

Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Service Delivery, Performance and Customers

At 9.30 am on Monday 26th July, 2021

Held as a virtual meeting

Present:-

Members

Councillor Lloyd Bunday (Chair)

Councillor Jean Addison

Councillor Annabel de Capell Brooke

Councillor Kirk Harrison

Councillor Bert Jackson

Councillor Richard Levell

Councillor Graham Lawman – Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets

Officers

Lisa Hyde – Director of Transformation

George Candler – Executive Director of Place & Economy

Stephen Phillips – Waste Contracts and Environment Manager

Rebecca Miller – Kier SWP

Andy Leighton – Kier SWP

David Pope – Senior Committee Administrator

11 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ian Jelley.

12 **Members' Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were received.

13 **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 28th June 2021**

RESOLVED that: The Service Delivery, Performance and Customers Executive Advisory Panel agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28th June 2021 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

14 **Notification of requests to address the meeting**

None

15 Recycling Centre Opening Hours

The meeting received a presentation which outlined the current position with regard to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) in North Northamptonshire.

It was noted that North Northamptonshire Council hosted the statutory waste functions of the former County Council, including HWRCs, Residual Waste Disposal and management of closed landfill sites. The HWRC contract was managed by the council with the service provided to West Northamptonshire Council via an Inter Authority Agreement.

The meeting heard that there was a network of nine HWRCs in the county, with four located in North Northamptonshire and five in West Northamptonshire receiving over a million visitors annually combined. In addition, four trade sites were in operation in the county, two in the North and two in the West. Items for re-use were collected at all sites and taken to one of seven off-site re-use outlets.

An overview of delivered service efficiencies was provided, with the meeting noting that changes to HWRC opening hours introduced in February 2015 continued to achieve savings of £450,000 per annum. The HWRC E-Permit Scheme for commercial type vehicles introduced in October 2018 to stop free trade waste disposal also continued to provide savings of £200,000 per annum.

Details of service pressures faced resulting from the Covid pandemic were provided to the meeting, who heard that demand for use of facilities had remained high throughout, with vehicle numbers on occasion being over 100% of that normally seen pre-Covid. Despite this, total HWRC waste tonnages had decreased by almost 12% from 2019/20 to 2020/21. Social distancing measures required by government guidance had resulted in fewer vehicles being able to unload at any one time, consequently, at peak times, queues of vehicles had to wait to access the HWRCs which impacted the highway. The lifting of social distancing regulations on 19th July 2021 had allowed a return to pre-pandemic operations, although this position would be kept under constant review.

Aside from a short period of closure during the initial nationwide lockdown, a full service had been in operation at HWRCs throughout the pandemic, with additional costs of £30,000 accrued for signage, restarting the service, initial Traffic Management and monitoring across all sites. A further cost to the service of £55,200 resulted from the provision of time-limited additional opening hours being introduced between 29th March and 30th June 2021.

Opportunities for transition and transformation across the service were provided to the meeting, who noted that service budgets were having to be managed alongside increasing demand and costs, although the move to unitary authority status offered an opportunity to consider the issue of waste management from collection to disposal and to optimise waste infrastructure. It was noted that economies of scale could benefit the council if waste collection and disposal was brought together, and this would form a significant piece of work going forward.

Following the presentation, members asked a number of questions in regard to:

- Queuing in and around HWRC sites, with reference to the negative impact on local highways, especially at the Rushden and Corby sites.

- Construction of new HWRC sites
- Layout of sites
- Improved education/communication with residents to ensure the correct recycling materials were placed in the correct bin
- Policing of non-county residents using HMRWs in Northamptonshire
- Income levels for recyclates, noting the disposal cost to the council of green waste

16 Maintenance of Highway Network

The meeting received a presentation from Rebecca Miller, Head of Customer and Communications for Kier SWP, holders of the integrated services contract for highways until March 2022.

It was heard that the contract had been in operation since March 2008, with an annual value of £45million. This was an all-inclusive contract to provide all services including highway maintenance, winter service and infrastructure management. The contract was currently going through a re-procurement exercise with Kier and SWP due to bid separately given the scope of the services.

The meeting heard that the asset value for highways in the county was £6 billion across a road network of 2664 miles and a footway and cycleway network of 2079 miles. In addition, there were over 1800 miles of Rights of Way and bridleways to be maintained within the contract.

An update on the impact of the Covid pandemic on the service was provided, with the meeting noting that usage of the network had altered due to lockdowns, with significant numbers of people working from home and the move towards alternative forms of transport. It was further noted that the service was beginning to feel the impact of global material shortages and this situation was being monitored.

Details of stakeholder engagement and communication were provided, with the meeting hearing that from a highways defect perspective, the Street Doctor platform was the best method to report issues as it provided a clear record of reports and allowed for feedback to be provided to those making reports. Numerous other communication channels were detailed, with proactive and reactive press releases, web pages and promotion of services through traditional and social media all being utilised by the service. A work programme was circulated weekly to councillors to advise of highways works across the county and a new, regular newsletter with highways-related articles and updates would be circulated to members. Councillor engagement sessions would be held quarterly at depots across the county and further information in relation to these would be supplied in the near future.

An overview of the various highway surface treatments employed by the service was provided to the meeting. Potholes were a major issue for residents and such defects were considered for repair within criteria set by the council, with a view to undertaking the longest-term repair possible.

It was heard that innovation was constantly sought to improve the way the service operated. A multi-disciplinary and collaborative Innovation and Best Practice Group had been created in 2016, with over 50 ideas being forwarded to operational teams for implementation. One idea currently being monitored was the introduction of electric

gritting vehicles, however given the size of the road network in the county existing vehicles did not have sufficient battery mileage available to make them a viable addition to the fleet. There remained an intention to move towards electric vehicles across the fleet to support the council's sustainability strategy.

It was heard that a project to have all utility location plans made available online was in progress. Approximately 40,000 applications were made annually to work on utilities under the highways network and better coordination would allow repairs to be completed more efficiently. Further areas for innovation moving forward included 3D mapping, drone use for Rights of Way inspections, highways inspections using camera-mounted vehicles and use of Combi Drainage vehicles for more efficient gulley maintenance.

The winter service was noted as being an extremely important part of the service, with seven weather stations across the county helping to provide accurate information to enable route-based forecasting. Approximately 43% of the county's road network would be routinely gritted when required between October and April. Communication with the public was vital, not only detailing gritting locations but to provide advice on safe driving and how people could assist themselves using grit bins.

Members asked questions in relation to:

- Pothole repair policy and repair longevity
- The number and cost of insurance claims relating to potholes
- Delays to the removal of traffic signals following the conclusion of works
- Public perception to road layout alterations, including traffic signals and junctions
- Inaccuracy of dates on signage relating to traffic works
- Increasing the public awareness of the Street Doctor service

17 Executive Forward Plan and Panel Work Programme

Members received the Executive Forward Plan and the work programme for the panel and noted upcoming items for both.

The Council's draft Corporate Plan would be considered by the next round of Executive Advisory Panels, with the panel reviewing aspects of customer service delivery and performance alongside the vision, strategic objectives, priorities, actions, outcomes and targets of the plan.

18 Exempt Items

None

19 Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 11.32 am

Chair

Date