

Operational Services Cabinet Committee

Thursday, 24 November 2022

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Lee Croxton (Chair)
Cllr Gurbax Singh (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Ejaz Aslam
Gurdip Bungar
Nirmal Khabra
Les Hoskins
Leslie Pearton
Christina Rolles
Frank Wardle

Stuart Alford	Assistant Director (Operations)
Elizabeth Thornton	Service Manager (Property & Regulatory Services)
Mark Lees	Regulatory Services Manager
Joel Simons	Waste Projects and Compliance Officer
Chloe Taylor	Committee Services Officer (Minutes)

8. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Broadley, Cllr Harding, Cllr Sangha (Cllr Hoskins, Cllr Aslam and Cllr Rolles substituted) and Cllr Ridgers.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 07 June 2022, were agreed and signed by the Chair.

10. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

11. Street Cleansing Policy

The Assistant Director (Operations) and the Waste Projects and Compliance Officer presented Members of the Committee with a report that outlined the proposed Street Cleansing Policy for comment and consideration. It was advised that Members consider the report and recommend its adoption. The following key points were highlighted from the report:

- Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) had a Waste Collection Policy and therefore created a Street Cleansing Policy to outline the expectations around Street Cleaning. This included what is GBC responsibility and what is not, and ensuring transparency is kept with the public and with Members.

- This tied in with a recent Scrutiny Topic Review titled, 'Street Cleanliness, Littering and Fly-tipping within the Borough'.
- The Policy was formed under the Environmental Protection Act, which stated the council had a duty to keep the streets clear of litter and remove fly-tipped waste on public land.
- Section 5.1 outlined the hours of operation. The Waste Projects and Compliance Officer explained to Members that the Town Centre had an increased regime.
- Section 5.5.6 detailed a useful list of contacts to report issues such as graffiti on post boxes that can also be found on the GBC website.

Following questions from Members, the Assistant Director (Operations) and the Waste Projects and Compliance Officer explained the following:

- It was discussed that lorries carrying waste should have a protective sheet to prevent litter from coming out of the vehicle. The Assistant Director (Operations) advised Members that he would explore the legal standing and look at what enforcement actions could be taken. Any incidents should be reported to the Assistant Director (Operations).
- The A2 and M25 fall under the responsibility of Highways England. The carriage way, litter and all furniture on the slip roads and the responsibility of National Highways. However, the A289 falls under the responsibility of GBC, and it's not an easy road to clean. This often included partial/full closure at night and costs between £5,000 and £6,000. Highspeed roads were discussed across Kent on how they can be maintained more often and how they can prevent littering on these roads.
- When weeds were green, they were the responsibility of Kent County Council (KCC). When weeds were brown, they were classed as litter, and this was the responsibility of GBC, but both parties work together.
- There was discussion around holding a Member training session after the Local Elections, with a presentation on direct services and having a user guide.
- Following a Members query on whether the policy could be more user friendly, the Assistant Director (Operations) explained that the policy followed the corporate template. However, he agreed to take this away for consideration.
- The removal of graffiti will be done as quickly as possible, with an aim of 5 working days. When the graffiti was on a private building, they would seek written permission from the owner before proceeding.
- The Town Centre alley ways were regularly washed down with disinfectant, but Members were assured that this would be looked at further.
- The Assistant Director (Operations) advised Members he would have a discussion with the communications team regarding future promotion of the service.
- Companies that used signs on pallets placed on the pavement as a form of advertisement would have these removed.
- Following concerns raised in Rochester Road, Gravesend, Members were advised informative letters on refuse collection would be distributed.

- Whilst foxes had previously been an issue within the Borough, it had dramatically improved when wheely bins were implemented. However, some instances had occurred since. When this happened, the street cleaning crew were expected to clear what they could.

Resolved: Taking into account comments fed back by Committee Members, that the policy be agreed and formally adopted with the exception that consideration be given to making the policy more user friendly.

