

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

10 January 2024

-: Present :-

Councillor Steve Darling (Chairman)

Councillors Brook, Cowell, Fellows, Law, Long, Maddison, Strang and Twelves

(Also in attendance: Councillors Bye, Chris Lewis and David Thomas)

36. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 December 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

37. SWISCo Annual Report

The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Culture & Events and Parking, Councillor Billings, the Chair of the SWISCo Board, Alan Denby, and the Lead Officer for SWISCo, Lisa Tuck, provided a brief overview of the Annual Report for SWISCo for 2022/2023 and responded to the following questions:

- why was the full business plan and risk register not included within the paperwork;
- the green waste service had been operating for a year, how many people had signed up for the second year and what action was being taken to increase take-up;
- were any incentives being offered to increase take-up of green waste collection;
- had the Council considered promoting green waste collection through the Council Tax leaflet or at remote collection locations;
- what was the original take up figure for green waste collection and how many people have re-signed up (a written response to be provided);
- had the Council considered a refer a friend scheme for green waste collection;
- why didn't the covering report reference the good work SWISCo do employing people with learning disabilities and care experienced young people etc. under the equalities section;
- how was SWISCo communicating that people could get a smaller green waste bin if they needed one;
- why was there not more detail on the capital investment programme, where it started and where it was now;
- what was happening about the future of the service and how could Overview and Scrutiny take an active role in this work;

- there was limited information regarding highways finances and prioritisation for repairs and maintenance;
- when would SWISCo be cutting the grass and could information be published on the website, once known, on the dates and areas for this, if possible with residents able to put in their postcodes to see when it was due;
- what action was being taken to do the work of the former Community Engagement Officer;
- how did SWISCo track energy changes (a written response would be provided);
- did the sensors in the bins detect smelly waste or just full bins and could people scan the QR code and report smelly bins so they could be emptied sooner;
- how was the campaign with the sensors in the bins going and had they been added to the bins in Babbacombe (a written response would be provided);
- what was preventing the weed spraying and what was the current programme for this (a written response would be provided);
- did the staff satisfaction results include agency and how did agency numbers impact on the results (a written response would be provided);
- why did the report not refer to outsourcing the out of hours team and what action was being taken to monitor performance of this;
- why were issues impacting on the stream by the Waste Transfer Station and the issues with the Environment Agency not included in the report;
- why did the report not include much detail about commercial waste and driving forward that data;
- where was SWISCo using agency staff and where were there vacancies;
- SWISCo were tasked to work with friends groups to develop parks plans, schedules, who was responsible for what, what plans there were, investment in new equipment etc. to put in parks notice boards what progress had been made on this;

Members requested a briefing note to be circulated to all Members on weed spraying so that they can understand about the times of year to carry this out and how we deploy the equipment and help inform their communities.

The Board heard from Margeret Forbes-Hamilton, Chair of the Torre and Upton Community Partnership and Chair of Torbay Greenspace Forum regarding delivery against the business plan and concerns in respect of community engagement and support. Mrs Forbes-Hamilton also requested an update on the progress of the Open Space Strategy.

The Board thanked SWISCo staff for their hard work and commitment working in all weathers and welcomed the ethos for SWISCo to become an employer of choice and the work that was being undertaken to support employees.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Cabinet be recommended:

1. to improve promotion and communication of the green waste collection through:

- advertising at the remote collection sites;
 - including information on the Council Tax Bills together with the tonnage and cost benefits of this;
 - consider refer a friend scheme;
 - to raise awareness that residents can get a smaller bin if they need one; and
 - to consider moving to automatic renewal;
2. to review what action is being taken to ensure community engagement with friends group and local communities is being undertaken following the loss of the Community Engagement Officer;
 3. to request the Managing Director of SWISCo to prioritise working with friends groups to develop park plans, schedules, who is responsible for what and what plans there are e.g. investment for new equipment etc. to put in parks notice boards;
 4. to request the Director of Corporate Services to ensure that Committee reports include relevant reference to equalities and diversity relating to the report topic;
 5. to consider introducing additional key performance indicators for maintenance of grass verges etc. to demonstrate that they are meeting the requirements in the Business Plan regarding maintenance and enable this to be monitored;
 6. to provide evidence of best practice to demonstrate how we are enhancing our environment;
 7. that the emerging Business Plan and Commissioning Agreement review be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board prior to submission to Cabinet;
 8. that the revised Business Plan includes:
 - a. elements of risk to SWISCo;
 - b. their role as corporate parents;
 - c. being a foster friendly employer;
 - d. enhanced information climate change; and
 - e. include reference to any changes to service provision and its impact; and
 9. future reports on SWISCo to include current Business Plan, Risk Register and Capital Investment Plan to give wider background for the Board to ensure that SWISCo is delivering against the approved Business Plan.

(Note: the Managing Director of SWISCo, Matt Reeks, was unable to attend the meeting due to an injury and gave his apologies.)

38. Councillor Call for Action - Review of Investigation into Removal of the Palm Trees at the Italian Gardens, Torquay

In accordance with Standing Order D13, Councillor Steve Darling outlined his reasons for submitting a Councillor Call for Action regarding the removal of the palm trees at the Italian Gardens, Torquay.

The Board had to determine whether or not to request officers to prepare a full report on the matter.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board requests officers to prepare a full report on a Review of Investigation into the removal of the palm trees at the Italian Gardens, Torquay to be presented to the Board by no later than 13 March 2024.

Chairman