

4. NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

The Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee consisted of the following members:

Councillor M Sartin (Chairman)
Councillor H Brady (Vice Chairman)
Councillors N Avey, R Gadsby, L Hughes, B Jennings, L Mead, A Mitchell, S Neville, A Patel and B Surtees

The Lead officer was Derek Macnab, Director of Neighbourhoods and Deputy Chief Executive.

Terms of Reference

1. To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of services and functions of the Neighbourhood and Communities Directorates (not including Housing matters).
2. To consider any matter referred to the Select Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
3. To keep under review:
 - (i) *Environmental enforcement activities;*
 - (ii) *Safer communities activities;*
 - (iii) *Waste management activities; and*
 - (iv) *Leisure Management*
 - (v) *Local Plan Scrutiny*
4. To identify any matters within the services and functions of the Neighbourhoods Directorate and the community services and community safety activities of the Communities Directorate that require in-depth scrutiny and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary.
5. To act as the Council's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and to keep under review the activities of the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership as a whole or any of the individual partners which make up the Partnership.
6. To undertake performance monitoring in relation to the services and functions of the Neighbourhoods Directorate and the community services and community safety activities of the Communities Directorate, against adopted Key Performance Indicators and identified areas of concern.
7. To monitor and keep under review the Council's progress towards the development and adoption of a corporate energy strategy / environmental policy and to receive progress reports from the Green Working Party.
8. To receive reports from the Waste Management Partnership Board in respect of the operation of and performance of the waste management contract.

9. To monitor and keep under review leisure management matters and in particular the procurement of the Leisure Management Contract.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:

(i) Key Performance Indicators 2014/15 Quarter 4 (Outturn) – At their first meeting of the year in July 2015 The Committee considered the outturn (Q4) report for the Key Performance Indicators for 2014/15 specific to this Select Committee area of responsibility.

(ii) Update on the adoption of the River Roding Flood Risk Management Strategy - The Committee considered the letter from the Environment Agency updating the council on the River Roding Flood Risk Management Strategy. It was noted that the Environment Agency (EA) had attended the Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Panel sometime ago to brief them on this management strategy. This letter was sent to every property next to the river and to this Council as it had land by the river. It was noted that members were very unhappy about this strategy.

The EA was responsible for the overview of flood risk management in England and had identified the best way to manage flood risk in the Roding catchment over the next 100 years, with the aim of protecting as many properties as possible while carefully balancing the amount of public money they spent.

(iii) Crucial Crew Initiative – In September 2015 the Committee received a report on 'Crucial Crew'. This was an annual event which was facilitated and delivered by the Council's Community Service and Safety teams. It was specifically designed to educate primary school pupils aged 10 (year 6) in a range of personal safety, health and wellbeing topics.

Crucial Crew has been provided for over 10 years and was historically delivered over the same two week period in June, in line with agreed primary school timetables. This year every Year 6 primary school pupil in the Epping Forest District attended the half day events; in all 1351 Epping Forest pupils participated. In addition 13 schools from the Brentwood area paid to attend, bringing a further 408 children into the project, making a total of 1759 attendees.

The event has traditionally been held at Gilwell Park Scouting Headquarters; however, following recent notification of a planned increase in hire costs by approximately £2000 in 2016 it was decided that an alternative venue of Debden House would be piloted in 2016 for the same venue costs as 2015.

(iv) Draft Community Safety Partnership Annual Report for 2014-15 - The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was made up of representatives from Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue Service, Community Rehabilitation Service, Epping Forest District Council, Voluntary Action Epping Forest and the Magistracy. They meet on a quarterly basis to oversee the range of work undertaken and were responsible for undertaking an annual review of current crime and disorder issues. Their main source of funding was from the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and although this has reduced, they have still managed to function efficiently and effectively.

Over the year they had assessed the following issues as local priorities:

- Domestic Abuse;
- Assault/violent crime;
- Anti-social behaviour; and
- Burglary in a dwelling.

They did some of the best work in Essex on domestic abuse by care and support of victims. They ran a sanctuary scheme with Community Safety, Essex Police and Essex County Fire & Rescue Service to provide enhanced security to very high risk victims that do not wish to move, making them feel safer at home. They also run 'J9' training courses across West Essex to deal with the preventative side of domestic abuse. Their work on Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) continues to be a priority area. They have an ASB investigator who is trained in mediation and is also the EFDC Restorative Justice Ambassador to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. This was a new initiative to identify emerging problem families and provide support and mediation before problems escalate.

