

## Overview Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 13 October 2022

7.30 pm

### Present:

Cllr Jordan Meade (Chair)  
Cllr Baljit Hayre (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:        John Caller  
                         Sarah Gow  
                         Leslie Hills  
                         Lyn Milner  
                         Emma Morley  
                         Diane Morton  
                         Frank Wardle

**Note:** Cllr Ejaz Aslam was also in attendance.

Stuart Alford            Assistant Director (Operations)  
Ben Clarke              Committee Services Officer (Minutes)  
Chloe Taylor            Committee Services Officer

### 7. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gurjit Bains and Cllr Gurdip Bungar; Cllr Frank Wardle and Cllr John Caller appeared as their respective substitutes.

### 8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 9 June 2022 were signed by the Chair.

### 9. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Jordan Meade declared an 'other interest' in item 5 as he was the Chair of Gravesham's Street Pastors Group.

### 10. Scrutiny Topic Review Report - Review of Street Cleanliness, Littering, and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough

The Committee were presented with the topic review report for the Street Cleanliness, Littering, and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough. It was recommended that Members approved the topic review report at appendix one and agree to its submission to Cabinet for further consideration.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Topic Review, Cllr Baljit Hayre, outlined the key points from the report and explained the following:

- In September 2019, the Overview Scrutiny Committee selected the subject of Street Cleanliness, Littering, and Fly-tipping for a topic review.
- The start of the topic review was delayed due to Covid -19, which meant the Street Cleansing and Enforcement Team had developed significantly since the beginning of the topic review.

The review commenced at the start of 2022, where three recommendations have been proposed as a result. Cllr Hayre guided Members through each of the groups three recommendations which were listed below:

1. Introduction of a business scheme similar to Street Champions
2. Roll out the digital version of Duty of Care Training
3. Funding for Days of Action Programme

The Committee gave their thanks to the Officers who had dedicated their time and effort to the topic review.

The Chair also asked that the Committee's thanks be passed to the Street Cleansing Team for their hard work.

The Assistant Director (Operations) fielded questions from members and explained the following:

- Regarding The Days of Action Programme, there was a funding gap of about £5,000 per each Borough Council in Kent Council. This can be covered through existing budgets.
- Regarding the high attendance rate for the digital Duty of Care Training in 2020, the Waste Team reached out and engaged with many local businesses to increase the take up which neighbouring local authorities didn't. There were no statistics for uptake of the training since the original training session as it hadn't been rolled out to businesses yet. Statistics on attendance to future training sessions will be made available to Members.
- After a question about the Business litter picking scheme, the Assistant Director (Operations) states that a trial scheme could be created, and businesses engaged to see if they would be willing to join the scheme and pick up rubbish outside their shops which if successful, could be progressed further. There were a number of responsible business owners in the Borough, and it was likely that a large number already picked up rubbish outside their businesses of their own accord.
- A proposal was being drafted for lockers to be given to the Street Cleansing and Waste Teams; a location for those lockers had been identified. The previously broken shower had been repaired and was now suitable for staff use.

- With regard to Youth Council involvement in the local environment, they were invited to a meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Board last year and made some excellent contributions to the meeting. The Waste Projects Officer and the Communications Manager had been in contact with local schools and delivered presentations on the environment/litter etc. Further contact and meetings have been had with the Youth Council with the hope was that engaging with the 16–24-year-old range would encourage them to take better care of the local environment and assist the Council with reaching a wider group of young people.
- The Assistant Director (Operations) expressed an ambition to get all litter and dog waste bins mapped out on the Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) website, where residents would be able to locate their closest bin, as well as report those that were full or damaged.
- Kent County Council (KCC) and GBC were working to strengthen their relations to improve fly-tipping removal times and weed/overgrown vegetation control around the Borough. The Assistant Director (Operations) assured members that KCC would be held accountable for any work that had not been completed and at a senior level the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive had built up a relationship with the Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport at KCC.
- The Assistant Director noted Members desire for an emphasis to be made on increased enforcement of dog fouling and clearing overgrown vegetation within the Borough. He agreed to discuss the matters with his team but advised Members that it was difficult to catch dog foulers in the act and the biggest deterrent for dog fouling was society not accepting it and members of the public reporting incidents. Discussions and also been held with KCC about the future of weed sprays and its effect on climate change.
- The Assistant Director (Operations) was unsure if evidence of dog fouling had ever been gathered from a ring doorbell or something similar; Members were advised that a common difficulty would be identifying the offender.
- It was essential to promote the message to the public that they should be checking waste removal companies have the proper license before paying them as illegitimate companies would often fly tip the rubbish and the original owner could end up with a fine. A consultation on the future of the license in its current form was held nationally in the past year. The consultation suggested that the process to acquire a waste carrier licence would become more stringent with a requirement to receive training from a responsible body; currently, companies only had to fill in a form and pay a small fee for a licence.
- The Assistant Director (Operations) had heard of the 'Love Junk' app, which could be used to hire companies (with waste carrier license) to remove waste, however he had not used it.
- Residents could check the GBC website for a link to the Environment Agency website (as the Licensing Body), where a list of licensed waste carriers could be found.
- Members praised the work of the Gravesham Street Pastors Group who had been out litter-picking in the borough. The Assistant Director (Operations) voiced that GBC was happy to work with any group who wish to go out litter-picking, and they could contact the Council to be provided with the right equipment.

- Regular updates on street cleansing were taken to meetings of the Operational Services Cabinet Committee; the new Street Cleansing Policy was due to be submitted to the next meeting in November.
- The Assistant Director (Operations) agreed to contact North West Kent College about their students littering and see if they would agree to work with the Council to keep the Lion Garage roundabout clean.
- The vaccination programme for the Street Cleansing and Enforcement Team was being discussed corporately with HR. No serious injuries have been reported for quite some time.

In response to several complaints by Members regarding lack of progress with KCC, the Chair implored Members to contact himself or another County Councillor who could liaise with KCC officers on behalf of Gravesham.

A number of suggestions were made by the Committee:

- The Council should engage with local businesses to encourage shop owners to pick up any rubbish outside their shop fronts.
- Rochester Road was full of overgrown vegetation and needed to be cleared by KCC
- A message should be relayed from Communications advising the public what a waste carriers licence looked like and the website they could go to check if a company held a valid waste carrier license.
- Any Member who encountered fly-tipping or an area with a lot of litter should report it immediately as the Assistant Director (Operations) and his team were very quick at turning the affected area around.

Members approved the topic review report at appendix one and agreed to its submission to Cabinet for further consideration.

## **11. Call ins**

The Chair advised that there weren't any calls in as the majority of reports that went to the previous meeting of Cabinet were largely for information only. The Chair was keen to call in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and had received assurances that in the near future another report on the UKSPF would be submitted to Cabinet with recommendations.

### **Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 20:28pm.