

Nottingham City Council

Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on 4 October 2023 from 2.00 pm - 3.42 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Imran Jalil (Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor AJ Matsiko
Councillor Kevin Clarke

Absent

Councillor Faith Gakanje-Ajala
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Andrew Rule

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Mary Lester - Interim Director of Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Corral Jenkins - Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment, Waste Services and Parks
Nancy Barnard - Head of Governance.
Catherine Ziane-Pryor – Governance Officer

1 Change to Membership

Noted that Councillor Zafran Khan is no longer a member of the Committee.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved for Councillor Neghat Khan to be Vice-Chair for the 2023/24 municipal year.

3 Apologies for absence

Councillor Andrew Rule (leave), Councillor Kevin Clark substituting
Councillor Nayab Patel (work commitments)

4 Declarations of Interests

None.

5 Committee Terms of Reference

Nancy Barnard, Head of Governance presented the Committee's terms of reference which outline the purpose, composition and remit of the Committee which had been established by Full Council in May 2023. She explained that the City Council's revised scrutiny structure is largely mapped to align with City Council departments and portfolio holder remits to assist in strengthening relationships and support advancement of committee member expertise.

The report also outlined the Scrutiny Protocol which sets out the agreed principles to which scrutiny operates in Nottingham.

Resolved to note:

- 1) the committee's Terms of Reference for municipal year 2023/24;**
- 2) that Article 11 – Overview and Scrutiny, of the Constitution sets out the rules within which the committee must operate;**
- 3) that the committee and individual committee members should operate in line with the agreed Overview and Scrutiny Protocol.**

6 Municipal Resources and Waste Strategy 2023-2050 Implementation

The committee considered the report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer which and a presentation by Councillor Corral Jenkins, Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment, Waste Services and Parks, and Mary Lester, Director of Neighbourhood Services on the implementation plans for the Municipal Resources and Waste Strategy 2023 to 2050. A copy of the presentation is issued with the initial publication of these minutes.

Further to the information provided in the presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- a) Waste is collected from 31,950 properties across the city every day. This represents the highest citizen interaction rate of any service within the city, and whilst Resident Services receives a high number of complaints, this counts for less than 1% of the citizens served;
- b) The presentation outlined recent changes to the Environment Act, including the requirement for the City, which currently only recycles one quarter of its waste, to significantly improve its recycling rate and requirements to collect and recycle food waste;
- c) Household waste recycling is collected with a presumption of a small percentage of contamination, but if that percentage is exceeded, the council is fined, and so collection operators do not accept obviously contaminated household recycling;
- d) Additional side waste (once bins are full), is a challenge and impacts on productivity by increasing the time necessary to complete the round. The amount of waste fluctuates throughout the year;
- e) A food waste recycling collection trial is being undertaken in Berridge Ward. In one week, 1.2 tonnes of food waste was collected, whilst the weight of residential waste collected was reduced only 2 tonnes. It is possible that a result of the trial citizens were more aware of their food wastage and this influenced their habits;
- f) The most effective collection of recycling is to achieve clean waste at source, which requires residents to appropriately separate waste. There are several

different approaches taken by different councils as to how waste is separated and collected, but consideration is given to the balance of multiple separate collection bins, and the potential multiple storage asked of householders when space, such as for terraced housing, may be limited.

Responses to members questions were provided as follows:

- g) Contaminant rates are now benchmarked and where there is significant and/or persistent contamination of recycling materials, it is investigated, and residents approached in person to explain the issue and try to resolve the issues at source;
- h) Previously there were issues around mistaken recycling of contaminated food packaging, such as pizza boxes, but with new cleaning and processing techniques and the broader use of greaseproof packaging, this is not such a significant issue and such items can now be recycled;
- i) Different models of waste and recycling collection are being explored across the city, including communal sites, mobile recycling and the logistics of pop-up sites;
- j) The domestic food waste trial will last one year and the wider implications considered, including for trade food waste, for which recycling data is collated separately;
- k) It is agreed that more effective communications with citizens over waste and recycling are required, including specifying the reasons why a recycling bin may have been rejected due to contamination. Councillors can support the work by promoting proper recycling to their communities;
- l) The achievement of other core cities being closely monitored to see which models of waste and recycling collection work well, and can be effectively adapted to meet the needs of this city;
- m) The need to recycle packaging and particularly plastics, to meet the new legislative requirements, is challenging as achievement is measured in weight and not volume. It is noted that the council also receives income from recycled materials based on weight only;
- n) Supermarkets need to respond to the pressures, not only around packaging disposal, but also food waste;
- o) The introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging and plastics will also be challenging for the Council to implement and enforce, but it is anticipated that trading standards may be involved;
- p) The Student Living Strategy will include an element of engaging with students to inform and encourage recycling and appropriate waste disposal;