In 2013 with funding from the PCC, EFDC's community safety team purchased 5 cameras allowing the installation of a self contained CCTV system (camera, monitor and recorder). These were offered to local residents on a loan basis with an option to purchase at cost price. They would be used to assist across a broad range of matters including gathering evidence in support of allegations of Anti-social Behaviour or deterring bogus callers.

Burglary from dwellings continued to be a priority crime due to the close proximity to the London Metropolitan area and the excellent transport links through the district. This allows travelling criminals to enter and leave by a number of different means.

(v) Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 Quarterly Updates - the Committee reviewed the Key Performance Indicators relevant to their Select Committee on a quarterly basis.

(vi) Review of the Local Plan – at each meeting the Committee received regular updates on the current state of the Council's Local Plan.

(vii) Uttlesford Local Plan – Issues and Options Consultation – In November 2015 the meeting noted that Uttlesford District Council's previous Local Plan ran into difficulties at Examination in Public late in 2014. The main concerns related to the Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAHN) figure relying on out of date evidence and the capacity of the village of Elsenham to take the amount of new development being proposed. The examination was not completed and as a consequence Uttlesford subsequently withdrew the Plan in February 2015.

Their current Issues and Options consultation on a new local plan was intended to be the first of three stages of formal consultation and engagement. They hoped to have a final draft plan by next year and a submission version by 2017.

Uttlesford along with Harlow & East Hertfordshire is one of the Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) partners with this Council. Officers were concerned that the SHMA was not mentioned in the consultation document as this was a key piece of joint evidence prepared for the four authorities in the Housing Market Area. Officers were also surprised that there was no mention in the document about the boundary issues and that more was not said about the potential impact of Stanstead Airport.

(viii) Community Services Summer Activities 2015 - The 2015 summer activities were organised and delivered by the Community Services section. They consisted of a wide range of activities to engage children, young people and their families. It was noted that almost 2000 people had participated in the extensive range of activities on offer which included physical activities such as Soccer Tots, mountain biking, Play in the Park and Play in the Forest sessions and dance programmes as well as other creative activities.

These activities were detailed in a brochure that was delivered to all schools in the district. This was supplemented by fliers, posters, school visits, social media, a website, radio interviews and attendance at community events and Town Shows.

There was also an 'Inclusion Programme' which was funded through Essex County Council, designed for children and young people with additional needs. Although parents and carers frequently elect to attend sessions with their children, a special fully supervised camping break was organised this year to give parents respite and enable the children to stay without their families if they wanted to. This proved hugely successful and received excellent feedback.

(ix) Fly Tipping Clearance and Enforcement – In November the Committee also received a report on fly-tipping clearance and enforcement. It was noted that this was a problem that was growing. The Environment & Neighbourhoods (EN) Team were responsible for enforcing waste law in the district. They log all incidents of fly-tipping and prioritise investigations to try and trace the source of the waste and fly-tipper. They took as an example Laundry Lane that was constantly being fly-tipped and constantly being cleared by the district or the County Council. Waste has also been dumped on private land and although the Council has the powers to force the land owner to clear the tip they did have some sympathy with them on this. They were also getting pressure from the private land owners to help them clear up the tipped areas.

(x) Update from the Green Corporate Working Party - The Committee noted that they were working towards a new environmental policy to tie in with the Council's Corporate Objectives.

A presentation was given to the Leadership Team on 11th November 2015 which Directors and Assistant Directors were asked to consider the options for the development of a corporate energy strategy/environmental policy. They came up with a number of suggestions including:

- Electric vehicle charge points in the district;
- The council to have their own electric vehicles;
- E-billing, e-notification, more on-line forms;
- Have targets for energy efficiency as part of the local plan;
- Making communities resistant to the impact of climate changes;
- Making meetings paperless.

These, and the other suggestions made would be taken to the next Green Working Party meeting to be discussed. They would then look to create an 'environmental charter' with an action plan which would then be brought back to this Select Committee for comments and agreement. This would replace the Council's existing Climate Change Policy 2009.

(xi) Review of Waste and Recycling Collection Arrangements – On 17 December 2015 a special meeting was arranged for this Select Committee with a one item agenda, specifically to review the new domestic waste and recycling contract and following the switch to the four day collection schedule and the introduction of new vehicles and technology. This resulted in an unacceptably high level of missed collections. The Council's Environment Portfolio Holder noting that this was an important service, formally requested that the Overview and Scrutiny undertake a review on his behalf and that the outcome be formally reported back to the Cabinet. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that this request should be determined by the Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee. Given this, a single, one off meeting of the Select Committee be dedicated to this single subject.

