

Cabinet Response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Board – SWISCo Annual Report

Recommendation 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.

Response/Update:

A fresh marketing campaign will be rolled out in March 2024. The campaign will include refreshed graphics and branding and be published via, websites, social media, banners and an article in the Council Tax leaflet. Work is underway to create an auto renewing Direct Debit option of £5 per month (reduced to £4 p/m for Council Tax Support Scheme recipients). Smaller bins are currently available (at same cost) but marketing and website sign-up will make this clearer. Options for refer a Friend are under consideration.

Recommendation 2:

To review what action is being taken to ensure community engagement with Friends Groups (FGs) and local communities is being undertaken following the loss of the Community Engagement Officer.

Response/Update:

The Community Engagement Officer was funded through s106 monies which are no longer available. A programme of engagement with all FG's began in November to develop improved ways of working with the last of these sessions in late Feb. In view of the importance placed on the relationship with Friends groups this engagement work was led by the Managing Director of Swisco and this allowed full consideration of how different service areas within Swisco could be involved to deliver best outcomes.

The sessions were very well attended with over 30 representatives from at least 14 Friends Groups (will confirm exact numbers ASAP). Whilst several people shared issues and frustrations that they have experienced in the past there was a general positivity around the opportunity for resetting the relationship, an appreciation of the need for groups to be aware of Health and Safety requirements and the principle of clearer communication and expectation management was welcomed.

Moving forward, a charter will be produced which captures the key principles of the relationship between SWISCo and the FG's based on the feedback from these sessions. It is anticipated that following consultation and engagement of the draft Charter it will be published and signed by the end of June 2024. The Charter will cover the way in which the FG's and SWISCo communicate, and it is envisaged that a specific email address will be provided for FG's from which all queries will be allocated to the relevant Service or Team Manager.

A key element to the Charter and the improving of the relationship will be annual site meetings of senior managers at SWISCo and FG's where future site plans, work programmes and roles and responsibilities can be discussed and agreed.

Since November Senior Managers at SWISCo have held 1:1 site meetings with a several FG's to agree annual work programmes and discuss key issues. These meetings have been successful and positive feedback has been received from the FG's involved.

Recommendation 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.

Response/Update:

As above, annual schedules and allocated work lists are a priority for SWISCo. These will be created as working documents following site meetings. Unfortunately however there is not enough resource to produce detailed site specific plans for each group. SWISCo will support any FG that wishes to develop public facing material.

Recommendation 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.

Response/Update:

This will be actioned through the Partnership and Inclusion Officer.

Recommendation 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.

Response/Update:

As part of the Commissioning Agreement review each SWISCo service area will have clear KPI's with agreed reporting methods and frequencies. The method of explaining the schedules and cycles of maintenance works to residents is being developed to allow residents to understand when planned works, for instance verge cutting, gulley cleaning, are scheduled. This is anticipated to reduce enquiries through to the Council & SWISCo by having this information in a publicly accessible space.

Recommendation 6:

To provide evidence of best practice to demonstrate how we are enhancing our environment.

Response/Update:

The new Business Plan 2024 – 29 will include an objective focusing on the Environment and will demonstrate how SWISCo will sustainably and achievably work towards limiting the environmental impact of our business and deliver improvements to our local environment.

Recommendation 7:

That the emerging Business Plan and Commissioning Agreement review be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board prior to submission to Cabinet.

Response/Update:

Agreed

Recommendation 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.

Response/Update:

The business plan will include an objective on Social Value and Employer of Choice which will demonstrate how SWISCo understands and will collaboratively supports the Council in its corporate parent role and what actions it will take in terms of working with staff across a range of initiatives. The other points will also be covered in the business plan.

Recommendation 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.

Response/Update:

The reviewed Commissioning Agreement will contain clear KPI's for cyclical functions and the Business Plan will set out the Objectives of the Business with clear targets to demonstrate success. Both documents will make clear the reporting mechanisms and frequencies and will be included in future annual reports. The Risk Register is a live document and will be presented along with the Annual Report in future.