

Task and Finish Group - Waste Contract

Held at:	Zoom - remote meeting
Date	Wednesday, 4 August 2021
Present	Councillors Gary Fuller, Peter Gane, Michelle Keutenius, Rebecca Shoob and John Wing
Officers Present:	Ewan Green (Director of Place), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Andrew Rush (Regulatory Services & Corporate Contracts Lead Specialist), and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist)

1. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

2. **Recommendations following the meeting held on 26 July 2021**

The Director of Place invited feedback from the Task and Finish Group Members following the session held on 26 July, in respect of any recommendations they wished to be made.

The following points were discussed:

- A recommendation should be directed to FHDC relating to ensuring effective contract management arrangements are in place at the point of contract award or renewal
- A recommendation should be made in relation to financial compensation and restitution.
- The communications around the suspension of garden waste had not been received well by some residents.
- There should be more consideration of risk management within the contract. There had been some complacency from the councils (DDC & FHDC) in terms of expectations based on previous high performance from Veolia.
- The issue of HGV driver shortages had been around for some time, and should have been recognised by Veolia sooner.
- The renewal should have been treated as a new contract.

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- Improvements were needed in terms of effectively managing live data and taking responsive action. When changes are being made, a 'threshold' should be established as to the level of disruption to expect. There should be an agreement with contractors that any significant route changes be phased and made *after* the full introduction of new technology and vehicles.
- The announcements about the suspension of garden waste had been done via social media as quickly as possible after the Council meeting, however some residents were not made aware until sometime after the announcement.
- Veolia should be pre-empting issues and proactively communicating these to FHDC residents sooner.
- Legal opinion was being sought in terms of the contractual position in relation to penalties and defaults.
- The public needed to see that Members were holding the contractor to account. A joint OSC meeting with DDC should be held in public.
- Any future joint contractual arrangements with DDC, or other public bodies, should be scrutinised to assess risks and benefits.
- Staff from other council services, such as Revenues and Benefits, temporarily supported Customer Services to quickly help manage the volume of customer calls and contacts.
- The lack of presence of Veolia staff at the session on 26 July was very disappointing. Individual staff operative's institutional knowledge had not been used well to inform the route changes. Knowledge of staff should be more highly valued by Veolia.
- At the session on 26 July, Veolia had been asked about staff turnover, and what the contractual reduction in number of FTE's had been, but had not provided an answer.
- There was an ongoing major risk in terms of the negative impact on the council's reputation.
- One of the major service failures related to the data not being uploaded and tested effectively into the new Echo system.
- A pilot of some route changes had taken place at DDC, but not at FHDC. This could have highlighted local issues, such as the heavy reliance on the local knowledge of staff.
- Time had been spent ensuring the data within the system was now correct, and it was important that this was not lost if there are further changes proposed to the routes.
- There had been many instances of bins being marked as collected when they had not been. Was this user error, or system error?

It was agreed that recommendations be based on the following headings:

- **Importance of Contract Management** – Awareness of risk associated with transition (including reputational risk), testing, attention to detail, and scrutiny.
- **Financial contractual matters** - FHDC to use contractual clauses to seek financial redress for failures.

- **Communications** – speed, range of methods, tone and transparency.
- **Staffing** – at Veolia greater staff engagement/involvement in service changes. Impact of changes across council teams should be considered fully at the planning stage. At FHDC, continued support to teams under pressure.
- **Data and systems** – Data integrity/accurate use of systems, scheduling and timing, avoiding simultaneous changes to ICT alongside service delivery changes. More robust and extensive testing of systems and data therein.
- **Joint OSC meeting with DDC** – with a focus on the detail of the recovery plan and any new proposed route changes, following the review commissioned by Veolia, prior to any further changes being made.
- **Veolia management attitudes** – lack of urgency and insufficient appreciation of difficulties in terms of operational matters across many teams.

The Chief Executive then advised on the next steps, which would be to finalise the recommendations, and circulate as a draft for approval, via the Chairman. A report would then be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 September incorporating the minutes of all meetings, and the recommendations. A further update report would be given at Cabinet on 22 September and would include the recommendations for consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A Member asked if the report could include a summary of what had gone wrong, and the Director of Place confirmed that this would be included in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Officers thanked members for their input and attention to the matters.