



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

4 February 2021

7.00 pm – 8.07 pm

Remote Meeting

Minutes

3

Membership

Councillor Simon Pickering (Chair)

Councillor George James (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Chas Townley

Councillor Paul Denney

Councillor Trevor Hall

Councillor Nick Hurst

P = Present

A = Absent

P	Councillor Haydn Jones	P
P	Councillor Norman Kay	P
P	Councillor Skeena Rathor	A
P	Councillor Haydn Sutton	P
P	Councillor Jessica Tomblin	P
P	Councillor Tim Williams	A

Officers in Attendance

Strategic Director of Place

Head of Community Services

Community Services Manager

Senior Community Services Officer

Democratic Services & Elections Officer

Other Member(s) in Attendance

Councillor Ken Tucker and Councillor Jim Dewey

EC.037

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Williams.

EC.038

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

EC.039

MINUTES

Councillor Sutton asked for a correction to be applied to the final sentence of paragraph 4 of EC.030 to read as follows: "These aims would need to be managed effectively so as not to have a detrimental impact on the birdlife."

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 3 December 2020 are approved.

In response to a question from Councillor Kay about the Public Rights of Way Officer due to be invited to the next meeting of the Committee, the Strategic Director of Place

clarified that this would be addressed as part of the Cycling and Walking Strategy item at the Environment Committee on 20 April 2021.

EC.040**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were none.

EC.041**UPDATE TO WASTE POLICY**

The Community Services Manager introduced the report which illustrated adaptations to the existing waste collection scheme policies approved in December 2015 and the entirety of the multi-service contract. The adapted supplementary waste policy was to be made fully accessible to the public on the Council's website with full transparency, in line with the approach of many other local authorities. This would afford members of the public direct online access to service expectations and enable self-service, with the aim of minimising the volume of questions currently being handled by the customer contact centre. The current information on the website is sound but the updated policy would go into greater detail and hopefully cover more queries at source.

Councillor Hurst highlighted the additional and replacement containers in section 10 and asked whether the fragility of the containers particularly in cold weather is considered within specifications and if the quality of the plastic was considered. The Community Services Manager confirmed that recycling boxes available on the market were fully researched and the supplier was recently changed to provide a more robust box. Complaints were received about the placement of the bins by crew members but the responsibility of the damaged bins did not lie with collection crews. The life cycle expected from the newly-procured boxes was six to seven years.

In response to a question from Councillor Townley about the availability of recycling box covers within the new policy, the Senior Community Services Officer explained that this was not referenced in the policy but that covers were being posted out upon request. This would be added to the updated policy prior to publication if the Motion was carried.

Councillor Townley further enquired about whether other elements of the service provided by UBICO for the Council could be reported on to the Housing and Environment Committees in future. The Chair highlighted the key areas of general street cleaning and cleaning for tenant services. The Community Services Manager explained that since the source of the majority of contacts was the waste collection service, that was the main focus of reporting at present. Producing reports on the wider range of services was not part of the current work plan but this could be factored in if required. Policies were in place for all services provided by UBICO and a link to these was detailed in the report. The Chair informed of a subsequent report since December 2015 which included changes such as reductions to the amount of cleaning in the Council's offices. The Community Services Manager confirmed that rationalisations had taken place with resultant changes and a link to these would be provided following the meeting.

Councillor Sutton commended the swift replacement of a split light grey bin. This had been replaced within a week to a more robust box in a darker grey colour without cost or hesitation. The Community Services Manager confirmed that a particular batch of bins had been identified as substandard. Due recompense had been received and grey wheelie bins of a much better quality were since being sourced from a new supplier.

Councillor Hall expressed thanks to the waste collection crews for their work. The Chair endorsed this gratitude on behalf of the Committee. Crews had worked in bubbles under particular risk and pressure at the current time and were doing an excellent job, handling a 20% increase in volumes of waste across the district including increased usage of dog bins and instances of fly-tipping and all during a particularly wet winter.

Councillor Jones suggested that the Committee send formal thanks in written form. The Chair confirmed this and added that a small bonus had been paid to staff in recognition of their extra work. Councillor Townley raised the importance of getting the Committee's thanks directly to frontline staff. It was confirmed that compliments were being received from members of the public, including on social media. These were recorded and circulated to crew members via a regular newsletter. It was agreed that the Chair would draft a letter undersigned by all Committee Members and the Community Services Manager would send this on to crew members individually.