12. Contaminated Land Strategy Review Report

The Regulatory Services Manager presented Members of the Committee with the draft revised Contaminated Land Strategy and the proposed consultation methodology, and explained the following:

- GBC had a duty to publish a written strategy that was subject to periodic review. It was thought that five years would be best practice. However, since its adoption in 2013 there had been no change to legislation, and as such GBC's policy had not been reviewed for almost ten years.
- Updates and improvements were now required to processes and mapping data in order to be able to support our statutory duty to inspect and prioritise contaminated land.
- The proposed tasks could be covered within the existing budget and would help to assist Officers by giving them reliable information.

Following questions from Members, the Regulatory Services Manager outlined the following:

- Leap Environmental Ltd were the only consultancy agency they engaged with as they were the dedicated Contaminated Land Consultants and had previously been involved with the process meaning they had access to the mapping system.
- The Regulatory Services Manager advised Members that would aim to commence the consultation the week following the date of the meeting.
- They intended to expand the consultation period from four week to between six and eight weeks in order to accommodate the Christmas period.
- Gravesham had a substantial amount of contaminated land due to its industrial history, but a lot had been made safe. This was often addressed through planning applications where the team looked at the relevant data, provided comments back to the planners and if the land was contaminated, the relevant conditions would be applied to require the developers to remediate the site.
- The total cost of the policy would be spread across two-years, meaning no additional budget would be needed.
- The consultation process was set out in section 3 of the report.

Item 8 on the agenda made reference to Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) partnerships. The Regulatory Service Manager agreed for them to be consulted.

The Regulatory Service Manager made note of the recommendations proposed by Members. Following any amendments made to the strategy, the portfolio holder was to formally approve the Contaminated Land Strategy without further need to report back to the Cabinet Committee.

13. Alley Clearance Project Update

The Assistant Director (Operations) presented Members of the Committee with an update on the Alley Clearance Project, and outlined the following key points from the report:

- The Alley Clearance Project was a one off, one year project that funded a deep clean for targeted alleys, both private and council owned within the borough. Alleys that were known fly-tipping destinations were gated and restricted vehicle access.
- The alleys were selected based on previous complaints, member reports and the teams experience with alleys within the borough.
- At the time of the meeting, nine alleys had been completed, leaving nine to complete.
- The project budgeted for one electric vehicle. However, due to supply issues, the delivery had been delayed and was no expected until January 2023.

Following questions from Members, the Assistant Director (Operations) explained that:

- The project covered the least maintained alleys across the borough.
- The alleys located in Forge Lane and Villa Road in Higham would be looked into.
- More alleys could be added to the project, but there was no guarantee that these would be completed before the project ended in March 2023.
- The residents located near the chosen alleys were informed via a letter that this would be a one-off clean.
- Land registry and research determined alleys that were private, and therefore maintenance would be down to the residents.
- Members thought this was a very worthwhile scheme.

The Committee noted the report.

14. Corporate Register of Partnerships - Operational Services

The Assistant Director (Operations) presented Members of the Committee with a report to inform them of the council's involvement in partnerships that were within the remit of the committee.

The council had four partnerships, all of which GBC had been long standing members of. They all had relevance to what they do as a service and regularly benefitted from what came out of them.

The Committee noted the report.

15. Corporate Performance Report: Q2 2022-23

The Regulatory Services Manager and the Assistant Director (Operations) presented Members of the Committee with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as introduced within the council's Corporate Plan, for quarter two 2022-23 (July to September). The following key points were highlighted from the report:

- PI 3 remained low and was a positive indicator of how safe premises in Gravesham were.
- PI 4 was the highest it had been in three and a half years, showing that more Officers have been able to get out to inspections following the covid-19 pandemic. The percentage was based on those scheduled for inspection, and those premises who were found to be compliant with a score of three or above.
- PI 5 has seen a slight drop, but still remained high despite large requests.
- PI 8 has dropped due to a decrease in garden and food waste. It was thought that with the cost-of-living crisis residents were being more mindful about food waste.
- The flat recycling scheme was working to get more flats to recycle, and a meeting had taken place with Gravesham Churches Housing to work on their recycling.

Members discussed the success of Street Champions, and the Assistant Director (Operations) explained a similar business champion scheme was taking place to encourage businesses to keep the outside of their stores clean. This was influenced by the Street Cleanliness, Littering and Fly-tipping throughout the Borough Topic Review that was conducted.

Thanks was given to all those who participated in the topic review.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.43 pm