(See Case Study for full details)

(xii) PICK Form on 20mph Speed Limit – In January 2016 The Committee welcomed David Sprunt, from the Essex Transportation Strategy and Engagement, Economic Growth; and Vicky Duff, the Essex Network Management Group Manager. They were there to enlighten the committee on those facts and policies used by Essex County Council and the guidance issued by the Department of Transport on road speeds, especially relating to the implementation of 20mph limits.

The Committee noted that:

- That Essex CC had a Speed Management Strategy advised by the Department of Transport circular 01/2013;
- It had been established by research that 20mph speed limits generally only led to small reductions in traffic speeds;
- The latest advice was that a mix of 20mph limits and 20mph zones would be better, providing that the signing was correct;
- The objective would be that 'any 20mph restrictions should be self-enforcing';
- Any 20mph limit of zone would require a Speed Limit Order, which had to be consulted on;
- The current policy allowed for the consideration of 20mph limits on local roads if the mean speeds were between 24 and 29mph, only then would the Cabinet Member consider putting in a 20mph restriction;
- At the beginning of the limits there would have to be clear signage and also at the end of the restrictions. There would also have to be repeater signs along the route;
- 20mph zones had traffic calming measures e.g. speed humps, chicanes etc. these zones applied not just to one road but to whole areas, such as estates;
- It was noted that generally people did not like them and the low speeds over traffic calming measures also produced more noise for residents;
- The most effective method for reducing speed was the use of chicanes, but it needed some major engineering work to put them in;
- 20mph signs could be used as a calming feature but they would not physically reduce the speeds;
- The county also has a "20's plenty" scheme used mainly outside schools, but very little reductions in speeds were achieved;
- Advisory speed limit signs could be also be used outside schools, they were not mandatory and thus no speed limit order was required;
- Before a scheme was put into place, information was required in the form of speed surveys, traffic surveys and collision data;
- It was noted that a lot of areas in Essex did not have high collision rates for Children and pedestrians;

- Repeat signage in an area tended to create clutter on those roads;
- Essex Police did not have the resources to enforce these areas.

(xiii) Area Crime Analyst – Also in January 2016 the Chairman welcomed the Safer Communities Manager and West Local Policing Area Partnership Analyst, who gave a short presentation on the local crime and disorder figures up to and including November 2015, via the Home Office system, 'iQuanta'. This system provided data for a 3 year span.

The Committee noted that:

- All Crime was up by 14% (630 cases) in comparison to previous years figures to date;
- On a month by month total – in December 2012 there were 591 cases compared to November 2015 with 642 cases, an increase of 7.9% (51 cases) over 3 years;
- Against other similar authorities we had similar figures to Maidstone, who the ONS identified as a match to Epping. Our figures were 56.835 crimes to Maidstone's 56.588 crimes;
- Broxbourne was a border council similar to us with similar proximity to London and transport links and had 62.278 crimes and Watford (with 72.614 crimes) had similar tube and Motorway links;
- The figures for violence against the person showed a 27% (246) increase in Epping Forest in comparison to the previous year;
- Epping was 17% below the Essex average;
- In comparison with other similar authorities, the figures for the year ending November 2015, Epping had 1690, Maidstone 2690, Watford 1704 and Broxbourne;
- Following a peak in October ASB incidents had fallen by a third in December; and
- By locality, Loughton remained the highest, with 263 ASB incidents, followed by Waltham Abbey (176) and Epping (139).

(xiv) CCTV Action Plan – The Committee reviewed the EFDC CCTV strategy for 2016-2022, noting that this report had recently gone to the Cabinet for their information and agreement.

The Committee noted that the strategy covered the period from 2015 to 2022, following on from the previous strategy that was produced in 2008, when the Community Safety Team took over the responsibility for the Council's CCTV provision as part of the Safer, Cleaner Greener Review.

The Strategy set out the Council's current CCTV provision, detailing respective locations, numbers of cameras, condition and costs for maintenance, and repair and replacements over the next seven years, along with recommendations for de-commissioning of equipment. It also provided an overview of the benefits that were realised for the local communities in which it was installed and the various use made of CCTV footage by the Police and insurance companies.

The Council's success in the use of CCTV had generated ongoing demands from Directorates to install new CCTV equipment within key areas of the district and the point had now been reached where an increased budget was required, to meet the costs of replacing old equipment and the increased servicing and maintenance costs, which was also covered by the Strategy.

(xv) Local Policing Proposals – The Committee received a report on the recently proposed Policing cuts and their implications on the Council’s Community Safety Service.

This originated from November 2015, when the PCC, Nick Alston and the Chief Constable of Essex Police announced proposals to make significant changes to local Policing across Essex, in a move to ensure that Essex Police was fit for purpose, in the future.

This report was aimed at starting a discussion with members on the implications of the reduction in police resources and the impact it would have on the Council’s Community Safety Service.

The problem council officers faced were that they were best guessing what was going to happen in the district. They were looking at potential reductions in policing, such as triaging calls into High, Medium or Low risks and then only reacting to high risk cases and fielding the other calls to other relevant authorities. They were mindful that the Council would pick up more work and there would be more disgruntled members of the public not having the Police act on their problems.

Anti-social Behaviour powers given to us by the Government would raise the officer’s workload, especially as the Police would not act. This may also result in more problems at the reception desks from disgruntled members of the public.

The Council only had two ASB officers to deal with the Epping Forest District. They were seeing a rise in cases from 192 to 331 cases. The public would make their feelings known to Members who will then let the officers know, increasing their caseload as they try and resolve complaints on behalf of Members and this would be very time consuming.

(xvi) Reality Roadshow 2015 - Building on the long-standing success of Crucial Crew, the Reality Roadshow initiative was a personal safety, health & well-being event that brought together a host of statutory and voluntary agencies, to deliver a day of educational workshops to Year 9 (14 year old) pupils at schools in the district. It was specifically tailored to address young people’s issues that have been identified as a priority concern locally. It provides over 1100 pupils in the district with expert advice and guidance on making the right choices in life for good health and well being.

Pupils participated in either 5 or 6 workshops depending on individual school timetables and each session was specifically designed to address current issues facing local young people. The workshops delivered in 2015/16 were:

- The Consequences of Crime – delivered by Essex Magistrates
- Online Internet Safety – EFDC’s Community Health and Well-being Team
- Sexual Health - NHS Sexual Health Services
- Legal Highs and Substance Misuse - Alcohol & Drugs Advisory Service (ADAS)
- Alcohol Awareness - AlcoHELP
- Healthy Relationships and Domestic Abuse - Safer Places

The impact of the Reality Roadshow programme on participants was generally very significant, as the messages given are very clear and designed to show the worse

case scenarios of being involved in negative behaviours. The programme also promoted the opportunity for young people to make changes in their lives and to receive support and advice from the various agencies available locally.

(xvii) Response to DCLG technical Consultation on the NPPF – Also in January 2016 the Committee received a report on the response to the proposed changes to the national planning policy consultation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012 and was supported by the online Planning Practice Guidance. Amendments are now proposed to the NPPF which encompassed the following:

- Broadening the definition of affordable housing, to expand the range of low cost housing opportunities for those aspiring to own their new home (this includes the Government's intention to introduce Starter Homes as a type of low cost home ownership);
- Increasing the density of development around commuter hubs, to make more efficient use of land in suitable locations;
- Supporting sustainable new settlements, development on brownfield land and small sites (up to 10 units), and delivery of housing allocated in plans; and
- Supporting delivery of starter homes.

There were nine sections contained with the consultation paper and 23 questions on which answers were sought.

(xviii) Museum Development Trust – At their March 2016 meeting the Committee received a report on the proposal to establish a Museum Development Trust for Epping Forest and Lowewood Museums.

The meeting noted that In April 2015, officers were successful in securing £55,000 funding from Arts Council England (ACE) as part of its Resilience Programme, to undertake two feasibility studies. The aim of the studies was to investigate opportunities for supporting resilience of the Museum, Heritage and Culture (MHC) service over the long-term and during economic austerity.

The key recommendation to come out of the study was to establish a Development Trust to operate in parallel to the general management of Epping Forest and Lowewood Museum services based on the model of a company limited by guarantee and registered charity.

They noted the positive benefits of setting up a separate charitable entity, which included the ability to access a range of funding possibilities that were not previously available, opportunity to secure additional grants and donations and the ability to claim Gift Aid on qualifying ticket sales.

A tripartite arrangement came into being in early February, following an approach by Chelmsford City Council for support and advice in relation to operation of their Museum Service, which had just received funding for a major Heritage Lottery Fund project.

Two senior officers from Chelmsford came to look at our museum and talk to senior officers here. They had discussions about the Trust and how to set it up. They were very impressed with our work and were keen to act as a partner agency for us and set themselves up as a separate Foundation Trust. We shall establish a close relationship with them as well as Broxbourne.

