

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Dickins (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. George, Mrs. Parkin, Piper, Mrs. Purves, Miss. Stack and Miss. Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Neal

38. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 January 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

39. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

40. Actions from Previous Meeting

The Head of Human Resources had advised that, in response to a question raised at the previous meeting, 20 staff members were on fixed term contracts, including 5 externally funded posts.

41. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman (also the Portfolio Holder for Strategy & Performance) referred to the project to create additional car park spaces on the Buckhurst 2 site in Sevenoaks Town Centre. He was pleased that the initiative was progressing and anticipated that Members and residents would have an opportunity to see the proposed design structure in due course. He advised that options for a permit scheme to assist local traders access the new car park were being reviewed.

The Chairman also confirmed that Cabinet would be considering proposals (from the Finance & Resources Advisory Committee) for an SDC owned company to be incorporated, thus enabling the Council to exercise trading powers and enter into more innovative arrangements with the private sector.

42. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were no such referrals.

43. Communication Working Group Update

Councillor Miss Stack presented a report of the Working Group which advocated measures for raising SDC's profile and for generating additional revenue by marketing and developing certain services and enhancing the effectiveness of internal and external communication regimes. The Group's recommendations included proposals for:

- (i) Signwriting refuse collection freighters to maximise awareness of SDC's (now relatively unique) weekly refuse collection service

The Working Group considered that SDC should draw full attention to the weekly nature of its refuse collection service by applying prominent "see you next week" logos to the freighters.

The option of personalising each freighter with separate names (e.g. with local connections) had also been suggested, although the Committee did not wish to pursue this particular idea at the present time.

- (ii) Enabling the Print Studio to utilise its skills to best effect for the benefit of both SDC and external customers

The Group had highlighted the importance of client departments submitting clear, well thought out briefs to ensure that their printing and design needs were met by the Studio. This exposed a potential training requirement and the need for a more focused communications strategy.

The scope for the Studio to showcase its services beyond SDC by offering design / print services to other public and voluntary sector organisations had also been identified. The Group foresaw that delivering design services to external clients may require the establishment of an account management post to allow the Studio to concentrate on its creative strengths. However, the Committee concluded that further consideration of measures to place the Studio on a more commercial footing should be deferred for the time being, pending discussions between the Leader and key Officers about broader corporate development issues.

- (iii) The Dunbrik Depot extending its MOT testing service to Class 5 vehicles (i.e. community transport vehicles under 7.5 tonnes)

This proposition was based on the apparent absence of local competition for such a service and the prospect of nearby community transport providers wishing to use Dunbrik for their fleets. Investment in the depot's infrastructure was, however, accepted as a necessary precursor to extending the range of Direct Service activities.

- (iv) Introducing a small bin alternative as part of the garden waste collection service

Whilst the existing garden waste service was performing well, the Group believed that smaller bins would be considerably more convenient for many residents (e.g. those with small gardens and/or limited space for bin storage). It was also anticipated that a 'small bin alternative' could persuade additional households to take advantage of the garden waste service. This would, however, need to be confirmed by business analysis and market testing. Pricing options for a small garden waste bin option were discussed.

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(v) Expansion of the existing trade waste recycling service

This proposal had been put forward with small businesses in mind. The Chief Officer for Environmental & Operational Services confirmed that the existing trade waste (refuse) collection service was profitable and that the opportunity to enable businesses to recycle their cardboard and paper could be expanded. He was satisfied that Direct Services staff had the operational capabilities to further develop a trade recycling scheme but that a critical mass of customers would be necessary to make it viable. Assistance with marketing the initiative would therefore be required.

Various issues arose during the discussion, including receptacle types; the option of providing tape for businesses to bundle material for collection (the 'Westminster' method); and the need for effective administrative / IT support, including the scope for vehicle tracking devices to enable the service to be as responsive as possible. Members also acknowledged that the Contact Centre would have a key role to play in the possible implementation of this and some of the other projects referred to above.

(vi) Promoting the pest control service more effectively

Options for enabling Environmental Health Officers to raise awareness of this service were discussed, including business cards with SDC pest control information on the back which could be left with clients upon routine food hygiene visits. The Committee considered that this, and other measures such as the targeted distribution of leaflets / flyers, would be appropriate for independent food premises where proprietors were less likely to be 'tied in' with commercial pest control operators. SDC's unique selling point of being a reliable, trustworthy service provider was considered worthy of promotion.

The Group had also identified the possibility of providing pest control services to West Kent Housing Association, especially in respect of communal areas on estates. The Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services was pursuing this.

The Group's report also outlined the follow up stages to the on-line survey of Members' communication / development needs. This would involve face to face sessions around the District and a gap analysis to inform subsequent recommendations.

Proposals regarding the SDC website and Contact Centre would be considered at the Group's next meeting.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Miss Stack and her Working Group colleagues for their efforts in identifying such an extensive range of service development opportunities.

Resolved: that it be recommended to Cabinet that:

- a) prominent "see you next week" logos be applied to refuse collection freighters (sample versions to be shared with the Communications Working Group in advance);
- b) the Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services develop business plans for the possible introduction of:

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- i. MOT testing for Class 5 vehicles (i.e. community transport vehicles under 7.5 tonnes) at the Dunbrik Depot;
 - ii. a small bin alternative as part of the garden waste collection service; and
 - iii. expansion of the trade waste recycling service;
- c) a workshop be provided for SDC staff on the subject of submitting effective briefs to the Print Studio for creative design work (the content / format of the workshop to be prepared by the Studio Manager in consultation with Councillor Miss Stack); and
- d) measures to promote and market the pest control service more effectively be pursued.

44. Work Plan

Provisional agenda items for the Committee's summer 2014 meeting were noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.24 PM

CHAIRMAN