

6c REFERRAL FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 MARCH 2022 – SHARED WASTE SERVICE GOVERNANCE

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) To agree to the new overarching aim of the shared services and principles outlined in 8.10 and 8.12.
- (2) To endorse the formation of a joint cross party working group. The terms of reference for which are outlined in Appendix A and the outline work programme described in 8.19.
- (3) To agree to explore the future options for governance of the Shared Waste Service, including consideration of a joint committee consisting of representation by both East Herts Council and North Herts District Council.
- (4) To establish the Joint Cross Party Working Group prior to the start of the new contract negotiations.
- (5) To ensure that relevant Governance and scrutiny processes are in place prior to the start of the new contract negotiations.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) Waste services are one of the largest services provided to residents in both Councils, a “one service” approach promotes resilience and flexibility ensuring residents and customers receive a high-quality service. The recommendations are being made to enable the further alignment of services, through joint decision making, and consequently the long term efficient and optimal management of the services.
- (2) A new aligned governance structure would promote a unified, stable and long-term strategic vision for the shared service and ensures:
 - a service that is agile and responsive to changes
 - reduction in customer confusion
 - better engagement/ use of skills/talent and retention of staff and therefore service delivered to customers
 - continuous improvement within the services
 - improved resource visibility and flexibility
 - aligned timeframes and increased speed for decision making
 - greater consistency and stability leading to greater interest and competitiveness from the market.
- (3) To identify areas where there may be difficulties or issues faced with the merging of the services in East and North Herts.

Councillor Amy Allen, Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management, presented the report entitled ‘Shared Waste Service Governance’ and advised of the following:

- The report detailed the aims and principles of the new service, recommends that a cross party joint working group with East Herts Council and recommends that alternative governance arrangements be explored.
- Legislative changes were expected in the coming years and it was prudent to look at the services and prepare these for the future.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Tony Hunter
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions the Service Director – Place advised:

- This is to begin looking at how a Joint Waste Committee could be established and to consider governance possibilities in principle.
- It was expected that a Joint Waste Committee would be set up in the future, but at this stage a working group would be set up alongside East Herts Council to look at where services differ and explore ways to align services.
- It was expected that there would be work carried out over the summer, with a hope to report back to both Cabinets by late 2022.
- By establishing a working group to look at future service design options, it would allow Officers to develop business plans and put actions in place to align services. There may be some areas where transitional alignment would be needed after the start of the contract, but getting agreement on alignment of most areas ahead of time would ensure that the Councils were in a more competitive position when it came to contract renewal.
- The main change to the shared objectives was the inclusion of green credentials.
- It was not expected that the aligning of the two Council's services would be easy and that was why the work would need to start now to be as prepared as possible at contract renewal.

Councillor Kate Aspinwall commented that it was positive to see this report and the beginning of looking at the waste service in a more holistic way. From the outset, there would need to be clear scrutiny and governance details in place and that this should be as formal as possible.

Councillor Tony Hunter commented that the issues needed to be fixed at this stage, not in three years' time when contract expires. Both parties and the service provider should work at this stage to remove inefficiencies in the service, which would benefit all involved.

Councillor Claire Strong noted that there was a list included of areas where services are not currently aligned, but there are far more in reality than listed in the summary.

Councillor David Levett noted that although the original aim of the joint contract was financial, a large part of this was so that services could be offered by pooling resources. He suggested that two further recommendations be added to ensure that the Joint Working Group was established and the framework for governance and scrutiny in place as soon as possible, but certainly prior to the start of the Shared Service.

The Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management highlighted that this a huge task in itself and there should be a pragmatic approach to this as the service progresses and any further issues are identified. Within the Waste Service there are several things that are not controllable and therefore changes should be expected in line with these circumstances.

The Service Director – Place advised if, following the service design process, there are any changes which are feasible to implement prior to commencement of a new contract, then steps will be put in place to try to achieve this.

Councillor Levett highlighted that a Joint Working Group would identify areas where services cannot be aligned and these can be brought up much earlier and prevent issues occurring upon the start of the contract.

Councillor Aspinwall requested that Overview and Scrutiny Committee see the commercial arrangements, as this was not provided last time.

Councillor David Levett, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Kate Aspinwall seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) To agree to the new overarching aim of the shared services and principles outlined in 8.10 and 8.12.
- (2) To endorse the formation of a joint cross party working group. The terms of reference for which are outlined in Appendix A and the outline work programme described in 8.19.
- (3) To agree to explore the future options for governance of the Shared Waste Service, including consideration of a joint committee consisting of representation by both East Herts Council and North Herts District Council.
- (4) To establish the Joint Cross Party Working Group prior to the start of the new contract negotiations.
- (5) To ensure that relevant Governance and scrutiny processes are in place prior to the start of the new contract negotiations.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) Waste services are one of the largest services provided to residents in both Councils, a “one service” approach promotes resilience and flexibility ensuring residents and customers receive a high-quality service. The recommendations are being made to enable the further alignment of services, through joint decision making, and consequently the long term efficient and optimal management of the services.
- (2) A new aligned governance structure would promote a unified, stable and long-term strategic vision for the shared service and ensures:
 - a service that is agile and responsive to changes
 - reduction in customer confusion
 - better engagement/ use of skills/talent and retention of staff and therefore service delivered to customers
 - continuous improvement within the services
 - improved resource visibility and flexibility
 - aligned timeframes and increased speed for decision making
 - greater consistency and stability leading to greater interest and competitiveness from the market.
- (3) To identify areas where there may be difficulties or issues faced with the merging of the services in East and North Herts.

The report to the Committee can be found under Item 14 here: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 15/03/2022 19:30 \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)