

## POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL 2 MARCH 2009

*Present :-* Councillor Julie Young (Chairman)

Councillors Nick Barlow, Mike Hardy and Justin Knight

*Also in Attendance :-* Henry Spyvee

Theresa Higgins

Tina Dopson

*Substitute Members :-* Councillor Kevin Chapman for Councillor Kevin Bentley

Councillor Beverly Lissimore

for Councillor Beverly Davies

### 25. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

**Councillor Nigel Chapman (in respect of being a member of the Board of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Julie Young (in respect of her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

### 26. Waste Prevention and Recycling // Options Appraisal

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Street Services providing information on the potential options for the future delivery of the waste and recycling collection service, the purpose of which was to identify options for the delivery of the service that would allow the Council to raise its recycling and composting performance to the levels being achieved by the highest performing authorities following the principles set out in the waste to resources strategy.

Matthew Young, Head of Street Services and Chris Dowsing, Strategic Waste and Sustainability Manager, attended the meeting to assist members in their discussions.

Paula Whitney addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). She considered the Options report contained some good points that the Panel should not lose sight of. She commended the Council for having garden waste collections but was disappointed that the Borough was the second lowest performer in the County. Additionally estimated home composting performance was low compared to the best. She noted, however, that Colchester's vehicle costs were relatively low. The Waste to Resources Action Programme report of June 2008 indicated that Colchester's income from paper and other recyclables was very low. Income from mixed materials amounted to around £12 per ton whilst separated

materials reached between £50 and £100 per ton. She therefore stressed the importance

Councillor Dopson, the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Partnerships attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel explaining that a comprehensive report had been prepared for the Panel's consideration including data as to how to increase recycling tonnages and from the Country's top performers, according to a range of criteria. She invited the Panel to come to a conclusion as to which type of 'Best' Colchester should aspire to.

Chris Dowsing provided the Panel with a presentation highlighting the important issues which had emerged from the Options Appraisal, including:

- Colchester currently had a recycling rate of 32.79% compared to 58.4% by the highest performer and 50% by the 20th highest performer;
- Colchester would need to increase its performance by 17% to reach 50% and 25% to match the best;
- The ten highest recycling and composting local authorities and the ten most improving local authorities all undertook alternate weekly collections using wheeled bins;
- The findings of the study undertaken by WRAP, the Waste to Resources Action Programme, had shown, amongst many other detailed matters, that 30% of food bought is thrown away and the amount of food waste being collected increased when residual waste collections were undertaken alternate weekly compared to a decreasing trend where residual collections were weekly.

The Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:

- The effect on local authority recycling performance of residents choosing to home compost;
- The effect of supermarket 'Buy One Get One Free' campaigns on the amount of food bought but not consumed and the introduction of the 'Love Food Hate Waste' campaign which supermarkets were now supporting;
- The requirement for food waste collections to be undertaken weekly because of the nature of the waste thus precluding an option for alternate weekly food waste collections;
- The proportion of local authorities which collected residual waste by black sack on an alternate weekly basis and the alleged problems associated with vermin;
- Some local authorities had opted to undertake both weekly and alternate weekly collections based on seasonal considerations but this was considered difficult to manage operationally and potentially confusing for residents;
- The option for Colchester to continue to collect in accordance with current arrangements but with an added weekly food waste collection had the predicted effect of poor levels of recycling participation;
- The need to bear in mind customer satisfaction in determining the Council's future collection regime but the difficulty in meeting various customer preferences;
- The fact that Colchester currently had no limit on the number of black sacks able to be put out for collection and the negative impact this had on residents' willingness to recycle;
- The strategy used by local authorities to change residents' behaviours about waste in

terms of minimizing the size of residual waste containers whilst maximizing the size of recycling containers;

- The limited scope available for future recycling initiatives to include difficult to recycle items such as toothpaste tubes, toothbrushes and crisp packets and the scope to continue with 'Bring Sites' for items such as tetra pak containers and batteries.

*RECOMMENDED* to the Cabinet that a Task and Finish Group comprising the following membership,

- Liberal Democrats 2 members
- Conservative 2 members
- Labour 1 member
- Independent 1 member

be formed to investigate in more detail the options for and to make recommendations on the future delivery of the waste and recycling service.

**Councillor Nigel Chapman (in respect of being a member of the Board of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Julie Young (in respect of her spouse being a member of the board of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

## **27. Nottingham Declaration Strategy and Action Plan**

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Street Services providing details of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, developed under its Nottingham Declaration commitment, inviting the Panel to consider its contents and provide views and recommendations on its suitability for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

Samantha Preston, Climate Change Officer, attended the meeting to assist members in their discussions.

Paula Whitney addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1) referring to the better fuel economy of the Council's previous fleet of refuse freighters in terms of carbon emissions, the conclusions of the Waste to Resources Action Programme report regarding the increased cost of collecting mixed waste and sending it to a Materials Recovery Facility and the generally positive effect on climate change of all composting practices.

The report explained that the Nottingham Declaration Commitment was signed by Colchester Borough Council in February 2007, which included a commitment to produce a Climate Change Strategy and an Action Plan to demonstrate its commitment. This had been drafted in September 2008 and had undergone public

consultation. The results of the consultation were extremely positive and the strategy had been adapted to accommodate many of the comments that were received.