- q) Following a period of substantial staff movement, the Service now has enough drivers and a stable workforce. The next priority is to address ongoing issues with residential waste, and then bulky waste collection and the prevention of fly tipping. The reduction in the Street Cleaning Team has had a knock-on effect;
- r) Beyond the expected seasonal influence, the volume of green waste is also influenced by changing weather patterns and so more flexibility may be required in the future;
- s) To achieve the carbon neutral ambition by 2028, Nottingham City needs to accelerate progress, including within its own buildings and operations. This may include recycling points which require further separation of materials, but the type and use of the fleet will be considered as part of the total review;
- t) The ability and capacity to support enforcement duties will be closely examined and potentially revised, along with improved communications to citizens to emphasise increased enforcement activity;

Resident Services do visit schools, with the aim to educate children regarding litter, waste and recycling, but with reduced funding, it is a concern that this, along with other educational approaches, may not be possible to continue and stronger enforcement may have to be the way forward;

- u) Progress on implementing the strategy will be closely monitored and regular updates provided to the Portfolio Holder and this Committee;
- v) The City Council has a statutory duty to collect and dispose of garden waste. Although collected by the Council, it is then taken to an independent company for processing and turning into compost, for which the council can make a small income, and has the opportunity to buy back compost at a much-reduced price;
- w) On occasions when waste cannot be incinerated at Eastcroft, such as periods of maintenance, waste is taken to a commercial recycling site at Colwick where it is processed and where possible, materials salvaged, but this results in a significant cost to the Council;
- x) There are no feasible sites within the City boundaries for the council to consider the establishment of a landfill site from which to harvest methane which could in turn be sold on. It is unlikely that there would ever be such a proposal;
- y) Members should be assured that the City Council does achieve value for money with its waste collection and recycling, but strives to further improve services;
- z) There are ongoing challenges regarding the historic design of the some areas of the City, particularly around terraced housing and the capacity to store multiple waste and recycling bins, and multiple occupation properties where

there is often a strong culture around take away food which has several waste and recycling implications.

Committee members commented as follows:

- aa) Clearer communications on recycling need to be provided to citizens, potentially including improved pictorial information specific to each type of bin, which can be understood by all communities, regardless of language and literacy. Face to face communication is also extremely valuable. Some areas within the city have a big churn of residents, so information and education programmes need to be ongoing;
- bb) Councillors are aware of the high level of ongoing complaints received regarding bins being missed;
- cc) The Council needs to work collaboratively with citizens to gain their support for the requirements, rather than just taking an enforcement approach. Citizens should be made more broadly aware of how contamination of recycling collections impacts on the council, including the rejection of an entire recycling materials collection, and potential for fines, potentially with street/area incentives;
- dd) The city has not performed well with commercial trade waste recycling which needs to be reviewed and addressed to restore confidence in the recycling culture;
- ee) The existing 'Clean Champions' network could be used to engage community groups and individual citizens and help to encourage recycling and promote a positive recycling culture. If willing, there is also potential champions to help monitor waste recycling, gather information, and provide clarity and guidance on what is required of our citizens;
- ff) When residents must wait 2 to 4 weeks for a bulky waste collection, this has resulted in localised fly tipping. This behaviour needs to be strongly deterred as where there is rubbish, more rubbish will appear;
- gg) Since the Covid pandemic, more people are working from home, which has resulted in an increase of domestic waste;
- hh) Utilising commercial companies' Corporate Social Responsibility ethos to support the council's waste and recycling strategy, potentially with some form of charter to which they could publicly commit would be beneficial, particularly the supermarkets who are likely to be receptive;
- ii) Stronger enforcement could be considered as other local authorities prosecute more often and for more reasons;
- jj) The majority of issues are caused by adults and not young people and children. Some citizens believe they can get away with fly tipping, particularly on private land, and often do. Further work needs to be done to address this and the fly tipping culture;

- kk) One of the most common complaints to Councillors is missed bin collections. The root of this problem needs to be identified and resolved as it has an additional impact on resources. If citizens don't understand what is required of them, for instance more careful segregation of recycling waste, clear clarification must be provided;
- ll) Without the opportunity to incinerate domestic waste at the Eastcroft incinerator, which then generates electricity and feeds the District Heating Scheme, the council would be liable for substantial environmental penalty charges for sending waste to landfill, but more attention needs to be paid to materials that can be recycled and from which the council can generate income.

Resolved

- 1) to note the progress to date in implementing the Waste Strategy;**
- 2) To make the following recommendations to the Portfolio Holder:**
 - i. To explore further the potential for temporary/ pop-up recycling points in communities**
 - ii. To explore how the green champions and other community networks could contribute to increasing recycling rates and reducing contamination**
 - iii. To review the balance between bulky waste collection and fly tipping clearance times;**
 - iv. To approach companies regarding their social and corporate responsibility requirements to establish whether they might be able to support waste issues and explore the potential, for a Nottingham waste charter with businesses;**
 - v. To make best use of Ward Councillors in consultations and community engagement.**

7 Work Programme

Following the informal discussions with committee members at the introductory session, a draft schedule of work was proposed, with best value reviews scheduled for the next meeting.

With reference to the Scrutiny Prioritisation Process, members were invited to suggest topics they would like to address.

A recommendation tracker has been introduced to ensure that responses and updates are provided.

Resolved to note the draft work programme.

8 Future Meeting Dates

Resolved to meet at 2.00pm on the following dates:

8 November 2023

6 December 2023

7 February 2024

6 March 2024

3 April 2024