

COUNCIL – 24 APRIL 2018

QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10

1-18 TO COUNCILLOR ANDERSON, LEAD MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE
FROM COUNCILLOR WRIGHT (RECEIVED 09.04.18)

Please give an explanation for the recent surge in missed red bin collections around the town, with at least 3 weeks of missed collections on some roads, and what measures have been put in place to ensure that there will be no further missed collections? Moreover, how were residents informed about changes to collection dates when the new waste disposal services came into operation?

Reply

Thank you for the question.

The recycling collection service has suffered some disruption recently due to a combination of factors. We are trying to deal with an imbalance between rounds due to property growth on certain days and we are re-blending which round does what work on the day. So, for example, we have taken work off Round A on a Monday and allocated it to Round E on a Monday. We have not changed the day of collection, we have changed the round to which the work is allocated.

There has been a reluctance from some crews at getting additional work and in addition the manual paper based systems were difficult to update without error . The spread sheet was “fixed” over the Easter weekend and improved controls put in place to control its administration. Staff matters are being dealt with in a number of ways including use of a new Round Debrief process and increased supervision. We are currently migrating round sheets into a new automated system which will give us continuous feedback as to where rounds are and what they have and haven't done through the use of “in-cab” electronic devices which require drivers to confirm what work has been completed when in real time – so an electronic timetable of events. The system is nearly ready and we are due to meet the supplier next week to agree a training programme and a “Go Live” date.

Introduction of data into The new system has highlighted that we have a wide range of property count between days. On Monday we collect from 10,339 properties, on Tuesday from 11,239, Wednesday 11,383, Thursday 12,229 and Friday 9,595. We plan to make “change of collection day” to some properties during June/July, once we are past May Bank Holiday catch ups, to get closer to an average of 11,000/day. Day changes will be communicated well in advance to householders and Ward Councillors and additional resources will be put in place to deal with any issues which arise.

2-18 TO COUNCILLOR HUSSAIN, DEPUTY LEADER AND LEAD MEMBER FOR TRANSFORMATION & PERFORMANCE AND COUNCILLOR PANTELIC, LEAD MEMBER FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE, FROM COUNCILLOR STRUTTON (RECEIVED 09.04.18)

A cross-party community cohesion group was set up in October 2014 to encourage awareness, debate, engagement and implement strategies and direction around such issues which could potentially affect community cohesion in Slough. What measures have been taken by the council at department level to ensure that officers adhere to apolitical and cohesive ways of delivering and communicating such strategies and wider council policies?

Reply

In 2014, a cross-party Members Community Cohesion group was established at Member's instigation - to recognise and develop the important leadership role that all Elected Members have promoting integration and understanding between Slough's diverse communities. The following is snapshot of some of the activities supported by the Group.

In February 2015, Slough Borough Council held its first Community Cohesion Conference, which explored the different ways we can work together to make Slough a place of cohesion and tolerance. The conference addressed a range of themes including child sexual exploitation and the threat from radicalisation and extremism.

In July 2015, a workshop was held with stakeholders and community groups which looked specifically at the emerging risk of people travelling to Syria. The workshop was designed to give local groups the facts about travel to Syria, why people might wish to go, the national and local context, giving to the right charities safely and how everyone could support families at risk of radicalisation. Attendees looked at ways to work together with our communities to protect those most vulnerable to the IS extremist message. Members of the Group agreed to continue to promote messages of tolerance and communities united against extremism, whatever its form.

Throughout 2015, the Group maintained a particular focus on raising aspirations and building resilience in local young people. Activities included:

- A workshop for councillors to hear directly from local young people about the issues that matter to them
- Cross-party councillor community cohesion statement developed
- Visits to faith based establishments across the borough
- An inspirational film showcasing local role models in different careers we are all working together to make Slough a place of cohesion and tolerance. The film was shown to over 1600 school pupils at a local careers fair and can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvrQJggVDyo>

As part of national interfaith week a young people's "question time" on community cohesion was organised by local youth organisation, Aik Saath, in collaboration with the Youth Parliament. The event was chaired by a local young person and had faith leaders from the community as panellists.

In November, over 100 members of the Slough Somali community attended a drop in session in, where a range of service providers from across the borough were on hand to provide information and answer questions about access to services including housing services, youth provision, mental health services, health services, library services and leisure services across the borough.

