

SWISCo Annual Report 2024/25 – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Report to Cabinet on 14 July 2025

Background

The Cabinet Member for Pride in Place, Transport and Parking, Councillor Billings and the Managing Director of SWISCo, Matt Reeks provided an overview of the submitted report on the SWISCo Annual Report and Business Plan which presented an annual review of the operation and performance of the Council's wholly owned and controlled company, SWISCo.

The Board asked a number of questions in relation to the following:

- could Park Management Plans be developed to help to inform residents of various information relevant to their areas;
- was there a rolling programme for cleaning of drains and gullies in Torbay;
- was there an in-house facility for recycling of the seaweed that was collected from the beaches within Torbay;
- where could the public submit a request for pink bags for collection of batteries;
- what arrangements are in place to collect waste and recycling collections from roads where the crews are unable to gain access due to parking issues on collection days; Overview and Scrutiny Board Wednesday, 9 July 2025
- why did the SWISCo Highways fleet continue to use vehicles with Tor2 branding;
- what work was being completed by SWISCo to encourage more recycling and food waste collections from residents to increase Torbay's recycling collection rate;
- did the overall waste collection figure stated within the annual report include recycling collections and what did the recyclable waste figure equate to;
- do SWISCo receive a high number of requests for replacement blue bags for the recycling of paper due to the bags being lost during the collection process;
- why was SWISCO continuing to use agency staff and
- residents reported several vehicles regularly park in Shedden Hill Car Park for long periods of time, what was SWISCO Management doing to resolve the issue.

The following responses to Members questions were provided:

- Park Management Plans could be developed as in previous years, however additional resource for the completion of this work would be required;

- the gully cleaning crew work on a 5-day week completing a schedule of cyclical emptying of drains and gullies where all areas have one emptying and cleaning annually;
- the seaweed that is collected from the beaches within Torbay was taken to a recycling plant in Marldon, Paignton for processing which is the most economical for SWISCo;
- SWISCo have distributed 15,000 pink bags to residents within Torbay for the collection of household batteries. Residents could request a pink bag through Torbay Council website or by stopping recycling crews who have bags on the truck that could be issued;
- all waste and recycling crews were aware of ongoing problematic areas in regard to blocked access. The crews amend schedules were necessary to alleviate any issues of missed collections by visiting the concerned areas either earlier or later in the day. Should the crews continue to be unable to gain access to the road, then collections would be prioritised for collection the next working day. SWISCo own four narrow access waste collection vehicles and crews do actively when issues occur, either leave a printed notice on the parked cars causing the access issues or post the notices through letterboxes of properties;
- SWISCo have prioritised certain types of vehicles to be replaced through the fleet replacement scheme to ensure that specialist vehicles continue to be operational for service delivery. All vehicles that display Tor2 branding, continue to be in a functional state and will be replaced at appropriate times;
- SWISCo had completed a project to encourage recycling and food waste collection in blocks of flats and houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) where historically they did not receive any food waste or recycling collections. Additionally at the Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC), crews continue to separate the waste collected from general waste collections to check for recyclable items. This process had uncovered that up to 90% of the items within the general waste collections, could be recycled;
- the blue bags for paper collection were introduced as part of the Right Item, Right Box campaign to help the crews during the collection process. Residents Overview and Scrutiny Board Wednesday, 9 July 2025 can request replacement or additional blue bags through Torbay Council's website. Alternatively, residents can leave paper for recycling collection in a plastic bag;
- SWISCo have reduced the reliance on agency workers however agency staff continue to be required for waste and recycling collection rounds due to annual leave and unanticipated absences to ensure that all collection rounds have full crew members. SWISCo continue to operate a rigorous procedure for temporary staff to be employed as permanent staff after a 12-week period. Agency staff are also required for seasonal roles as it is more efficient process for SWISCo for roles to be employed via agency staff; and
- the Managing Director explained that he could not provide a definitive answer as to why the number of vehicles are parked for long periods within Shedden Hill Car Park but would endeavour to investigate. However, some crews do not return to the depot during the day for break times and do choose to take their breaks within the vehicles.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. that Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the submitted Annual Report and Business Plan and the achievements of SWISCo over the last 12 months;
2. that the Cabinet be recommended to discuss in detail and identify the necessary resources to support the activity of developing the Play Park Strategy and Open spaces strategy through identifying a fixed term contract to be funded through the underspend; and
3. that SWISCo develop draft Park Management Plans for all parks located within Torbay as public documents to be shared with the community.