The Chair moved the Motion which was seconded by Councillor Sutton. On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

- a) To approve the supplementary Waste Policy for adoption, and**
- b) To delegate authority to the Community Services Manager to finalise any minor alterations to design and formatting.**

EC.042

UBICO CONTRACT EXTENSION

The Community Services Manager introduced the report and highlighted the skew in relation to KPI targets as a result of the pandemic, since residual waste volumes had increased by 20%. Recycling rates were expected to reach the usual 60% rate for the financial year, consistent with prior years. The aim was to work towards all categories in the KPI tracker to reach the green traffic light standard going forward.

Councillor Jones asked about the ongoing management of challenges regarding the depot site. The Chair highlighted that the location and size of the current depot were not optimal and the Community Services Manager informed Members that options were currently being explored.

Councillor Townley asked about contract length, timeframes for the renewal of the agreement and potential exit strategies. The Community Services Manager informed Members of the clause allowing the option of up to a five-year extension. Work was needed in the interim to prepare for this scenario since a new agreement would currently be required come the end of the five-year term. The Chair added that the current UBICO contract has more flexibility than previous contracts which had more fixed elements.

Councillor Hurst enquired whether UBICO were still happy with the terms of the agreement and how much flexibility was there in the financial aspects of the contract to allow for adjustment to waste volumes. The Community Services Manager informed that UBICO and the Section 151 Officer had undertaken a robust process. Additional resources to meet the demands of the pandemic had since been sought, for which Covid-19 financial reporting mechanisms had been used. Room for continued growth with additional rounds would need to be factored in going forward. For the financial year 2022/23 a capital provision for fleet vehicles had already been budgeted for.

The Chair summed up that the working relationship with UBICO was now in excellent shape. The new scheme had been embraced by residents of Stroud District, with far more food waste and recycling collected, exceeding all expectations. The hard work of crew members, Council officers and the UBICO team in building a strong and successful partnership was acknowledged.

The Chair moved the Motion which was seconded by Councillor Denney. On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

- a) To approve the extension of the Ubico agreement for a further 5 years, taking the contractual period to 31st March 2027, and**
- b) To delegate authority to the Head of Community Services in consultation with the Chair of Environment Committee to formally write to Ubico and undertake such other steps necessary to carry out this recommendation.**

EC.043

MEMBER REPORTS

a) Planning Review Panel

The report had been circulated to Committee Members. There were no questions. The Chair raised the possibility of the provisional special meeting on 9 March 2021 for the Local Plan. A further update on this would be given following the meeting.

EC.044

WORK PROGRAMME

The Strategic Director of Place informed of plans to invite representatives from the local Nature Partnership and Highways Authority to join discussion around the Gloucestershire Tree Strategy and the Cycling and Walking Plan items at the April meeting. It was also agreed that a Performance Monitoring meeting with the Strategic Director of Place, Councillor Sutton and Councillor Townley would be scheduled.

EC.045

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chair invited Councillor Jim Dewey to read out his question as follows:

I thank Cllr Pickering for answering some of my concerns about Ash Die Back in Stroud and across Gloucestershire I have seen Gloucester County Council are felling Ash trees along Frocester Hill and elsewhere and understand they are allocating a substantial sum to take down dangerous Ash trees and replanting with other trees. What steps are Stroud District Council taking to educate, inform and work with other private Landowners to identify any trees at risk and have them removed? One of the obstacles is the cost associated with their removal and the number of trees which are diseased. Do we know how many trees are affected? What enforcement measures could be considered to ensure any such trees identified are made safe? This was raised by the Tree Warden at Uley Parish Council Meeting in December 2020 and it seems a valid concern It could also fit in with our CN2030 Strategy by allowing other trees to be grown in their place which are more resilient and able to cope with the Changing Climate. There was also an instance of a car being driven in Uley some years ago on Crawley Hill B4066 which was hit by a falling tree and the occupant was killed so this is potentially a real problem.

The Chair read out the following response:

In regard to risk management the District Council advises landowners to zone their land into: High, medium, and low risk areas. High risk areas include trees adjacent to highways, and trees within falling distance of infrastructure, or areas of high foot fall. Medium levels of risk are associated with footpaths, and low frequency areas of land populated by the public. Low risk relates to trees in the middle of fields or on land that is not accessible to the public. I am not aware of any statistical data that relates to the number of infected trees within the District. The County Council can use section: 154 of The Highways Act 1980 to serve notice on landowners to fell trees adjacent to the highway. The District Council has powers under the Miscellaneous Provisions Act. The County Council have employed an Ash dieback officer to address this problem.

The meeting ended at 8.07pm.

Chair