

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

3 APRIL 2017 - 2.30PM



PRESENT: Councillor F H Yeulett(Chairman), Councillor Mrs A Hay(Vice-Chairman), Councillor G G R Booth, Councillor M Buckton, Councillor S Count, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor D Mason, Councillor Mrs K F Mayor .

APOLOGIES: Councillor A Pugh.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor Sutton.

Jane Bailey (Member Services and Governance), Gary Garford (Corporate Director), Anna Goodall (Head of Legal and Governance) and Jamie Hemming (Harbour Master).

OSC39/16 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of 20 February 2017 and 6 March were confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising and Updates

1. Councillor Mrs Hay informed members that she had an update with regards to Eastwood car park. She stated that members of the County Council attended Chatteris Town Council, the planned new primary school that is going to be built on Tithe Farm Estate has been delayed. It is proposed, that depending on the number of applications made for Chatteris Primary Schools, 2 mobile classrooms will be placed on part of the astro turf site. If they do this they will have to make improvements to Eastwood car park to make it safe.
2. Councillor Yeulett asked for an update with regards to previous recommendations made. Anna Goodall confirmed that she had circulated a number of outstanding actions and recommendations to CMT and agreed to circulate the responses to the panel. Councillor Booth asked how far the actions and recommendations were taken back. Anna Goodall stated that she feels that she has gone back sufficiently and has captured anything outstanding but agreed to circulate the drafted document to the panel for review.
3. Councillor Sutton stated that with regards to the suggestions made about the Golden Age Fairs, this had been raised at a recent partnership meeting and that the general feeling was that they did not believe that the general health and wellbeing bolt-on would be the way forward, and thought that it might actually be detrimental. Councillor Mrs Davis added that the partnership did not think that the 2 audiences could be combined.
4. Councillor Yeulett stated that the meeting date to meet with the LEP has been confirmed for 17 May 2017.
5. Councillor Mrs Hay provided an update with regards to the Paperless Review Group. She informed members that the group are now at the stage where they will be compiling a report which will come to the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in June.

OSC40/16 COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW: INCREASE SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS CHARGES

Councillor Yeulett stated that members will note that this item has a confidential annexe at Agenda item 7. He proposed to take Agenda items 5 and 7 together as one item. Members agreed.

He confirmed that he would put forward the confidential motion but remain in open session until any member has a question on the confidential information. He requested that if a member has such a question they leave it until the end of the item and indicate before asking the question that it relates to the confidential information, so that the press and public can be excluded for the duration of that question.

Members considered The Comprehensive Spending Review - Increase Sewage Treatment Works Charges Report presented by Gary Garford.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Mrs Laws asked what the cost would be to bring the sewage treatment works up to the standard to transfer them to Anglian Water and is it possible to upgrade 1 or 2 of the pumping stations each year and build it into a plan to enable us eventually to transfer them. Gary Garford stated that we review them regularly to see if there are any links to areas already sewered, and as Anglian Water sewer more areas we are looking at opportunities to link in to them but most of the treatment works are several miles away from the sewered network, and the adoption of a sewage treatment works by Anglian Water is in the region of £300,000, and we can manage the sites for around 1/3 of that in terms of capital investment. He added that we look at all opportunities and informed members that we have had future developers in some villages connect to a sewage treatment works for a fee and for a maintenance fee;
2. Councillor Mrs Davis stated that in 2016 many small pumping stations were taken over by Anglian Water, she asked if any of ours transferred at that time. Gary Garford stated that none of these were ours, they were inline stations that were part of the Anglian Water network, whereas we are a single supplier going through a private sewage treatment works and not part of that network;
3. Councillor Mason asked about the consideration for future investment as part of the Asset Management, has the telemetry been evaluated. Gary Garford stated that as we update each plant we install the telemetry which costs around £2000 per unit and this is why the revenue cost have gone down from 1.2 FTE to 0.7 FTE, this is due to a reduction in plants and an increase in the technology used;
4. Councillor Mrs Hay asked for confirmation that the option to work with South Holland District Council is not realistic. Gary Garford confirmed that it is not realistic at the moment, when we first looked at this last year we were intending to tender their service, so we asked to be part of that tender. South Holland decided not to tender as they were paying a very good price and a tender might increase that. We have said if they procure again we would be interested in joining up with them as they have the same number of plants, but to tender on our own would not be cost effective;
5. Councillor Yeulett asked if we can realistically achieve a cost neutral service moving forward, and is the future going to be joining up with another authority. Gary Garford stated that our ambition is always for an external service to break even, but there are a lot of things that can affect that. When we first started this exercise we thought we could increase charges to make up for the shortfall, but we have discovered that we cannot. There are a lot of variables, but we will manage those variables, we have some sewage treatment works where only private properties go into them now and we are still maintaining that treatment works so we have looked at this from a legal point of view to see whether we can transfer that obligation to the owners, but we are unable to do that. So sometimes we are stuck with the responsibility for those treatment works. We will monitor our costs to try to adjust where we can, Anglian Water are going to be increasing their rates up by 2% next year so we will benefit from that;
6. Councillor Yeulett asked if other authorities are having similar problems. Gary Garford stated that South Holland are our nearest neighbour and they have the same problems they cannot control their charges because they are also constrained by OfWat guidance linked to

Anglian Water charges. He stated that to raise our charges we would have to submit a paper to OfWat to justify it, and the legal view is that it would cost twice what it would make you to challenge it;

7. Councillor Booth stated that he feels that the approach being taken is the right one as it is about having an efficient service and therefore the actions proposed are the right ones. He asked for clarification with regards to the sewage treatment works at Newlands Road as it is just a matter of yards from the main sewage line. Gary Garford stated that it maybe that we have a very efficient plant and there has to be an agreement with Anglian Water. In the past when they have had to build a pumping station for a village we have offered for them to put that station on our site for free, and in return disband our sewage treatment works for free. If they do not need our site there is less leverage for us to negotiate;
8. Councillor Count asked for clarification of the split for the employee cost savings between recharging travellers and revising staffing. Gary Garford stated that the staffing aspect is the significant part of the saving and the recharging was about £5000. Councillor Count stated that this is not a true saving as another budget will go up by £5000. Gary Garford agreed, and stated that it is a recharge to the County Council as they fund us to manage the travellers sites;
9. Councillor Yeulett asked about our relationship with Anglian Water. Gary Garford stated that they will look at the income stream that they would get from taking over a pumping station, and the public health risk, there is no incentive for them unless we give them the money to do that. He stated that we have a good relationship with Anglian Water and meet regularly. At the moment they are not sewerage other villages so there is no real benefit in having detailed discussions;
10. Councillor Yeulett asked does this service add value to the community being delivered by FDC. Gary Garford stated that it is an obligation that we cannot lose because we have to maintain the public health discharges. It was a joint decision between officers and members as at that time it was not financially beneficial to transfer them to Roddons. Moving forward we will try to manage them as efficiently as we can. Councillor Yeulett asked if moving forward we want to continue to provide this service. Gary Garford stated that we do not have a choice whether we provide it, but we have a choice around the way that we provide it.

OSC41/16 CONTINUED. COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW: INCREASE SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS CHARGES. CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX B

This confidential appendix was considered as part of the previous agenda item.

OSC42/16 WISBECH PORT CSR PROJECTS

Gary Garford introduced Jamie Hemming, the Harbour Master at The Wisbech Port.

Members considered the Wisbech Port CSR Projects Confidential Report presented by Gary Garford.

Following a comprehensive presentation on the Wisbech Port and Marine Service by Gary Garford, members asked questions, made comments and received responses which will be considered by Cabinet in April 2017.