

Operational Services Cabinet Committee

Tuesday, 8 June 2021

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Gurbax Singh (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Conrad Broadley
Gurdip Ram Bungar
Gary Harding
Nirmal Khabra
Leslie Pearton
Alan Ridgers
Brian Sangha
Frank Wardle
John Burden

Stuart Alford	Assistant Director (Environment)
Mark Lees	Regulatory Services Manager
Clare Reed	Senior Environmental Health Officer
Ciara Ferguson	Committee Services Support Assistant (Minutes)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Lee Croxton (Chair) and Cllr John Burden attended as his substitute.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 24 March 2021 were signed by the Vice-Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Presentation on Food Hygiene and Safety

The Committee received a presentation from the Senior Environmental Health Officer, on the work completed by the Commercial Team regarding food safety.

The presentation can be viewed on the link below:

<https://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/documents/s63033/Presentation%20on%20Food%20Hygiene%20and%20Safety.pdf>

Following questions from the Committee; the Senior Environmental Health Officer highlighted the following:

- Food businesses are not normally informed when an inspection will take place. During lockdowns, some visits were announced as, for example, inspections were taking place at residential homes which required the inspector to take a lateral flow test before entering the premises.
- Inspections will still be taking place on the physical site of the food premises. The technical advancements will make the on-site inspections easier as inspectors will be able to have the inspection document pre-loaded on a laptop or handheld device so that information can be input on site. Moreover, guidance and registration forms can be easily accessed by the inspectors to show to the food businesses during the visit.
- In regards to some of the examples showcased during the presentation and the timescale it can take for these issues to occur, the Senior Environmental Health Officer reassured Members that they were old photographs that were extraordinary examples. Most businesses in Gravesham are rated 4 or 5 and the businesses which do not meet these high standards (3 or lower) are inspected every six months as they are higher risk premises.
- Following a question about how quickly the Commercial team will handle the backlog of cases caused by the pandemic, the Senior Environmental Health Officer explained that the team is prioritising inspections in order of high risk to low risk. The officer also explained that 107 of the backlog of cases are new food businesses, a lot of which are in the low risk category as they are domestic cooking businesses selling cupcakes, cookies etc.

Members noted the contents of the presentation.

5. Update on recent Waste Sector Government Consultations

The Assistant Director (Operations) provided the Committee with an update on the current Government Consultations which relate to the Waste & Recycling Service.

The presentation can be viewed on the link below:

<https://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/documents/s63029/Update%20on%20Current%20Waste%20Related%20Government%20Consultations.pdf>

In response to Members questions, the Assistant Director (Operations) highlighted the following:

- In regards to the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), a Member asked if the price of the deposit was known. The Assistant Director (Operations) explained that at the moment a price range of 10p to 40p is being considered. It was also mentioned that a concern for the DRS would be the potential for bin raiding.
- Following a question regarding the deposits which are not claimed back through the DRS, it was explained to Members that the unclaimed deposits would be re-invested into the scheme and used by the System Administrator as funding for other environmental projects.
- As part of its response to the Consistency Consultation the Council will provide strong feedback to the Government that all the schemes within the consultant especially Garden Waste should be fully funded to cover loss of income and service

delivery costs. Currently all authorities in Kent have a chargeable garden waste scheme and would be affected financially if the Government did not cover the entirety of the costs.

- In regards to a question about the accessibility for the waste bins and services for flats, the officer reassured Members that they are already considering ways for how to introduce food waste collections for flats. Moreover, guidance on new builds is that food waste has to be included and developers are required to pay for the correct waste bins.
- Following a question on the exportation of Gravesham waste abroad; the Assistant Director (Operations) explained that a small proportion of Gravesham's plastic is sent abroad. This waste is well audited in order to ensure it goes to the correct place and every year an End Destination Charter is published to document where all the waste from Kent goes.

Members noted the contents of the update.

6. Corporate Performance Report: Q4 2020-21

The Committee were presented with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as introduced within the council's Corporate Plan, for Quarter Four 2020-2021 (January to March 2021).

The officers went through each policy commitment in turn and provided an update on what activity had and/or would be delivered in order to successfully realise the policy commitments. The following comments were made by the officers during the update:

PI 3 – The increase seen on the chart represents an additional 8 reported incidents within a three month period, some of which are wrongly reported through the system and some of which represent slips and falls in the workplace.

PI 4 – The figures are distorted due to some inspections not taking place due to the Covid-19 lockdowns; when a food business has missed an inspection it is classed as 'non broadly compliant' therefore explaining the dip in the chart. The gradual dip does not therefore necessarily reflect a dip in food safety standards.

PI 9 – There has been an increase in the residual waste collected per household, this is a result of national lockdowns which have caused people to be at home more and an increase in home decorating. As there has been an increased demand for bulky waste collections, frontline staff are working every other Saturday to keep up with the demand.

PI 11 – There has been a slight increase in graffiti across the borough. The council are working on getting different bodies to take responsibility for graffiti on their assets, for example passing the removal process on to Network Rail if the graffiti is on their bridge.

PI 39 – The council's service is more efficient now as inspectors carry iPads when they visit playgrounds which they can then use to load all the documents from the independent body inspection. This reduces the need to print off loads of paper and makes the process quicker.

Following questions from the Committee; the Assistant Director (Operations) and Regulatory Services Manager highlighted the following:

- A question was asked in regards to PI 39 and whether all the playgrounds had passed the inspections, Members were informed that there were no high risk equipment found in any of the Gravesham playgrounds and therefore all playgrounds passed their inspections.
- Regarding PI 5 and the quality of responses received by residents from the Environmental Protection team, the Regulatory Services Manager reassured Members that quality is not being sacrificed in order to respond within five working days.
- The majority of shopping parades are visited seven days a week by waste removal services and generally there are no issues of overflowing bins and Bigbelly bins have been moved to Perry Street and Valley Drive to help reduce littering. The Assistant Director (Operations) is now looking at digital solutions such as collecting data to establish when a bin was emptied and how full it was when it was emptied, this would help with efficient bin emptying schedules. Furthermore, the concept of litter bin sensors is being considered for the rural areas as some bins in the rural area do not get as much usage. Therefore, a sensor could reduce the amount of times a bin gets unnecessarily emptied and a sensor would establish whether a bin is in a good location for usage.

Members noted the information contained within the report.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm