

JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRANSITIONAL BOARD
27 MARCH, 2009

WASTE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

Purpose

1. To report to JOSTB the final conclusions and recommendations of its Waste Scrutiny Task Group.

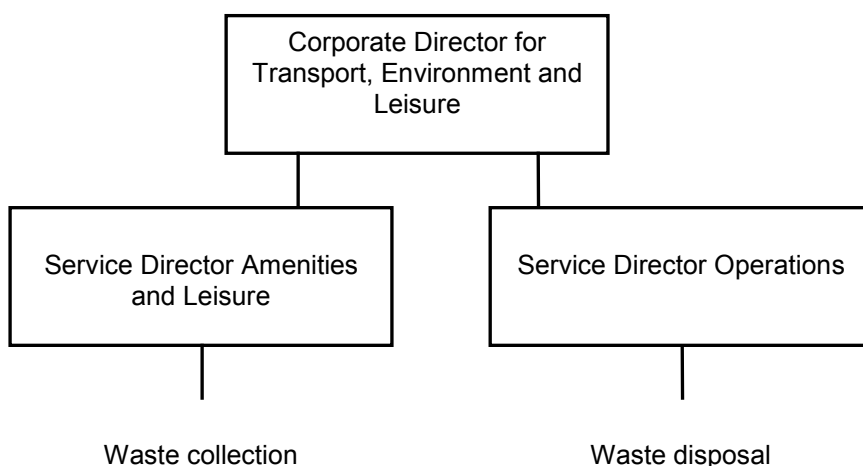
Background

2. The IE has agreed that the aim for waste during transition was to ensure a smooth transition of services on April 1st 2009.
3. The Task Group, created in March 2008, has reviewed the progress of the waste collection project team, as it works towards this goal.
4. Interim reports were submitted to JOSTB in April and August 2008. This report, based on the evidence submitted at the March 5, 2009 meeting, will provide JOSTB with a final pre-vesting day overview.

Findings

Staffing

5. The responsibility for Waste falls to the Corporate Director for Transport, Environment and Leisure. Waste collection (the focus for this review) sits under the Service Directorate for Amenities & Leisure, whereas waste disposal is within the Service Directorate for Operations.



6. Members were reassured that the working relationships between the two services were extremely positive, especially when considering they sat within the same corporate directorate.
7. The staffing structure for the Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing team had been finalised and the Head of Service was in post. It was expected that the management team would be appointed by the end of March. This process was not expected to impact on the service to customers but the members were concerned about the uncertainty faced by staff.

Budget

8. Working within the constraints of a cash freeze budget presented a massive challenge. However, officers qualified that the savings required to achieve the freeze outweighed the year one savings identified for waste collection in the bid. For example, early harmonisation savings had been identified for bulky waste, litter bin collection and the West Wiltshire Commercial Service.
9. The Task Group was told that further savings were possible by further transformation but it would be for the new council to determine the programme for this work. The key service examples of countywide alternate weekly collections and chargeable garden waste collections were provided as areas which Wiltshire Council may wish to consider.
10. Concern was raised in relation to the well publicised problems facing the recycling market and any potential impact on Wiltshire Council. The IE lead member confirmed that any loss in value of recycled materials would fall on our partners – Hills Waste. To date because of the low level of contaminants found in our recycling, the impact within Wiltshire had been less severe.

Waste Transfer Licences

11. There are four depots which require waste transfer licences; currently two have secured a licence. Of the remaining two, Salisbury has submitted an application and work is being undertaken with planners in North Wilts to move towards the application stage.
12. This legal issue was not anticipated to impact on the customer and the Environment Agency has been fully involved on progress.

Customer Contact

13. The Task Group in its August interim report highlighted the handling of public calls as a risk. The members were satisfied in the work that had taken place between the Customer Access and Waste teams, with scripts developed and ready for use by the customer care unit team. These findings were supported by the Customer Access Scrutiny Task Group, as considered in the February meeting of JOSTB.

Delegation to Parish and Town Partnerships

14. The project team was undertaking a series of desk-top exercises to examine the possibility of delegating to Town and parish Councils responsibility for areas such as litter bin emptying. The towns currently being considered were Corsham, Trowbridge and Salisbury.
15. The Task Group welcomed the work but was concerned that if too much delegation took place, it could lead to inefficiencies as the benefits of delivering through a large organisation would be lost through diseconomies of scale.

Conclusion

16. The evidence submitted; coupled with verbal assurances from officers, lead the Task Group to conclude that customers should experience a seamless transition of waste collection services from April 1st 2009.
17. However, the Task Group is aware of from its own experiences on the door step and the feedback from the 'one council' road shows that waste is one of the key issues for the public. It is felt by the Task Group that tackling the issue of transforming the waste service to a uniformed approach across Wiltshire will have to be a priority for Wiltshire Council and this has been addressed within the recommendations.

Recommendations

18.
 - a) To ask JOSTB to agree that the scrutiny of Waste should be recommended as a key area for scrutiny in the new council and for it to be included in any draft work programmes;
 - b) To ask the lead IE member for Waste to instruct officers to produce an options paper in relation to the transformation of the waste service to include the key areas of alternate weekly collections and green bin charging. This document to be available for the Wiltshire Council cabinet member for Waste in June 2009.

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