

SWT Community Scrutiny Committee - 27 July 2022

Present: Councillor Libby Lisgo (Chair)

Councillors Dave Mansell, Simon Coles, Tom Deakin, Dawn Johnson, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Andy Milne, Ray Tully, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Ed Firmin and Loretta Whetlor

Officers: Sam Murrell, Marcus Prouse, Chris Hall, Stuart Noyce, Steve Hughes, Vicky Lowman, Darren Hill,

Also Present: Councillors Andrew Sully and Brenda Weston

Councillor Derek Perry (via zoom)

Guests

David Greenwood (SLM Leisure Manager – Everyone Active)

Michael Cowdell (Customer Experience Manager, SWP)

Emma Matthews (E Hants Partnership Manager) via zoom.

(The meeting commenced at 6.16 pm)

21. **Apologies**

Apologies were received on behalf of Cllr Steve Griffiths (subs by Cllr Ed Firmin), Cllr Andrew Pritchard (subs Cllr Loretta Whetlor), Cllr Roger Habgood, Cllr Martin Peters and Cllr Richard Lees.

The Chair expressed concern for Cllr Lees and wished him a speedy recovery from ill health.

22. **Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee**

The Minutes were approved.

Prop: Cllr Mark Lithgow / Sec: Cllr Simon Coles. (Unanimous)

23. **Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	SCC & Taunton	Personal	Spoke and Voted

		Charter Trustee		
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Mansell	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr David Mansell declared an interest in Item 9 as a representative on the Somerset Waste Partnership Board.

24. **Public Participation**

There were no statements or public questions brought before the Committee.

25. **Community Scrutiny Request/Recommendation Trackers**

The Recommendation / Request Trackers were approved / noted.

Prop: Cllr Dawn Johnson / Sec: Cllr Vivienne Stock Williams (Unanimous)

26. **Community Scrutiny Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan was approved.

Prop: Cllr Janet Lloyd / Sec Cllr Mark Lithgow (Unanimous)

27. **Executive and Full Council Forward Plans**

The Executive and Full Council Forward Plans were noted.

Prop: Cllr Mark Lithgow / Sec: Cllr David Mansell

28. **Sports and Leisure Management (Everyone Active) Bi-Annual Report**

Cllr Derek Perry introduced the item via zoom as portfolio holder for Sports, Parks and Leisure.

David Green presented a series of slides which outlined the progress Everyone Active has made in the last six months. The presentation slides can be viewed [here](#).

Overall, the outlook was positive, due to the through-put and footfall through the doors and increase in activity at the Sports Centres and pools which was coming back up to pre-pandemic levels but there were a couple of key challenges that the organisation faced going forward: -

- Energy / Environmental – The increase in utility bills was a major challenge, and SLM were trying to mitigate against this using good energy housekeeping. They were shutting down rooms, appliances and equipment which were not in use and seeking alternative more energy efficient ways of using the centres. (For example, reducing pool temperatures by a degree. Converting to LED lighting where possible and expanding the use of solar panels).
- Competition – Other gyms in the area were now offering very competitive rates and monthly membership. Everyone Active had to come up with ways to preserve their price-point advantage and promote the benefits of public sector facilities over those in the private sector. One example given was the highly trained personnel who operated in the SLM sports centres. Recently staff had saved a life using CPR following a cardiac arrest, which meant that the casualty made a full recovery in hospital.

It was stressed that these were not “terminal” challenges but did present some issues around BAU operations. The partnership between SLM and SWT remained strong and the relationship with officers on both sides continued to be positive and supportive.