(xix) Prevent Initiative and Radicalisation Issues – Also at their March meeting the committee received a report on the Home Office funding for the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism – the ‘Prevent Duty’ that came into force for local authorities on 1st July 2015.

In October 2015, the Council received notification from the Home Office, that it would be allocating £10,000 to all local authorities (excluding priority areas) as a one off payment in this financial year, for the delivery of specific work to support the implementation of the Prevent Duty.

All Councils were required to apply for the funding and needed to present a plan on how the money would be spent. The application on behalf of EFDC focussed on two distinct areas of work; the upgrading of the Council’s IT systems to prevent misuse of IT for extremist material, and, the provision of a Prevent Education Programme within the district’s local secondary schools, for both pupils and teachers.

Following the receipt of the grant a nationally recognised Training Programme ‘*Me and You Education*’ was therefore commissioned to undertake the delivery of in-schools Prevent work and this has been delivered to pupils in years 7 – 13.

(xx) Brentwood Draft Local plan: Public Consultation - The Committee noted that the Brentwood Draft Local Plan includes the strategy, planning policies and proposed land allocations intended to cover the period 2013 to 2033.

Epping Forest District and Brentwood Borough are in a very similar situation – i.e. with challenging pitch provision targets from the GTAA (112 and 84 respectively) and with very comprehensive Green Belt coverage (92% and 89% respectively), so there could be some advantage in considering joint provision in the general area of the common boundary.

(xxi) Response to Lower Thames Crossing Consultation - Highways England was consulting on proposals for a new road crossing of the River Thames connecting Kent and Essex. It was considered that a new crossing was needed to reduce congestion at the existing Dartford Crossing and unlock economic growth, supporting the development of new homes and jobs in the region.

The proposal was the culmination of lengthy investigations into options for a new Lower Thames Crossing which has been lobbied for by Kent and Essex County Councils and business leaders.

(xxii) Replacement Essex Waste Local Plan – Consultation - The Replacement Waste Local Plan: Pre Submission Draft was the version of the Plan proposed to be submitted to the Secretary of State, leading up to independent examination by a Planning Inspector later in 2016. It included a vision statement, objectives and a spatial strategy to enable the delivery of sustainable waste development, site allocations and policies to manage waste development. The Plan covers the administrative areas of Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.

The focus of this consultation, which was being carried out under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 was on soundness and legal compliance. The Planning Inspector could only address these issues in his consideration of the Waste Plan.

(xxiii) Data Quality Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/19 – The Committee noted that the Council needed timely, accurate and reliable data in order to manage activities and meet internal and external requirements to demonstrate accountability through accurate reporting. Data was used for the assessment of the Council's performance, including the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Data Quality Strategy set out the arrangements for the next 3 years to ensure key data meets the highest standards and was 'right first time'.

The Council had identified principles and arrangements to ensure high standards of data quality and had for a number of years, formalized them within a strategy, to support consistency and encourage high standards of practice of data quality management. This revised strategy continued to reflect the principles for data quality originally identified by the former Audit Commission.

(xxiv) Enforcement Activity – The Committee received an updating report on the enforcement actions taken in 2015. They noted that in line with previous reports on enforcement activities of the Environment & Neighbourhoods team, the data has been broken down into 6 month periods covering the summer and winter months. In general summer months were busier, particularly for noise complaints. This pattern has been repeated in 2015.

Noise and waste/fly-tipping issues make up a large percentage of the teams enforcement work, it was estimated that the Environment and Neighbourhood Officers (ENO) spend 80% of their time on these two issues across the district.

In some cases officers are clearly working towards establishing non-compliance with the law, with the aim of instigating prosecution proceedings e.g. fly-tipping incidents. However, officers also spend a great deal of time trying to educate, deter and resolve issues informally. That was particularly the case with noise issues and other neighbour nuisance complaints. Although prosecutions draw attention, enforcement officers investigate and resolve many more cases informally.

Officers have started to use new powers to issue formal Community Protection Warnings (CPW) and Community Protection Notices (CPN). This new power provided officers with more scope to deal with some issues that previously did not fall under specific statutory nuisance powers.

Although the new power was welcome, the Committee noted that it came at a time when other enforcement agencies, that share similar enforcement responsibilities, such as the Police, Environment Agency and Essex County Council were increasingly under pressure, leading to more enforcement work being directed to the ENO team.