In 2015, the *Slough Women's Forum (SWF)* was established to identify and address issues that matter to women in the local community. It is open to **all** women and is not targeted at any specific community. It aims to bring together people from all ages and background to talk about what matters to them, breaking down barriers and promoting understanding.

During 2016, a number of SWF events were delivered. Ideas for forum events came from the women themselves including: positive parenting, child safety (internet safety, CSE, FGM), raising awareness of mental health, support for carers etc. In response to wishes from forum members an ongoing programme of personal safety sessions has been delivered to local women in partnership with Thames Valley Police. The Forum produces a quarterly newsletter which can publicise a wide range of events and items of interest. There is a steering group which has access to council and other partner professionals who can assist in expert discussions and signposting to appropriate services.

A range of activities have taken place across council departments throughout 2017/2018 to promote good community relations, dialogue and understanding between different groups – the following is snapshot of these activities:

Diverse Steps - Dance in Unity Event - The Members' Community Cohesion group hosted a major celebration of all communities in Slough which took place on Saturday, 20 May 2017 in the Town Square, Slough Town Centre. The aims of the event were to showcase the cultural diversity of communities in Slough through dance and entertainment. The event coincided with 'World Day for Cultural Diversity' – enhancing our understanding of acceptance of different cultures. The event drew in large crowds in the town centre - over 150 participants took part in the event with 16 different groups performing dance styles from around the world. The event kicked off with a street procession which was led by Members of the Community Cohesion Group and performers.

Feedback from participant: *"a great event – our children really enjoyed their participation. The sense of community cohesion brought about by these kind of events is more important than ever"*.

Celebrate Chalvey Event - A community cohesion event organised in partnership with Neighbourhood Services, YMCA, the Police, local businesses and all members of the community - included Chalvey Stories – stories of local people and their histories.

Slough Canal Festival -Around 5000 people attended the annual community festival in Bloom Park Langley on 10th & 11th September 2017. It was a weekend full of fun activities bringing communities together.

Black History Month celebration – Black History Month community celebration on 21st October at Byron House with Lydia Simmons first black female Mayor of Slough as key guest speaker

Teamwork and community spirit at Baylis Park - A community volunteer day in Baylis Park was organised jointly with SNAP (Slough North Action Project), Slough Amey and the council's parks and community safety teams. Around 20 volunteers came along to the historic walled garden to learn and take part in gardening activities such as rose and fruit pruning, tree planting and weeding and tidying the beds and borders.

Manor Park community feedback event - Slough Borough Council hosted a drop in community feedback event at the Manor Park Community Centre in November alongside hundreds of local residents as well as representatives from, Thames Valley Police, the Ujala Foundation, Paving the Way and the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust. The event was held to share feedback following a public consultation in March which asked residents to share their experiences of using the Manor Park community centre, surrounding park and adjacent Age Concern building. Residents had an opportunity to hear more about the plans being proposed for the community centre, hall and park following their initial feedback, as well as the work that has been carried out to date by Councilors, council officers, community members and partner organisations.

Community groups Paving the Way and the Ujala Foundation organised a Winter Festival for local residents which took place in the main hall at Manor Park on the same day. The Winter Festival family fun day hosted stalls selling food, gifts, sweets, clothes and jewellery and offered free cake and face painting for children, as well as a range of fun activities. More than 300 people attended the event.

YES - Empoword regular spoken word workshops and performances held bringing together a very diverse group of young people and adults. Poetry and music used to vocalise views on a wide range of issues and experiences

Celebrating International Women's Day - In partnership with Thames Valley Police a community event was held at The Curve where information stalls, entertainment, children's activities and motivational guest speakers were on hand sharing their life experiences with participants.

Work is currently underway to review the Council's current approach to community cohesion and to set out for discussion a position statement and an action plan to guide its future work.

Moving forward:

All key strategies and policies need to set out in reports to Cabinet how they contribute to the Five Year Plan and support delivery of outcomes to improve lives of people in Slough. The Five Year Plan also covers the role of the council including demonstrating community leadership and working with the community.

Officers have been working with Members who have a portfolio responsibility for Cohesion to further develop and embed the cohesion agenda and ensure that processes, priorities and roles and responsibilities are fit for purpose.