The overall aim of the strategy was to incorporate all climate change related targets under an 'umbrella' document, allowing progress in this area to be monitored in a joined up way. Under this strategy the Council has four priorities relating to climate change, Reducing our Own Emissions, Being a Community Leader, Delivering Sustainable Services and Using our Powers each of which included aspects of mitigation and adaptation.

The first priority aimed to support the Council in reducing CO2 emissions from its own buildings and operations; Being a Community Leader set out how the Council would help to raise awareness of climate change across the borough and the various projects that will support a reduction in CO2 emissions from schools, businesses and residents; Delivering Sustainable Services concentrated on each of the Council services to ensure that they are delivered in a sustainable way and, lastly, Using our Powers is intended to ensure that the Council can maximise its existing influence across the community to help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:

- The 'Buy Local' campaign and the possibility of including a reference to this within the Strategy;
- Whether it was possible for the Council to provide additional resources to the Warm Homes Project;
- The diversity implications of the Strategy and the importance of reaching people in rural areas and those whose first language was not English;
- The possibility of extending the insulation programme to the housing managed by Colchester Borough Homes;
- The amount of publicity it was possible to issue in relation to the Strategy bearing in mind relatively limited amount of officer resource available to accommodate the work generated;
- The feasibility of improving all homes in the Borough to the Warm Homes standard.

*RECOMMENDED* to the Cabinet that the adoption of the Nottingham Declaration Strategy and Action Plan be approved.

## **28. Equality and Diversity // The Current Scheme, the Equality Standard and Framework and the Equality Bill**

The Panel considered a report by the Interim Head of Corporate Management seeking feedback on the Council's current Equality and Diversity Scheme, the changes taking place nationally to replace the Equality Standard with an Equality Framework and the introduction of the Equality Bill.

Councillor T. Higgins, the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Diversity attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel seeking the Panel's

approval of the approach outlined in the report.

In accordance with the framework set out in the Diversity Policy and Plan, the Council adopted a Race Equality Scheme in 2002, a Disability Equality Scheme in 2006 and a Gender Equality Scheme in 2007. The Race Equality Scheme was refreshed in 2008, outlining the Council's commitment and intentions to meet the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It also detailed how the Council intends to respond to the needs of all people in increasingly diverse communities and promote race equality across the borough.

The Disability Equality Scheme's aims were to promote equal opportunities regardless of disability in the delivery of services and employment of staff. This Scheme also sought to ensure that people are not discriminated against, directly or indirectly, as a result of their disability.

The Council's Gender Equality Scheme's aims were to overcome potential discrimination that might be experienced because of gender, either in service delivery or in employment.

The Equality Standard was a framework with five levels which enabled councils to ensure that they have mainstreamed equalities systematically. Each level had a different set of criteria, and the Council reached Level 2 in April 2005. The Council had made further significant progress in establishing valuing diversity as a core value of the organisation and this was now key to the way we operate. Councillors had previously determined that they wish to reach Level 3 of the Equality Standard to recognise this effort and commitment.

The key requirements of Level 3 required that each service within the Council had developed an Equalities Action Plan which had become part of their performance management processes. These action plans were based on the impacts identified in Equality Impact Assessments and any consultation and research which had been undertaken. Each service needed to have begun to achieve some of the objectives in their action plans and the Diversity Policy. In addition to the existing three strands of Gender, Race and Disability, Level 3 of the Equality Standard requires councils to incorporate the three newer equality strands of Age, Sexual Orientation and Religion or Belief by March 2009. This would lead to councils having a Single Equality Scheme which covers all six equality strands in one scheme.

The Equality Standard has been in place since 2001 and will be replaced by the Equality Framework from 1 April 2009. The Equality Framework, which will cover all six strands of diversity, aims to be simpler, and less process-driven; based on self-assessment and peer challenge; relevant to existing performance frameworks and to Comprehensive Area Assessment; and to be aspirational – highlighting the role of local authorities and partners in challenging inequality in their communities. The Council intended to start the work required to develop a single Equality Scheme in advance of the legislation requiring its introduction. This is to avoid delay and as it was clear that there were several strategic, operational and financial benefits to amalgamating the schemes and having a single equality scheme for the whole authority.

Councillor Spyvee attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel explaining the difficulties he had experienced in locating equality and diversity information from the Council's website.

The Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:

- The fact diversity monitoring for staff who were new to the organization was undertaken and this information was used in service planning work;
- The availability of Diversity training for Councillors;
- Information relating to the breakdown of Council's achievements in respect of the Equality Standards;
- The likely timescales involved for developing Single Equality Scheme.

*RESOLVED* that the current situation regarding the Council's current Equality and Diversity Scheme, the changes taking place nationally to replace the Equality Standard with an Equality Framework and the introduction of the Equality Bill be noted.

## **29. Work Programme 2008/09**

The Panel considered a report by the Interim Head of Corporate Management giving details of the work programme for 2008/09 and the work successfully completed during the year.

It was explained that to inform the Panel's work programme for next year, discussions would take place with the Chairman prior to the meeting of the Panel scheduled in June 2009 with a view to providing the Panel with options for consideration at that meeting.

*RESOLVED* that the completed Work Programme for 2008/09 and the arrangements for the forthcoming Municipal Year be noted.