

Meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 12 March 2019, 10.30 am



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Ashley Baxter
Councillor Michael Cook
Councillor Mike Exton (Chairman)

Councillor Breda Griffin
Councillor Bob Russell
Councillor Brian Sumner

Officers

Strategic Director Commercial and Operations (Gary Smith)
Assistant Director Commercial and Operational (Ian Yates)
Assistant Director Resources (Richard Wyles)
Corporate Operations Lead (Paul Stokes)
Democratic Officer (Lucy Bonshor)

40. Membership

The Committee were notified that Councillor Griffin was substituting for Councillor Trollope-Bellew and Councillor Cook was substituting for Councillor Craft.

41. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Wilkins and the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Dr Moseley.

42. Disclosure of Interests

None disclosed.

43. Action Notes from the meeting held on 22 January 2019

The action notes from the meeting held on 22 January 2019 were noted.

44. Updates from the previous meeting

One Member queried why a decision with regard to street lighting had not been taken by Cabinet last week following the decision that had been made by the Committee. The delay had been due to the lack of financial information which was complex. The issue was on the agenda for the Committee to discuss that day.

45. Environment SK and Grounds Maintenance

The Assistant Director Commercial and Operational gave the Committee an update in relation to the grounds maintenance contract and the new Environment SK Company. The Company had become operational on 1 March 2019. A secure building and site had been leased off Swingbridge Road, Grantham which had excellent links with the A1. Nearly all employees from Glendale had TUPE transferred across to the new Environment SK Company and arrangements such as inductions and health and safety briefings had been carried out. Equipment included vans and a number of cutting machines. Two extra vans had been hired until the new vehicles were ready. Due to the warm February some grass cutting had already taken place. It was stressed that as it was a completely new organisation that had been set up, it was early days and everyone was on a “learning curve”, operationally everything was in place.

Members congratulated the officers for the hard work that had been undertaken to get everything done within such a short timescale.

A Member asked about the flexibility within the contract and gave an example when work had been carried out by the previous contractor outside of the contract in relation to an event at Dysart Park, Grantham. Another example given was the annual festival at Stamford. The Assistant Director Commercial and Operational stated that having flexibility was one of the reasons that the Company had been set up. It was explained that any quality issues or requested service adjustments should be notified to Lynne Lord.

Further discussion followed in connection with tenders and Parish Councils. A question was asked about the number of contracts that EnvironmentSK had won from Parishes. Prices had been given to as many organisations as possible including parishes and private businesses. To date five Parishes had contracts with EnvironmentSK. In providing prices for works, the square footage of the site was needed, in some cases this information was not readily to hand, but where possible officers had gone out to measure sites up to enable a quote to be given.

Further discussion followed in relation to ownership and responsibilities for maintenance of “pieces of grass”. The Grounds Maintenance Supervisor would be able to help with identifying ownership of land, although this was complicated. It was noted that LCC was the responsible body for grass verges

along the highway. It was suggested that a visit to the EnvironmentSK depot may be something that the new Committee may wish to undertake after the May elections.

46. National Waste Strategy - Upcoming consultations

The Assistant Director Commercial and Operational referred to the Key Milestones slide which was reproduced in the agenda pack which looked at forthcoming consultations in relation to the Resources and Waste Strategy. Currently consultations had been released on four main areas and they were:

- Reform of the extended producer responsibility scheme – this looked at manufacturers and businesses in relation to packaging and regulations around this, how businesses paid for the environmental impact of their products.
- The potential to deliver greater consistency of waste recycling – this linked with what was contained in the Lincolnshire Waste Management Strategy looking at consistency in waste recycling collection across Lincolnshire
- Deposit Return Schemes – how a scheme would work
- Plastic packaging tax - the volume of plastic packaging was huge.

The consultations documents ranged in size and officers had not yet had the chance to look at them in great detail. Unfortunately the timing was not great, the consultations concluded on 13 May 2019. It was suggested that priority be given to the consultations in relation to the consistency of waste recycling. Each consultation consisted of on-line surveys with a number of questions. The Lincolnshire Waste Partnership would also be collating a responses to the consultations and this would be tracked to help inform feedback from the individual District Councils. Due to the timeframes it was suggested that the documents be looked at by Officers who would feedback to Members through e-mail. Responses required appeared to be at a high level and officers would be able to help inform the responses having regard to the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership responses. Members felt that the timing of the consultations was bad, but that officers would be best placed to respond to the consultations, circulating responses to Members to keep them informed. Members agreed that the priority consultations should be the ones relating to the consistency of waste recycling.

> Action note

That Officers respond to the consultations, priority to be given to the consistency of waste recycling, responses to be circulated to Members of the Committee.

47. Textile Collection

The Chairman changed the order of the Committee to enable the Street lighting item to be dealt with last on the agenda.