Officers have drafted priorities and a action plan and will be discussing these with the Members on the 17th May. Key to the agenda moving forward is cohesion becoming everybodys business.

3-18 TO COUNCILLOR PANTELIC, LEAD MEMBER FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE, FROM COUNCILLOR KELLY (RECEIVED 20.04.18)

Can the council answer how it can be called a fair process when a local charity with 40 years specialist experience of the domestic abuse sector loses out to a semi corporate based London organisation who have no record of delivering services in a town such as Slough. Perhaps, most importantly you could be transparent about the loss of services to women as a result of Dash no longer be able to deliver in the area, I understand that a programme of 12 week 1 to 1 support to medium risk clients has been replaced with a 2 hour intervention.

I have also been informed that no-one from the local authority has had a conversation with Dash face to face to understand how they can and will use their considerable expertise and knowledge to continue to support the residents of Slough, Why is this?

Reply

This council and its partners are committed to working together to prevent violence against women, girls and any person in our town. One of Safer Slough Partnership's key priorities is to raise awareness of domestic abuse, support victims and address perpetrator behaviour.

In relation to 'fair process' in re-commissioning I can confirm that the council's contract with DASH which started in 2015 was for a 3 year period for the provision of 3 Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) to support medium to high risk DA victims and delivery of the 'Freedom' Programme providing domestic abuse education. At the end of that contract the council re-commissioned these services in full compliance with EU procurement processes and this was closely overseen throughout by the SBC Procurement Team.

The assessment of responses to re-commissioning included a multi-disciplinary panel to provide breadth of experience, ensuring a deep understanding of the complexities facing domestic abuse victims, safety, risk and access to services so that the best decision could be made to re-commission these services for Slough.

After careful consideration of 3 provider responses a decision was made by the panel to award the contract to Hestia, a charity which currently delivers domestic abuse services in a number of west London authorities; Harrow, Hillingdon and Ealing, areas with considerable similarities to Slough. Hestia is an organisation with a 40 year, proven track record in domestic abuse services, including support during 2017 for 3557 victims of domestic abuse as well as 719 women and 668 children in Hestia's 29 refuges. The final selection was based on the scope of the offer from Hestia and the significant benefits they can offer residents of Slough.

Via this contract the council is providing exactly the same level of staff employed under the previous DASH contract and therefore the new service retains the same level of council funded provision of three IVDAs working with medium to high domestic abuse cases supporting criminal justice interventions and a psychoeducational programme providing support for victims, for example.

I am pleased that as an addition to core council funding, the council's Community Safety Team were selected by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to commission across East Berkshire two further posts:

- 1) BAMER Development Worker to help ensure BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee) clients gain better access to services.
- 2) Medium Risk Safety Planner (to be based in the Police Domestic Abuse Unit) providing medium risk domestic abuse victims safety plans to help sign posting to agencies for further support.

These posts considerably enhance the offer we now have available for victims in Slough and formed part of the recommissioning process.

Members should be aware that at no time did the council fund the wider range of services DASH has provided in Slough over the years; these were funded by grants available to charitable causes, such as the Big Lottery Fund. Furthermore, the council is still working in partnership with DASH in relation to refuge accommodation which is provided to DASH at heavily subsidised rent for the sole purpose of refuge (with refuge clients funded through housing benefit payments).

I'd like to re-assure Members that there is no evidence of any loss in service to people suffering from domestic abuse as a result of the contract change. The provision is now larger and more robust with Hestia's wider experience and the additional funding from the OPCC providing the two additional roles mentioned above.

In relation to conversations with DASH; in line with procurement rules after the award notice the mandatory alcatel period of 10 days was honoured and the two unsuccessful bidders were offered the opportunity to raise any concerns regarding the procurement process. No formal challenges were received from DASH or the other bidder.

Finally, DASH were contacted by officers via email on 7th March 2018 requesting a face to face meeting. My understanding is that this was declined by DASH and officers later accepted a document via e-mail from DASH outlining their plan to cease work in Slough, which went beyond the services that had been funded by the

council. Hestia remains in communication with DASH on the transition of services. DASH declined an invitation to a Violence Against Women and Girls – plus Men and Boys (VAWG+) partnership meeting.

The Council still works with DASG in relation to refuge accommodation and we are keen to continue this partnership and work with our partners as we tackle Domestic abuse and violence.

I hope this answer has made the position clear.