two offices, members of the team are predominantly working remotely from the head office to avoid unnecessary travel and are trying to maintain productivity and minimise any inefficiency. The new way of working has been hampered to some degree by the lack of available functioning touchdown points in the Mid Suffolk area but this is being addressed and the Food and Safety team are on schedule to complete the planned inspections for the financial year 2017/18.

The Food and Safety service has been involved in an investigation into three linked cases of Legionnaires disease. Sampling of water systems was carried out in conjunction with Public Health England which resulted in no contamination being found at the business that had been implicated. This was clearly a relief to the business in question which is considered by the Food and Safety service to be a compliant operation but it leaves the source of the disease a mystery.

Food Safety training is once again available from the Food and Safety service with details on the councils' website at: <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/business/food-safety/food-safety-training/> Both scheduled and bespoke courses are offered to businesses as well as a specific low cost course for charities.

Licensing Service

- 3.9 The Licensing Sub-Committee meet on 26th February to determine an application for (minor) licence changes at the Limes Hotel, Needham Market. Local resident objections will be heard and an outcome notified once set.

The Licensing Team will be preparing work to set a statutory Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles review. As with the last revision this will be as common as possible between MSDC and BDC (but cannot be joint given that they are separate licensing authorities).

Work will also begin on a common policy update between MSDC and BDC on taxi and private hire work. That work has been waiting for national scheme changes which have been stop-start over the past couple of years. We may see a Private Members' Bill pass to enactment which will influence this area of work.

We are beginning the upcoming event season support (festivals, public outdoor events and temporary activities) which contribute much to the visitor economy and health and wellbeing, as well as showcasing some of our excellent SME businesses in crafts, food and drink, agriculture and leisure/hospitality. The Licensing Team co-ordinate this work, which brings in a range of blue-light and essential services to give event organisers the best support possible to enable safe and successful events.

The newly approved Joint BMS Economic Open for Business Strategy also commits to closer work between regulators, economic development and the business community. This will maximise the support we can offer to our businesses, including important licensed sectors.

Our small team, continues to support a combined per annum total of 900 licensed leisure, club, retail and event premises, 1000 temporary events, 350 licensed vehicles (taxi and private hire) and 400 drivers. The service is continuing to refine itself through agile working learning and business process re-engineering, which will be complemented by progressing the common policy update referred to in paragraph three, above.

Building Control Service

- 3.10 Our Building Control service, following the recruitment of two new surveyors, continues to be the provider of choice for Building Control within the district. The new members of staff have settled in very well and, following a re-organisation of the surveying staff and the areas they cover, we now hope to continue building on the good work from last year.

The Suffolk-wide collaborative working development plan is continuing on from the groundwork laid down last year. Work has now been undertaken, in conjunction with the other Suffolk authorities, to identify key areas in the market place where work is being lost and work is underway to develop a Suffolk-wide business plan to address the issues.

Challenges remain in what is a very competitive environment. Stabilising our position within the market is a priority to ensuring our continued resilience. We have recently secured the work for providing the building control service for the construction of 175 dwellings in Stowupland, an indication of what can be achieved. The work being done with our counterparts elsewhere in Suffolk will be crucial in increasing market share and keeping the standard of new housing within the control of the Council.

Public Realm Service

3.11 Public Realm Transformation

A report was received by Cabinet on 5th March 2018 following final report back from the consultants, WYG. Short-term actions involve focussing on enhanced litter collection on arterial roads and co-ordination of grounds maintenance activity and street cleansing to avoid litter shredding, for example on rural highway verges following flailing by the County Council. The development of an Environment Strategy, that will feature a major contribution from Countryside and Public Realm will help focus the Council's work in this area, which includes ongoing work by the team on enhancing sites for biodiversity, increasing community engagement and exploring the more efficient management of Council assets such as parks and open spaces. A task and finish group will be set up as required to look at performance/quality standards, tree policy/strategy, public conveniences and open space adoption.

3.12 Litter Innovation Fund

Officers from Public Realm contributed to a successful Suffolk-wide bid to the litter innovation fund from central government which will be part of an anti-litter campaign. The money will be used to purchase new bins for designated spots on A roads, literature production, posters, stickers and advertising. A £10k grant will be used to boost funds already available through the Suffolk Fly Tipping Action Group (STAG) that the Council is part of. STAG was first developed to tackle fly tipping but is now involved in general anti-littering as well.