Textile collections had been asked to be put on the agenda by Councillor Baxter. He asked why the Council did not have textile collection banks on Council car parks. He informed the Committee that he had been in consultation with the Salvation Army about having a textile bank situated in Market Deeping. The Salvation Army would deliver, manage and maintain the bank at no cost. The contents were sorted and either sent to third world countries or re sold. He could not see why the Council did not have banks on their car parks. The Chairman suggested that textile banks be put on the work programme. The Member felt that it was something that could be trialled now, for a quick recycling gain. The Assistant Director Commercial and Operational indicated that possible sites could be considered now. Mention was made of two sites in Grantham at two of the large supermarkets but both had dedicated areas for cars to drop clothes off. The Member felt that putting the issue on the work programme was a waste of time and he was disappointed that a decision could not be made sooner. It was felt that more detail was needed on what car park sites could be used (inc considering safety) and it was agreed that the item be included on the work programme for the Committee to look at in the future and that further research on sites was required on being put to the vote this was agreed.

>Action note

That textile banks be included on the future work programme – research on possible sites was required.

48. Prospective Work Programme

Members noted the content of the future work programme with the addition of textile banks/recycling. One Member stated that he had asked for cycling and biodiversity as items for the work programme, neither item had been discussed by the Committee.

49. Street Lighting

A vote was taken on whether the press and public should be excluded during the discussion of the following item due to the commercial sensitivity contained within the presentation. On being put to the vote the exclusion of the press and public was agreed however, Councillor Baxter wished that his vote against the exclusion be recorded.

It was anticipated that, in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public may be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because of the

likelihood that otherwise exempt information, as described in paragraph 3 of the Act (as amended) would be disclosed to the public.

The Strategic Director Commercial and Operations referred to the slides that had been circulated for Members information and the reason that the exclusion had been read out due to the commercial sensitivity of information contained in some of the slides which could affect future procurement.

The context and background of the street lighting issue was contained within the first few slides and the recommendations made by the Committee and the response from Cabinet. The slides showed the current arrangements both for the General Fund contract and also the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) arrangements which had not been included previously but related to circa 300 lights and how many of the total number of lights had been replaced to date with LED lights which totalled 110. Repairs and maintenance of lights under the HRA had been undertaken on an ad hoc basis. The GF replacement was on a three year cycle currently on a rolling contract. A key slide showed options for LED Replacement over a number of years. The slide was not comprehensive and was there to give Members an idea of the different levels of investment and the timescales. Funding options were discussed both recurring and one off funding such as Invest to Save funding. Other considerations including conservation style lights and suitability of columns and brackets were also included. Dimming of lights and automatic fault reporting had not been included within the cost model options. The HRA lights had not been included in the cost modelling as they came from a different financial source however, plans would be made for HRA street lights to take advantage of the arrangements (and financial rates) put in place for GF lights.

The Committees preferred option would be taken forward to the Cabinet Member for Environment for him to consider how the issue would be taken forward.

The Assistant Director Resources indicated that the options showed were modelling examples and it was for the Committee to decide their preferred level of investment. He informed the Committee to have regard to the working assumptions that had been made in making the projections which could be subject to change i.e. utility prices and the costs of the LED bulbs could increase. The models assumed continued investment replacement over future years but this was only an assumption as Council can only approve a budget for the year ahead.

A question was asked about the current provider to which the Strategic Director Commercial and Operations replied. A question was asked about street lights generally and it was stated that the majority of street lights were the responsibility of Lincolnshire County Council, although there were privately owned ones such as those on railway stations and private retail units. The location of the District Council lights were sporadic throughout the district although the main ones were on footways, cycle ways in parks and car parks.

Reference was again made to the commercial sensitivity of the information before Members which the modelling assumptions had been based on. If the proposal was to go forward the contract would go out for procurement, it would be inappropriate for the prices shown within the presentation to become public knowledge as it would prejudice the current contractor and could negatively impact the market submissions. Further discussion followed on the costs of the lamps and market testing.

Reference was made to Salix funding but it had been determined that the payback period of five years did not bring any benefits. Option 5 as shown in the presentation was proposed. A comment was made about costs and a different provider. The Assistant Director Resources assured the Committee that the assumptions made in relation to the options before Members were current. At the time the market is tested the rates may go lower but the rates used were up to date. The issue was to “pump prime” a replacement programme but it was for the Committee to decide their preference. More money spent would result in a quicker return over a shorter period of time, the less money spent would result in a longer period of time.

The Chairman proposed option 3 as the way forward, the Member who had previously proposed option 5 did so again but did not receive a seconder. Option 3 did receive a seconder and on being put to the vote there was an equality of votes for option 3 and votes against option 3 with two abstentions. The Chairman used his casting vote in favour of option 3.

Recommendation:

That option 3 is the Committees preferred option to be taken forward by the Cabinet Member for the Environment.

50. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 12:20pm.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance.