

Cabinet Member Sustainability response to recommendations of a scrutiny task group

Cabinet

16 April 2013

Scrutiny Task Group – Ubico

The Scrutiny group has worked hard and should be commended for not being afraid to lift all the stones, and ask the difficult questions. In undertaking the review the task group looked at both Ubico and retained council functions such as the client side management and customer interface to ensure that the business benefits of establishing Ubico have been achieved. Some recommendations therefore of the task group relate to the council whilst others will need to be considered by both the council and Ubico as they require both organisations to respond.

Some of the recommendations are quite far reaching and deserve thorough examination, and it is good that the working group has given until September to complete the reviews. One of the key findings from the review is the need to communicate effectively to residents and businesses, especially during times of bad weather, or times of change. On the agenda this evening I am also presenting my report on the lessons learnt following the service disruption to waste and recycling earlier in the year and this too made reference to the need for clear communication with the public.

I intend to use the Cabinet Member working group on waste and recycling, which has three members of the O&S task group on it, as a sounding board to progress recommendations 2 to 6.

Recommendation 1 will in the first instance be reviewed by Cabinet, but essentially it is for the shareholders to decide, not the Cabinet or Council.

1. Review the decision not to nominate any borough councillors to the Board by September 2013 (as set out at 6.7 of the report).

I recognise that there is a substantial body of member opinion which supports the principle of full member participation on the board, but I would nevertheless like to more fully understand the O&S task group's rationale in putting forward this recommendation. I also understand the arguments against, principally surrounding board members' primary duty to the company, and resolution of this possible conflict would be an important early consideration if this idea is to be pursued. However this is a shareholder matter but I think that it is useful for Cabinet to review the decision. It should be noted however that any changes to the nomination process would also need to be agreed by other shareholder councils. I would suggest that the Leader needs to discuss the issue with the Leader of Cotswold District Council.

2. **Review the customer service arrangements at an appropriate time, but no later than by the end of September 2013 and consider whether delivery of this service should return to the depot (as set out at 6.2 and 6.3 of the report).**

The O&S task group recognised that when they were undertaking the review it is still less than a year since the transfer of responsibility for customer contact moved from the former operations division to the customer services team. I am aware that officers are undertaking a systems thinking review and we need to let them complete this review before any consideration of the arrangements. I recognise that there is some double handling of issues (and it will be for the systems thinking team to propose solutions), however I am also aware that the council now has a better understanding of the customer issues and we have more resilience to deal with issues as they arise.

3. **Review internal and external communication strategies by September 2013 (as set out at 6.4 and 6.5 of the report).**

I fully endorse this recommendation in relation to CBC functions and indeed have already agreed with officers that this is a priority. It will be a matter for the Ubico board to decide if they need to review their own internal communications with their workforce but this will be raised with them at the regular liaison meetings and asked to report back on what action they have taken.

4. **Review the emptying frequency timetable for the bring site facilities as part of the review of bring sites by September 2013 (as set out at 6.10 of the report).**

I have already asked the officers to pick this up as part of their review. I hope that the review of bring sites will be completed by September but if this is not the case, as I am keen that the council undertakes the review within the context of the wider Gloucestershire Waste Partnership Strategy, I will update the O&S committee accordingly.

5. **Consider the adoption of waste and recycling literature (bin tags) which include information including collection dates, bin information and key messages, as produced by Tewkesbury Borough Council by September 2013 (as set out at 6.4 of the report).**

The use of bin tags and any all other means of communications is being reviewed at this time. The Council's experience is that in normal operating conditions, in most areas, information such as collection dates is not the main challenge, and that by far the bigger challenge is how to communicate changes, and update residents on the range of materials collected, and their correct presentation.

6. **At the end of the season (end of April 2013) assess the overall impact of the decision by the senior football league to cease coordination of their sports pitch bookings and if this has had a largely negative impact on resources within the customer services team ask the senior football league to reconsider their decision (as set out at 6.9 of the report).**

This is a CBC function and officers are comfortable with undertaking this review.

7. **Consider providing additional marketing resource on an invest to save basis for the promotion of the trade waste service by September 2013 (as set out at 6.8 of the report).**

I have already asked officers and Ubico to prepare a business case as to how we can invest in our trade waste service and this will be part of this review. I am keen that the excellent service we provide should be marketed effectively and I will need to consider the resource implications when they are presented within the business case.