Questions arising: -

- Is going cashless in the leisure centres excluding children from swimming or being able to use the facilities? *This has not been subject to negative feedback so far, but the situation will be monitored. Most people prefer to book online prior to arrival at the pool to ensure they have use of the facilities. This was implemented during COVID and has continued, particularly around lane swimming and prevents overcrowding.*
- Are there any activities being delivered in the West Somerset area, around the free membership for children in care and people with Parkinson’s Disease? *Not at present but SLM are hoping to work more closely with County Sports in partnership to develop more links in this area. Mini medics, walking cricket and mini football are all initiatives that are being developed.*
- What arrangements are in place to work with GP’s around social prescribing? *Everyone Active do work with users to promote better health outcomes for patients but need to have more contact with local GPs. If these links could be established, then Everyone Active would gladly accommodate. It was agreed that there was a need to improve the message to GPs about the exercise referral scheme.*

Final Note

- Is there any way to analyse users of the leisure facilities via postcode, to get a breakdown of the demographic? In particular in

Priorswood concerning Wellsprings which was operating in a very deprived area. - *The Chair agreed that this was an answer that could be provided at the next update.*

29. **Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) Update**

Cllr Andrew Sully introduced the item as Portfolio Holder for the Environment.

Michael Cowdell presented a series of slides on behalf of the Somerset Waste Partnership. These can be viewed [here](#).

Questions from the floor as follows:-

- It was agreed that daily communications around missed collections to alert residents was very good via social media but was better communication needed between SWP and SUEZ? Were they aware when they missed collections and the level of resulting complaints? *SWP are in day-to-day contact with SUEZ, and both are doing their best to address this issue. The level of complaints is still too high, but pressure is being brought to bear and it is reducing.*

- What steps are taken to educate householders about recycling, and what can be done for those households who have difficulty with storing the various waste containers? *There will be escalations such as marking of bins to advise of contaminants in the waste containers – this is the main reason for a “left collection”. The next step is letters to householders to explain how the refuse should be separated, so that it is easier to collect. HMOs and those properties (such as flats) who have nowhere to store their bins will be dealt with on case-by-case basis.*

In the past, “Gull-Bags” were trialled in parts of Taunton and Watchet to see if they would provide a suitable alternative to a wheelie bin. Unfortunately, the trial was not successful, so the use of gull-bags has been discontinued. It was more difficult to collect recycling from HMOs because the level of contamination from and mixed recyclables took more time.

- Concern was expressed for those people who couldn't report missed collections online due to accessibility issues. *Missed collections and other complaints can still be made to SWT via the Customer Services number (main switchboard) and these will be passed on.*
- A query was made about the tonnage of tins/cans that were collected as the amount seemed to be low. *Explained as “empty volume”. They take up a lot of room before crushing, but once crushed they don't represent a lot of weight in terms of tonnage.*
- Concern was expressed that some residents were placing their household waste in the litter bins at public parks. Despite being cleared immediately, it was proving to be a daily occurrence. *This is fly tipping! If residents put*

their domestic waste in litter bins, it will be reported, enforced and SWT will fine the culprits if they can be found.

- Although the frequency of missed collections was getting better there was no room for complacency.
- Cllrs praised refuse collectors who went above and beyond in their level of service. Particularly those who adjusted their routes and accommodated the elderly and infirm, who had difficulty with putting out their refuse containers.
- A schools officer is going to be employed to encourage a better working arrangement with schools and other large organisations.
- The level of food waste collected has remained static, and SWP were examining the reasons for this.
- It was asked how families with disposable nappies were coping with the three weekly general waste collection cycle? *Very well overall. If a need for a larger container or additional collection was required, this was catered to on a case-by-case basis. Also related to other medical needs/requirements such as clinical waste collections which could be made more frequently.*
- It was asked where the pick-up and drop-off points were for collection crews as this could be quite disruptive to residential neighbourhoods, first thing in the morning. *There were two in SWT. One was in Priorswood which had attracted some complaints as very residential and the other on the Blackbrook trading estate.*

30. **Executive Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services: Councillor Andrew Sully**

Cllr Andrew Sully introduced the first item as Portfolio Holder for the Environment. This was an update on the **Litter Enforcement Strategy (LES)**.

A short presentation was carried out by Emma Matthews (E Hants Partnership Manager) via Zoom. The slides can be viewed [here](#).

The key points from the presentation were: -

- Main source of littering (498 out of 504 occasions) was due to tossing of cigarette butts.
- There was currently a 70% collection rate on the fines. After the initial 3-month introductory period, the non-payers were now moving on to court proceedings for recovery.
- There is a heavy emphasis on education to encourage changing behaviour. (Some people didn't realise that tossing a cigarette butt counted as littering). The LES were working with organisations to promote

a better understanding of littering. Also distributing stubby pouches so that cigarettes could be disposed of in a more environmentally friendly way.

- The delivery of the LES was cost neutral as the staff were paid from the fixed penalties. There were also unforeseen benefits in the fact that people took more of a pride in their neighbourhoods, other crimes could be prevented/ reported and the enforcement officers were a visible presence.
- 160 bins have now been fitted with stub out plates so that smokers are encouraged to dispose of their cigarettes in the litter bins.
- The procedure for enforcement is that under the Environment Protection Act of 1987, littering is seen as walking away from left litter or throwing it on the floor. Officers will engage with an offender and details will be taken to issue a fixed penalty. On 5 occasions, the police have had to be called to assist.
- Despite the penalties, it is not unknown for there to be repeat offences. This is why education is very important.
- In the Enforcement areas there has been a 60% reduction in littering.

Questions and comments arising included: -

- There was surprise that cigarette butts contributed to the main source of littering. There was a general perception that it would have been more focussed on fast food outlets and takeaways where littering was prevalent. Most enforcement was carried out on foot in the main areas Mon-Fri.
- It was asked if the areas and times could be extended to include fast food outlets and weekend working. *Hot spots can be reported so that patrols can then target those areas. Important to note however, that the patrols are carried out on foot, and it is difficult to take particulars for a vehicle unless the licence plate is taken.*
- It was deemed that the trial was proving successful in that it was cost neutral and was providing a deterrent to littering. Education is better than enforcement and encouraging people to dispose of their litter sensibly was a greater benefit.
- It was asked if the trial could be extended to include dog-fouling? *Despite the general consensus of support, dog fouling legislation is completely different from the Environmental Protection Act. It is unlikely in the lifetime remaining of SWT, that this will be addressed, but it will definitely need to be looked at in the future.*

Other areas of business

- **Warren Road Drainage, Minehead Seafront.** Despite an assurance that this work had started, the drains remain blocked and no contractor has

been on site? *Steve Hughes took responsibility and said that he had provided the Portfolio update for Full Council in good faith, expecting to meet the contractor on site that day. Unfortunately, due to various reasons this had not then taken place. They were trying to work out a solution, but in the event of the contractor being unable to complete the work, an alternative contractor would be employed.*

- It was asked who organised the work for the **Environmental team** who had been weeding and clearing SWT areas? How was the weeding done? Did the Council spray areas with weedkiller? *The Environmental team was organised by Darren Hill (Parks and Open Spaces). It was a 2-man team who had some capacity in their workload to undertake this work. They had been working in SWT car parks and leisure centres to generally tidy up areas. They removed the weeds manually. Any spraying that was required was undertaken by a sub-contractor.*
- **The Blue Anchor Defence Scheme** – How long was the Scheme expected to protect the integrity of the road? *The rock armour that was being shipped into Blue Anchor was expected to last from 50-100 years and hopefully into perpetuity. (Certainly, beyond the lifetime of most people!)*
- **“Watchet Weeders” and other volunteer groups.** These groups were now looking to re-start their work back in the community following being stood down due to COVID. Who did they need to liaise with in the Council? *Darren Hill said he was the person to contact. Community Engagement is vitally important and SWT relies on the Friends and Volunteer Groups to assist with the maintenance of parks and open spaces. Their contribution is extremely valuable,*

(The Meeting ended at 9.05 pm)