Case Study: Review of Waste and Recycling Collection Arrangements

On 17 December 2015, the Chairman of the Committee welcomed the members of the public, officers, councillors and invited guests to a special meeting of the Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee. The meeting was to review the new domestic waste and recycling contract and following the switch to the four day collection schedule and the introduction of new vehicles and technology. This had resulted in an unacceptably high level of missed collections. The Council's Environment Portfolio Holder noting that this was an important service, formally

requested that the Overview and Scrutiny undertake a review on his behalf and that the outcome to be reported back to the Cabinet. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed that this request should be determined by the Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee. Given this, a single, one off meeting of the Select Committee be dedicated to this single subject.

In addition to the Environment Portfolio Holder and the Council's lead officers on Waste and Recycling, senior representatives from Biffa municipal were present. They were invited to give evidence and answer questions.

Part one – the Procurement Process

The Committee went on to review the procurement process. The consultant from White Young and Green, who supported the council through the procurement process gave a brief description of why the council chose to go for Competitive Dialogue, the procurement process, any key considerations and service improvements identified. He noted that this process enabled the bidders to take into consideration:

- the grounds maintenance service;
- establish synergies between grounds maintenance and street cleansing services;
- to market test the in-house service for fleet management and maintenance;
- to seek a solution in relation to depot provision;
- an innovative approach to the provision of trade waste collection and recycling;
- achieve a minimum average recycling rate in excess of 60%;
- the provision of up to date ICT; and
- where affordable to endeavour to go for innovation and added value.

The Council had expressed a wish to move from their current depot and explore alternative type of fleet contract and would also examine the contract term, which should be longer than the former 7 years.

They were also looking at how recycling, composting etc. could be improved; the procurement process was wholly designed to see how contractors would tackle this.

Part two – Mobilisation and the first 6 months of Contract

The meeting went on to consider the second part of the review, the mobilisation and the first 6 months of the contract.

Officers advised the meeting that the decision to award the contract was made by the Cabinet in May 2014. After that there was a handover period from Sita to Biffa. The first thing was to get Biffa set up at the Langston Road depot; TUPE staff transfer over to Biffa; transfer assets like vehicles and the stock of wheelie bins and other containers etc. This was carried out successfully and Biffa operated the 5 day collection service from 4 November 2014. The Waste and Recycling Manager added that the council acted as a buffer between the outgoing and incoming contractors.

Officers noted that every household received a letter about the change over, with a calendar showing the collection dates, information was also put on our website with a search tool to enable householders to check the date and type of waste and recycling collection, and this proved very successful. The Council had received criticism for not

having enough publicity, but the problem was not that, but that collections were missed.

The Portfolio Holder added that with hindsight the letters were not as clear as they could have been. But more broadly, we had done a good job communicating by using the website and other means.

Part three – Revised Arrangements, Problems, Operational Issues & Remedial Actions

Officers noted that the 4 day collection consisted of Tuesday to Friday collections, a one pass collection for dry recycling and glass and new ICT and Customer relationship Management systems for the management of customer contact and also the new collections for small electrical equipment, textiles and batteries.

At the start the Council had received feedback that the collections were not happening as effectively as they should have been. Some houses were missed and this was coupled with a lack of knowledge of some of the areas being covered. Staff did not necessarily know the location of some of the bins as there were some unusual places they were being kept. This ended in missed collections and staff had to do some relearning of the 'ins' and 'outs' of an area. Some rural areas had consistent problems at this time.

At its peak the contact centre was getting about 750 calls a day and they handled this by drafting in staff from other areas to answer calls and emails. An additional problem was that officers had to learn new ways of processing the new systems; at the start the lines of communication were not that clear, but this had changed now.

A member of the public said that she had received her recycling calendar for May to October for which she thanked the officers. But, right from the beginning her general waste was collected but her recycling waste wasn't. On numerous occasions during May and July when she reported it she was told that Biffa would be informed of this.

Officers from Biffa noted that that the new ways of working required change. They should have been using local crews; and once they started operating they were not achieving what they should. They then had to run three 'mop-up' crews to deal with the problems that arose. A combination of various issues caused a perfect storm. They also lost some employees and with them local knowledge. The new vehicles were different and needed some time for familiarisation; they were also slower which impacted on the length of the rounds. They were also relying on a new IT system which had teething problems and the longer working days meant that they got caught up in traffic as well. They noted that they did not have enough resources and introduced four new rounds and also had to bring in new people.

The Chairman noted that a full report would go to the February Overview and Scrutiny Committee and onward to a future Cabinet meeting.